State Visits

12. **Deputy Martin Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the area of the budget of An Garda Síochána from which the estimated €15 to €18 million cost of the visits of the President and Vice-President of the United States of America will come from; the details of the expenditure in view of the high cost and the fact that the visits were of a short duration; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47533/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that high level visits to Ireland are of significant importance in the development and maintenance of our relations with other States. Such visits are to be welcomed and offer important opportunities to us, as a small outward-looking State, for positive engagement with partners.

In terms of the cost associated with the visit to Ireland of President Trump and Vice-President Pence, the Deputy will appreciate that there is an obligation on the State to take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of every visiting dignitary, in line with risk assessment. Similar measures and courtesies are as a matter of course also extended to Ireland, when members of Government travel on official visits to other States.

The Garda authorities have informed me that the costs compiled to date in respect of President Trump’s visit total approximately €11.5 million. I understand that the cost of Vice-President Pence’s visit stands at approximately €3 million. Such costs arise across a number of sub-heads, generally including salary including overtime, travel and subsistence, communications costs, equipment costs, station services and so on.

As I have previously indicated, additional funding will be provided to the Garda Vote before the end of this year to meet the costs to An Garda Síochána associated with the visits. I am grateful to my colleague the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for taking this into account.

Direct Provision System

13. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to address the number of persons living in direct provision centres; his further plans to cease using hotels as emergency centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47798/19]
Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):

As the Deputy will be aware, the State has a legal obligation to offer accommodation, food and a range of other services (including utilities and healthcare etc.) to any person who claims a right to international protection in Ireland while their legal claim is being examined. These services are demand led and generally it is difficult to predict demand far in advance.

I am advised that as of 10 November 2019, there were 6,052 persons being provided with accommodation by my Department in the 39 accommodation centres located nationwide.

Due to an unexpected rise in applications (up 60% to date this year), these centres are at full capacity, therefore a further 1,523 persons are residing in 37 emergency accommodation locations in hotels and guest houses. Every effort is being made to re-accommodate applicants in emergency locations to a dedicated accommodation centre as quickly as possible.

To meet the associated increase in demand for accommodation, my Department has initiated two processes to source additional accommodation.

Firstly, we have sought expressions of interest from parties who would be interested in providing accommodation and related services to people in the international protection process. Premises assessed as suitable under this process may be offered a short-term contract (usually one year).

Secondly, we have run procurement competitions through the Government’s procurement portal, Etenders, on a regional basis throughout the country to procure accommodation. These contracts will be longer term with a minimum contract duration of 2 years on offer and a maximum contract duration of 4 years.

My Department is committed to reducing the length of time applicants spend in the international protection process, and has introduced a number of measures aimed at achieving this.

The International Protection Act, 2015, introduced the single procedure process for the determination of protection applications. The aim of the single procedure process is to help reduce waiting times significantly by considering all elements of a person’s protection claim together, rather than sequentially.

In addition, a number of other measures have and are being taken including increases in staffing levels at the International Protection Office (IPO) and a new streamlined system for processing Safe Country of Origin (SCO) cases.

An applicant who applies for international protection today can expect to receive a first instance recommendation/decision within approximately 15 months, provided no complications arise. Prioritised cases are being processed in just under 9 months. Prioritised applications include those from countries such as Syria and Eritrea and from especially vulnerable groups of applicants, such as unaccompanied minors. My Department is working hard to try to achieve target of 9 month in the vast majority of cases.

I can also say that my Department has, in conjunction with a number of charities and NGOs who were awarded funding for projects, assisted a total of 675 people to transit from state provided accommodation to permanent homes in the community. This figure relates to the period from the beginning of the year to the end of October.

My Department also secured an additional €1m in Budget 2020 for Immigration Service Delivery which includes provision for additional staffing to fast-track applications thus reducing pressure on Direct Provision.
**Court Accommodation Provision**

14. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the OPW has carried out a recent assessment of Carndonagh courthouse, Carndonagh, County Donegal; if issues have been identified; his plans to remedy same; the timeframe involved; if the OPW will work with the Courts Service to ensure a temporary venue is made available in Carndonagh and that court sittings continue to be held in Carndonagh; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47796/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts, including the provision of accommodation for court sittings, is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and been advised by the Courts Service that immediate health and safety issues were identified by the Office of Public Works following an inspection of Carndonagh Courthouse. Unfortunately, court hearings could not continue at the courthouse in the short term.

The Courts Service is undertaking condition surveys of approximately 65 courthouses nationwide. In view of the circumstances in Carndonagh, priority has been given to this courthouse and I understand that the survey was carried out on the 30th October 2019. However, the Courts Service await the structural report from this review before any decision can be made on works to Carndonagh Courthouse.

I understand the sitting of Carndonagh District Court which sits once per month has been transferred to the nearest Courthouse, Buncrana Courthouse, just under 20 kilometres distance from Carndonagh. Carndonagh District Court will continue to sit in Buncrana Courthouse until the review is complete.

**Cyberbullying Issues**

15. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review harassment laws here taking into consideration the impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of a person; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47527/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I appreciate the deeply harmful effects which cyberbullying can have on persons who experience that or other harmful online behaviours. These experiences can be devastating for those concerned.

In that context, I welcome the successful conviction last week in the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court of a man for a sustained campaign of harassment conducted against a number of female journalists and writers. It is important to see successful use of the criminal law in such cases, as I am conscious of the potential for a chilling effect in relation to these matters, including in particular for women and female candidates for election.

A whole-of-government response is appropriate to addressing these complex issues. As the Deputy may be aware, the Government’s Action Plan for Online Safety 2018 - 2019 identifies a range of positive actions to address online safety issues, including cyber-bullying. There is a general consensus that the appropriate response to addressing such online issues is one that encompasses educational and awareness raising campaigns, as well as effective actions and policies on the part of internet companies.
In relation to harassment laws specifically, the Deputy may be aware that the Law Reform Commission published a report on Harmful Communications and Digital Safety in 2016 which recommended a number of legislative changes in order to deal more effectively with the negative aspects of increased use of online communications.

Many of the recommendations outlined in this report were provided for in a Private Members Bill sponsored by Deputy Brendan Howlin - the Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Bill 2017. To ensure that legislation in this area can be enacted as swiftly as possible, I and Government as a whole agreed to adopt and amend that Bill.

Government in May of this year approved the approach to be taken in that regard, and my Department is now engaging closely with the Office of the Parliamentary Council to draft amendments to the Bill, to ensure consistency in its provisions and that the law in this area is robust and effective.

These amendments will result in a Bill which will modernise the laws in relation to sending threatening or abuse messages, introduce a distinct offence of stalking and provide for two offences to deal with non-consensual recording and distribution of intimate images. The amendments will also remove some of the civil provisions in the Bill that may be more appropriately dealt with through proposals to establish the Office of the Digital Safety Commissioner, currently being examined by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

It is my intention that these amendments will be completed and introduced at Committee Stage in the Dáil at the earliest possible opportunity.

Finally and as the Deputy will be aware, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality has been examining these issues, having invited written submissions from stakeholders and subsequently held public hearings throughout October on the issues of online harassment, harmful communications and related offences. I look forward to receiving the Committee’s report on this matter and will examine it closely as we continue to progress our legislative proposals in this field.

**Departmental Reviews**

16. **Deputy Ruth Coppinger** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the report by a person (details supplied) into the conduct of rape and sexual assault trials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47827/19]

17. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the review of the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences due in December 2018 will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47763/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality(Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 16 and 17 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, Tom O’ Malley, Senior Lecturer in Law at the National University of Ireland, Galway and member of the Law Reform Commission, is chairing the working group carrying out this review. He is joined by representatives of the Garda Síochána, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Probation Service, the Courts Service and my own Department.

The review is examining the adequacy of measures available to protect vulnerable witnesses
during the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences, to help ensure the best quality evidence is available to the jury in making their decision, while respecting the dignity of the victim and their right not to be re-victimised by the investigation or trial process itself.

It will examine the entire legal process around sexual offences, from the initial reporting of an offence through to the end of any court proceedings. The review is particularly concerned with the treatment of complainants and vulnerable witnesses throughout this process. This Government remains committed to tackling the scourge of sexual violence, in all its forms and to supporting victims. Examining the experiences of victims is vital to that aim.

The terms of reference encompass a broad range of issues and I understand that the working group has received a large number of submissions. It is important that these complex and sensitive issues are considered carefully and I understand that the review is at an advanced stage and is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

While the outcome cannot be pre-empted, I look forward to its recommendations. Any such recommendations will be given careful consideration alongside the recent work of the Law Reform Commission on knowledge and belief concerning consent in rape law which I have welcomed. My overall goal in this exercise will be to provide for implementation of any recommendations which may be of assistance in supporting victims and vulnerable witnesses, while of course respecting the necessary fairness and balance inherent in our criminal justice system.

*Question No. 18 answered with Question No. 11.*

**Law Reform Commission Reports**

19. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will respond to the call from the Law Reform Commission for a change in the way consent is considered in rape trials; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47613/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I very much welcome the publication of the Law Reform Commission’s Report on knowledge and belief concerning consent in rape law. As the Deputy may recall, the report was prepared by the Commission in response to a reference from the then Attorney General, on behalf of the Government.

The report is a thorough and expert examination of this complex issue and I can assure the Deputy that my Department is closely examining its recommendations with a view to bringing forward amending legislation.

It is important to understand the context of the report.

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017 has been widely recognised as a landmark piece of legislation dealing with consent and exploitation in sexual activity. For the first time, it set out in statute what consent actually means - a free and voluntary agreement between people to engage in sexual activity.

The 2017 Act also set out a non-exhaustive list of circumstances where consent is impossible, such as when a person is asleep or unconscious; if they are being held captive; if they cannot communicate their agreement due to physical inability or disability; if they are mistaken or misled about who the other person is, or what the activity is; or for example if they are so drunk or intoxicated that they are in no position to consider the activity and make up their mind.

In order for a jury to find a person guilty of rape, three things are necessary.
1. Sexual intercourse must have taken place;
2. the person must not have consented; and
3. the accused person must either have known that person didn’t consent, or been reckless as to whether they consented or not.

During the Oireachtas debate on the Bill, the issue of whether a person’s belief in consent must be reasonably held was discussed in some detail. As the law stands, the mental element of the offence of rape is not present if the accused honestly believed consent was given, so long as that belief was genuine, no matter how unreasonable or irrational. As a result, a person who held a genuine but completely unreasonable belief that the other person consented would not be found guilty of rape.

It was on foot of those debates that the Attorney General and my predecessor as Minister discussed the matter and agreed to refer it to the Law Reform Commission, for detailed consideration.

As the Deputy is aware, the Commission’s recently published Report recommends a change in the law to state that the belief of the accused person in consent must be reasonably held. It also touches on some of the surrounding matters which are being examined elsewhere, such as rape myths and stereotypes, obstacles to prosecution in rape cases, the treatment of victims in rape cases and other related matters.

The timing of the Commission’s report is particularly welcome, given that the review of protections for vulnerable witness in the investigation and prosecution of sexual offences, chaired by an expert barrister Tom O’Malley, is due to be completed by the end of this year.

I intend to consider these two sets of recommendations in tandem and I therefore have asked my officials to examine the Law Reform Commission’s Report in detail with a view to bringing forward proposals to implement its recommendations. Any recommendations which may arise out from the O’Malley review group and which may be of assistance in supporting victims and vulnerable witnesses will feed into this process, while of course maintaining the necessary fairness and balance inherent in our criminal justice system.

Succession Act

20. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent of proposed changes in the law to protect the integrity of wills and prevent unscrupulous third parties from inveigling themselves into the confidence of vulnerable persons for their own benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47783/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The position is that Part VII of the Succession Act 1965 sets out a number of legal requirements for the making of a valid will:

- It must be in writing;
- The testator must be over 18 years of age (the testator may be under 18 if he or she is or has been married);
- The testator must be of sound mind;
- The testator must sign or mark the will in the presence of two witnesses;
- The two witnesses must sign the will in the testator’s presence;
- The witnesses cannot be beneficiaries of the will;
- The witnesses must see the testator sign the will;
- The signature of the testator must be at the end of the will.

These statutory provisions, as interpreted by the superior courts in relevant case law, provide robust safeguards in relation to the validity of wills.

It is, of course, possible for a person to commence legal proceedings challenging a will on the grounds of either the diminished capacity of the testator to make a valid will, or the testator’s ability to make decisions freely in disposing of their property by will.

When determining whether or not a testator had the capacity to make a will, courts will generally consider whether they understood the nature of the act of making the will and its effect, and whether the testator understood the extent of the property of which they were disposing.

Where undue influence is alleged, the law places the burden of proving such undue influence on the person alleging it. In order to succeed, the court must be satisfied that:

(a) The person alleged to exert the influence had the power or opportunity to do so;
(b) Undue influence was in fact exerted; and
(c) The will was the product of that influence.

While I have no current plans to amend legislation in this area, the operation of the relevant legislation is kept under review by my Department.

Garda Data

21. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí in each of the Cork divisions; the number of retirements over the past year; the number of new trainees assigned to each Cork division in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47802/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** It is important to be clear that under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner has responsibility for management of An Garda Síochána and for the allocation and efficient use of Garda resources. This includes responsibility for personnel matters and the distribution of personnel across the various Garda Divisions. As Minister I have no direct role in these matters. I understand however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.

The information requested by the Deputy in respect of the number of Gardaí and Probationers allocated to each of the Cork divisions is available on my Department’s website and is updated every month with the latest data provided by An Garda Síochána. I have reviewed the details of the Cork workforce and I would point out that the number of Garda members and staff in all of the Cork Divisions has increased over recent years.

This Government is committed to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. We currently have approximately 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, sup-
ported by over 2,900 Garda staff. And as part of the Government’s plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff.

Since the reopening of the Garda College in 2014, approximately 2,800 probationers have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties nationwide. Another 200 Gardaí are due to attest at the end of this month. Of these probationers, 138 have been assigned to the Cork Divisions.

As of 31 October 2019, which is the most recent data available, there are 700 members in Cork city Division, 335 in Cork North and 304 in Cork West. Taking account of retirements and departures, there are now 114 additional Gardaí across the Cork Divisions since the end of 2015, representing an overall 9% increase in Garda members across all the Cork Divisions since the end of 2015.

These Garda members are supported by 160 Garda Staff, which represents a 50% increase in the Cork area since 2015. This increase in Garda staff levels supports the redeployment of Gardaí from administrative to operational policing duties, where their training and expertise can be used to best effect.

With regard to retirements, I am advised by the Commissioner that projected departures are kept under continuous review and that the level of recruitment is adjusted as necessary in order to maintain the desired strength.

As the Deputy may be aware, the retirement of members of An Garda Síochána is governed by law, which sets the mandatory retirement age for all members at 60 years of age. Members of An Garda Síochána who joined prior to 1 April 2004 may retire on full pension at 50 years of age once they have served at least 30 years and those who joined on or after 1 April 2004 may retire on full pension at 55 years of age with 30 years service. Gardaí have the option of continuing to serve until they reach 60, subject to the Garda Commissioner being satisfied that they are fully competent and available to undertake their duties.

I am informed that there have been a total of 39 retirements in the Cork Divisions during 2018 and 2019. The following table sets out the number of members who retired on a Voluntary, Compulsory or a Cost Neutral Early Retirement basis in each Cork Division in 2018 and 2019, as provided to me by the Garda authorities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cork City</th>
<th>Cork North</th>
<th>Cork West</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (as of 15 November)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Direct Provision System**

22. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the tender process for a direct provision centre in the western region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47765/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**
As the Deputy will be aware, the State has a legal obligation to offer accommodation, food and a range of other services (including utilities, healthcare etc.) and allowances to any person who claims a right to international protection in Ireland while their legal claim is being examined.
The number of applications has been steadily increasing (up 60% since the start of the year). To meet the associated increase in demand for accommodation, my Department has initiated two processes to source additional accommodation.

Firstly, we have sought expressions of interest from parties who would be interested in providing accommodation and related services to people in the international protection process. Premises assessed as suitable under this process may be offered a short-term contract (usually one year) which will help to meet demand while the regional tender process is rolled out nationally.

Secondly, we have run procurement competitions through the Government’s procurement portal, Etenders, on a regional basis throughout the country to procure accommodation. These contracts will be longer term with a minimum contract duration of 2 years on offer and a maximum contract duration of 4 years.

It is open to accommodation providers to offer premises both through the expressions of interest process or the tender process.

An evaluation of offers received is now underway. It is anticipated that the evaluation process for the Western region will now conclude by mid December 2019. For the purposes of the tender, the Western region covers Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. Until the evaluation is complete, the Deputy will appreciate that I cannot comment on the possible location of any new centres. When the evaluation and commercially sensitive aspects of the process are completed, my Department will begin engagement with local communities and their political representatives.

My Department currently has a network of 39 accommodation centres across 18 counties and there is positive engagement between residents and local communities in all cases including through the Friends of the Centre Groups. These Groups promote integration across the communities and are a valuable support to residents and to centre managers and staff.

Garda Resources

23. Deputy Niamh Smyth asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the specific investment his Department has made in the Garda fleet and personnel in the Cavan-Monaghan Garda district in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47586/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached record levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion. I am also pleased to have secured an overall increase of €122 million to increase An Garda Síochána’s budget for 2020 to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for 2020.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána, including a total of €46 million for investment in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. A total of €10 million capital funding was made for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2019 and I understand from the Garda authorities that this is being used for purchase and fit-out of over 300 new vehicles this year. €9 million capital funding has been allocated for the Garda fleet for 2020. This continuing investment is intended to ensure that An Garda Síochána has a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose fleet and that Gardaí can be mobile, visible and responsive on the roads and in the community to prevent and tackle crime.

In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner is responsible for managing the administration and business of An Garda Síochána. The Com-
missioner is also responsible for the efficient use of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of Garda vehicles and Garda personnel among the various Garda divisions. As Minister, I have no role in these matters. I am assured, however, that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities so as to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that as at 31 October 2019, there are 59 vehicles in the Cavan-Monaghan Garda Division. It is important to note however that the Garda fleet is made up of vehicles in a range of different categories.

I very much welcome the Garda Commissioner’s recent decision to establish a new Armed Support Unit based in Cavan. As at 31 October 2019, there are 372 Garda members assigned to the Cavan-Monaghan Division. These members are supported in their role by 48 Garda staff and 8 Garda reserves. This is an increase from 346 Garda members at the end of 2018 and from 38 Garda staff at the end of 2018. These figures are available at my Department’s website.

**Immigrant Investor Programme Data**

24. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 145 of 8 October 2019, the number of applications received, granted and refused, respectively, for labour market access permission; the number in employment; of those; the number residing in direct provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47762/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):**
The European Communities (Reception Conditions) Regulations 2018 came into effect from 30 June 2018. The Regulations included access to the labour market for eligible international protection applicants. The Regulations provide access to both employment and to self-employment.

I can inform the Deputy that as of the 14 November 2019, a total of 5,027 applications for access to the labour market were received by my Department. 1,452 applications were refused, while 3,438 applications for a labour market access permission have been granted.

I can inform the Deputy that, based on the returned declaration forms received to date, a total of 1,708 applicants have indicated they have commenced employment or self-employment, of which 1,208 are living in accommodation provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS).

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 my Department being notified of same.

**Organised Crime**

25. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if additional measures will be implemented on a cross-Border basis to tackle criminality following the 17th Annual Cross Border Conference on Organised Crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47760/19]
36. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the additional measures that will be implemented on a cross-Border basis following the 17th Annual Cross Border Conference on Organised Crime in terms of crime investigation and prevention which is of critical importance in the Border region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47759/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 25 and 36 together.

Tackling cross-border crime is a high priority for this Government, the Gardaí and our other law enforcement authorities.

Policing in the border region has always presented particular challenges that necessitate a collaborative approach to policing between law enforcement agencies north and south of the border. There is close ongoing cooperation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI and other law enforcement agencies who all work closely together on a broad range of policing responsibilities.

As I have outlined in the Houses previously, the existing multi-agency cooperative arrangements in place to tackle cross-border crime are already quite structured and successful.

The Deputy will be aware that in November 2015 the British and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a series of measures in the *Fresh Start* agreement, as part of a concerted and enhanced effort to tackle organised and cross-jurisdictional crime. These measures included the creation of the Joint Agency Task Force which is led by senior officers from An Garda Síochána, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Revenue Commissioners and UK Revenue and Customs. A number of other relevant bodies, including the National Crime Agency and the Criminal Assets Bureau are also closely involved.

The objective of the Task Force is to build on existing law enforcement frameworks and to increase the collective effectiveness of operational actions. In this format, the senior management level of the two police services provide strong strategic direction and oversight to frontline operational activities.

The Task Force has had some notable success in tackling cross-border criminal activity across a range of crime areas. These include not just traditional smuggling activities, but also rural and farm crimes, organised burglary and drug crime.

The regrettable absence of an Executive in Northern Ireland means that the work of the Task Force is less visible than it might have been. It was designed to report to Justice Ministers north and south and it is my hope that the restoration of power sharing in Northern Ireland will allow the Task Force to reach its full potential.

The multi-agency nature of the Task Force is critical to its success. It is a strong example of the extensive North-South cooperation between the police, customs services and other law enforcement agencies involved in tackling crime and enhancing the safety of all communities on both sides of the border. The Task Force complements both the ongoing formal and informal co-operation between AGS and PSNI.

The Deputy may also be interested to note that the collaboration between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI was recently extended with establishment of the first ever AGS-PSNI Joint Investigation Team involving Eurojust. This is a very significant and positive development will further strengthen the already close and positive cooperation between police services on the island of Ireland.

Finally, I would assure the Deputy that An Garda Síochána has the full support of the Gov-
ernment in its ongoing work in addressing cross-border criminality and we are providing record resources to enable it to perform this critical role. The Northern region continues to benefit from the accelerated recruitment to An Garda Síochána as part of the Government’s plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, supported by the unprecedented level of Government funding to the organisation.

Garda strength in the Northern Region has increased to approximately 1,500, an increase of 150 Gardaí since the end of 2017. These Gardaí are supported by approximately 160 Garda staff in the region, which represents an increase of almost 35% over the past 3 years, with the result that additional Gardaí can be redeployed from administrative to operational policing duties where their training and policing expertise can be used to best effect.

**Legislative Programme**


**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** Addressing the gender pay gap is an important element in the Programme for a Partnership Government and is included as a key commitment in the Government’s National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020.

The Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2019 was published on 8 April 2019 and the Bill completed Dáil Committee Stage in June. Report Stage is currently awaited.

The aim of the Bill is to provide transparency on the gender pay gap. The Bill provides for the making of regulations requiring employers to publish gender pay gap information. The regulations will initially apply to firms with 250 or more employees but, over the next few years, this would be reduced to 50 employees. Information on differences in bonus pay will be among the data, which must be published. The regulations will apply to the public sector as well as the private sector, subject to the employment thresholds.

It is intended that mandatory reporting will incentivise employers to take measures to address the issue insofar as they can.

Measures such as those included in the Bill have been taken in a number of other countries and, indeed, EU member states were encouraged to take such measures in an EU Commission Recommendation of 2014.

The other gender pay gap measures in the National Strategy for Women and Girls include initiating dialogue between union and employer stakeholders on the matter, increasing understanding of the gender pay gap and its causes and developing practical tools to assist employers to calculate the pay gap within their organisations.

Tackling this issue is good for equality and it also makes good business sense, as firms that can report a low or non-existent gender pay gap will have an advantage in recruiting future employees. Initiatives to address the gender pay gap can also be expected to have a positive impact on disparities in income for women across and after their working lives.

**Bail Law**

27. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to
which further consideration has been given to further reform the bail laws with particular reference to the need to tackle organised crime, deal with recidivism and protect the general public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47782/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, the Criminal Justice Act 2017 made a number of changes to the bail laws. Under the Act, the court has the power to refuse bail where there are reasonable grounds to believe the person is likely to commit a serious offence. In assessing this likelihood, the court must take into account the nature and seriousness of the offence, the accused person’s previous offending and may also take into account the danger he or she poses to the public if bail is granted.

The new law also strengthened Garda powers to deal with breaches of bail providing a power of arrest without warrant in certain circumstances, and made provisions to increase the use of curfews and to facilitate the introduction of electronic tagging for those on bail in certain circumstances.

While I am open to revisiting the law if the changes introduced in 2017 are shown to be insufficient, I think the Deputy will agree that it would be premature to do so at present. It is important to await the evidence of the impact of this legislation and take the time to evaluate the effect of these new provisions before further changes in the law can be considered.

**Sexual Offences Data**

28. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to reform the monitoring of sex offenders; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47457/19]

39. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to tag sex offenders following their release from prison; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47458/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 and 39 together.

I understand the concern which communities can have in relation to the issue of rehabilitation of sex offenders and in relation to measures to protect public safety.

First it is important to note that there are already provisions in existing law in relation to the management of sex offenders after they have been released from prison.

The Sex Offenders Act 2001 provides that a Court can impose conditions on a convicted sex offender as part of their post-release supervision. Further, where An Garda Síochána believe that a convicted offender poses a serious risk to the public, it can apply to the courts for a Sex Offender Order under s.16 of the 2001 Act. A Sex Offender Order can prohibit the offender from doing anything the Court considers necessary, in order to ensure that the public is protected from serious harm.

In terms of legislative reform, I can confirm that the General Scheme of the Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill was developed by my Department following a comprehensive review of current law and administrative practice. The General Scheme was approved by Government in June 2018 and it is available on my Department’s website.

The Bill is currently with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting. My officials and that Office are working together to finalise the draft with a view to publication of the Bill.
The purpose of the Bill is to enhance current systems for assessment and management of convicted sex offenders and to put those systems on a statutory footing. While the drafting process is not yet complete, the main provisions are expected to include:

- Stricter notification requirements including requiring offenders to notify Gardai of their address upon release from custody, or any subsequent change of address, within 3 days as opposed to the existing 7 days.

- Provision to allow for fingerprinting and photographing the offender, where necessary to confirm their identity.

- Enhanced supervision of high-risk offenders, including, in limited circumstances, the electronic monitoring of offenders subject to post-release supervision orders.

- The placing on a legislative footing of assessment teams to assess and manage the risk posed by sex offenders.

- Provisions whereby a court can prohibit a sex offender from working with children.

- Provision for a statutory basis for the necessary disclosure of information relating to a high-risk offender on the ‘sex offenders register’. The information in relation to an offender which may be disclosed include the name, address and threat posed by the offender. It is intended that the disclosure would only be made to the minimum number of people necessary to avert a serious risk to safety.

**Courts Service Data**

29. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons convicted for possession of drugs in 2018 with a value in excess of €13,000; the number that received sentences of less than one, one to three, three to five, five to ten and more than ten years respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47676/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service, which is independent in exercising its functions, which includes the provision of information on the courts system. The judiciary are of course independent in the exercise of their function.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has provided the following breakdown of sentences imposed in 2018 in relation to prosecutions under Section 15A of the Misuse of Drugs Act:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prison Sentence</th>
<th>Number of people convicted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1 year and 3 years</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 3 years up to 5 years</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5 years up to 10 years</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that this data refers to the main sentence imposed and does not take account of the parts of the sentences which may have been suspended by the Court.
30. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the role of security forces in combating right-wing extremism here in view of recent incidences of violence and anti-immigrant sentiment in relation to the issue of direct provision here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45773/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** It is long recognised that violent extremism, whatever the motivation, is a threat to democracy. Ireland, along with its European partners, is working to ensure that the developing threat of right-wing extremism remains under continuous review at European level. Most recently I, along with my EU colleagues, met in the Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial Council formation to have a policy discussion on right-wing violent extremism and terrorism. In particular, we discussed the rise in radical propaganda messages which have contributed to a rise of the risks associated with right-wing extremism.

While it is not the practice to comment in detail on security matters, I can inform the Deputy that the security services here in Ireland are vigilant in this regard. The threat level, including any emerging threats, is kept under constant review by An Garda Síochána in consultation with the Defence Forces, utilising all of the expertise available and working continually with their EU and international counterparts to identify and manage threats.

As the Deputy will also be aware, last month the Garda Commissioner and Minister of State David Stanton launched the new Garda Síochána Diversity and Integration Strategy, 2019 – 2021. The three year programme has a significant focus on enhancing the identification, reporting, investigation and prosecution of hate crimes. This Strategy recognises the existing and emerging diverse composition of our communities, and aims to protect all minorities and diverse groups in society and sets out a working definition of hate crime in line with best international practice and the McPherson “perception based test”. My Department is currently engaged in a wide-ranging public consultation on the incitement to hatred legislation with a view to bringing forward amendments in the context of hate crime legislation early next year.

A new Anti-Racism Committee will also shortly be established, with a mandate to examine what needs to be done by public sector bodies as well as the wider community to challenge racism.

In relation to direct provision, the reception system for international protection applicants operates under a whole-of-Government approach with a view to ensuring the best outcomes for residents as well as for local communities. It is not just a question of providing accommodation for vulnerable people. It is a suite of services provided by a number of Government Departments including Health; Education and Skills; and Employment Affairs and Social Protection. There has been much commentary in recent weeks about the system. There has been debate too, about the location of centres, which I welcome. However, I would appeal for it to be thoughtful, respectful and factual. As I mentioned in my statement to this House last Wednesday night, far-right anti-immigrant activists are paying close attention, seeking out opportunities to incite fear and hatred – as far-right groups have done throughout history. It is incumbent on all those of us in public life to demonstrate real support for asylum seekers and refugees and for the local communities who welcome them.

**Refugee Resettlement Programme**

31. **Deputy Catherine Connolly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the
commitment to admit 4,000 persons under the relocation and resettlement programmes will be met; the number of persons admitted to date; the number being accommodated in emergency accommodation and in emergency reception and orientation centres by length of stay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47761/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):
The Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was established by Government Decision of September 2015 as a key part of Ireland’s response to the global humanitarian migration crisis. It committed Ireland to accept 4,000 persons under various strands, including the EU Relocation Mechanism and UNHCR Resettlement Programme.

As of 19 November 2019, progress across the various strands of the IRPP was as follows:

- Under the EU Relocation strand, 1,022 people were relocated to Ireland
- Under UNHCR-led Refugee Resettlement strand, a commitment was made to resettle 1,985 people, of which 1,625 resettlements have been completed
- Under the IRPP Humanitarian Admission Programme 2018/19 (IHAP), a commitment was made to admit 740 family members of refugees, of which 159 people have arrived in Ireland; and;
- Under other mechanisms (including Search and Rescue Missions, Unaccompanied Minors from Greece, Calais Special Project), a commitment was made to admit 253 people, of which 102 have arrived.

The EU Relocation strand is now complete. On the 19 November 2019, there were a further 178 arrivals under the UNHCR-led Refugee Resettlement Strand which is due to be complete by end 2019. There will be some delay in the completion of the IHAP strand, however, as those granted permission to travel to Ireland make their own arrangements for travel, the exact timing of which is not known to this Department.

Refugee and asylum seekers arriving in Ireland under the resettlement and relocation strands of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) are initially accommodated in Emergency Reception and Accommodation Centres (EROCs).

Two EROCs are currently in operation:
- The Abbeyfield Hotel, Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon
- The Clonea Strand Hotel, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford

In addition, there are dedicated EROC places within the Mosney Accommodation Centre, due to its particular suitability for families. The table below sets out the current numbers and the average length of stay for each of the centres as of 14 November 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EROC</th>
<th>Current Occupancy</th>
<th>Avg. Length of Stay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abbeyfield Hotel EROC Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>134 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clonea Strand Hotel EROC Dungarvan, Co. Waterford</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>185 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosney EROC Julianstown, Co. Meath</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>332 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>185 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 2,647 people who have arrived to date under the resettlement and relocation strands
of the IRPP, more than 80% have been resettled in communities across Ireland.

Garda Operations

32. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the new operational model of An Garda Síochána; the breakdown of the divisional strength nationally; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47529/19]

    **Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I warmly welcome the introduction of the new Operating Model of An Garda Síochána. This model has long been recommended by independent policing specialists, including the Garda Síochána Inspectorate and in the Report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI). Rollout of this model meets a key commitment in A Policing Service for the Future, the four-year implementation plan giving effect to the recommendations of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland.

    I understand from the Commissioner that the aim of the Model is to reduce bureaucracy and increase the numbers of frontline Gardaí, and in this way improve policing services provided to communities nationwide. The new model is also expected to increase community engagement and expand access to a wider range of specialist services across the country.

    I am informed by the Commissioner a number of considerations were taken into account in developing the new model and the restructuring of Divisions, including population, geography, projected growth, crime trends and workload across a range of work streams.

    While new to Ireland, this model is the norm in other countries. It will reduce bureaucracy and shift real decision-making power from Garda Headquarters to the Chief Superintendents, closer to the communities they serve.

    I am informed that Divisions will be typically made up of approximately 600 to 800 personnel. This will ensure each Division has the resources and skills to deliver a wider range of community policing and specialist services based on the demand in their area. I understand that under this model, each Division will consist of the following hubs:

    - Community Engagement
    - Crime
    - Performance Assurance
    - Business Services.

    I understand that the new model will be implemented on a phased basis throughout 2020. The first five Divisions where the new Model will be implemented, are Galway, Cork City, Dublin South Central, Meath/Westmeath and Limerick.

    In terms of Garda resources nationwide, I would point out that An Garda Síochána is a growing organisation – there are now approximately 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,900 Garda staff and 470 Garda Reserves.

    I am confident that this ongoing investment in Garda resources together with the ongoing reform process will result in an improved policing service for all communities, urban and rural, now and into the future.
Detailed information on the Garda workforce is available on my Department’s website at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce

For more general information on Garda facts and figures, the Deputy may also wish to see the information on the link below: http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures.

Prison Accommodation

33. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he is taking to end overcrowding in prisons here. [47530/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy may be aware, prison governors are required by law to accept all prisoners into their custody who have been committed to prison by the Courts. Therefore, the Irish Prison Service has no control over the numbers committed to custody at any given time.

The number of spaces available on a given day can be less than the capacity figure as cells may be unavailable for different reasons such as repairs and maintenance. Furthermore, where local management assess a prisoner as being unsuited to share a cell for reasons of vulnerability or propensity to violence, a cell designated as being operationally suitable for two prisoners may, temporarily, house only one prisoner.

Where the number of prisoners exceeds the maximum capacity in any prison, the Irish Prison Service makes every effort to deal with this through a combination of inter-prison transfers to manage the available space and structured Temporary Release. Decisions in relation to temporary release are considered on a case by case basis and the safety of the public is paramount when those decisions are made.

My Department is working closely with the Irish Prison Service to ensure a safe working environment for staff and the safety and security of prisoners in our custody, and a number of short and medium term steps to address the issue of increasing prison numbers.

I am advised that plans are advanced for the re-opening of accommodation not currently being used within the system, including the re-opening of the Training Unit which will provide approximately an additional 96 spaces.

In addition, an audit of existing accommodation is underway, in order to identify where additional spaces can be brought on stream with the potential to provide in excess of an additional 100 spaces. A major project is also underway in Limerick for the construction of a female prison, as well as a new wing to Limerick male prison. Together, this will provide 158 new spaces.

I can further advise the Deputy that there has also been progress in providing alternatives to custody, including the Criminal Justice (Community Service) (Amendment) Act 2011, which requires a sentencing judge to consider the imposition of community service where a custodial sentence of 12 months or less is being considered. The Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014 also provides a number of alternative sanctions for the courts to reduce the need to commit anyone to prison for the non-payment of fines.

Garda Stations

34. **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the plans of
the OPW for new builds for Garda Stations in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47801/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Deputy will appreciate that the Office of Public Works (OPW) has responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation. As a result, all works to the Garda estate involve close cooperation between the OPW and the Garda authorities.

Major investment is being made in the Garda estate, to provide fit-for-purpose facilities for Garda members and staff, as well as the public interacting with them. This is a significant undertaking, as there are over 560 stations nationwide. The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached unprecedented levels, with an allocation of €1.76 billion for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to €92 million this year. These resources are being provided in support of the Government’s commitment to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and deter crime.

The Garda Building and Refurbishment Programme 2016-2021 is based on agreed Garda priorities. It continues to benefit over 30 locations around the country and is underpinned by significant Exchequer funding across the Garda and OPW Votes. In addition, other major ongoing works to the Garda estate include the development of a new facility at Military Road and the major refurbishment of Fitzgibbon Street station as well as the Pilot Garda station reopening project.

As the Deputy will be aware, a Public Private Partnership (PPP) arrangement is included in the Building and Refurbishment Programme is intended to deliver new stations in Clonmel, Sligo and Macroom. The OPW has agreed to provide its expert services in the design of the three stations in question. Macroom is the only new build currently planned for County Cork.

PPP projects are progressed under the auspices of the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA). An Garda Síochána, the OPW, the NDFA and my own Department are working closely together to progress this project.

It is not possible to say at this stage when the stations will be completed. The establishment of PPP projects can be complex and it is vital to get the projects right at the planning and design stage. Pending delivery of the new stations, I am informed that Garda management and the OPW have been working to improve conditions and facilities at the existing stations in Macroom, Sligo and Clonmel.

Insurance Fraud

35. Deputy Brian Stanley asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to establish a Garda insurance fraud unit to tackle insurance fraud. [46266/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for management of An Garda Síochána and for the allocation of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the allocation of resources and deployment of personnel, as well as organisational matters, including the nature and number of Garda units and their remit.

I am informed that the Commissioner is of the view that a Divisional focus on insurance fraud is preferable to the establishment of a centralised investigation unit. This approach is aligned with the Divisional-focused Garda model.
The Deputy will be aware that the Cost of Insurance Working Group (CIWG) specifically called for An Garda Síochána to explore the potential for further cooperation between it and the insurance sector in relation to insurance fraud investigation. An industry-funded Garda insurance fraud unit was one option considered in this regard. While the Commissioner has indicated that he does not support industry funding of Garda units, he is open to considering other industry-funded proposals to combat insurance fraud.

It is the intention of the Commissioner that the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) will guide Divisions and provide training in the investigation of insurance fraud. Over a number of years, the GNECB and the Garda Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB) have delivered training courses to Garda members engaged in economic crime-related investigations, across all Garda divisions.

Since 2015, in conjunction with the Garda Síochána Training College and University College Dublin (UCD), GNECB and GNCCB have offered an accredited course to over 40 members a year, drawn from all Garda Divisions, as well as from specialist units engaged in the investigation of economic crime. Representatives from the private sector, including the insurance industry are invited to contribute to the course, thereby providing specialist insight into relevant insurance sector-related topics. On completion of training, successful candidates are awarded a Post Graduate Certificate in Fraud and E-Crime Investigation from UCD.

More recently, each Garda Síochána Division has been requested to provide information regarding the extent of insurance-related fraud. This information is being examined at the GNECB and will be utilised to determine investigative activity, which will be undertaken under Operation Coatee.

Operation Coatee was launched in April 2019, its focus being the prevention of insurance-related fraud and associated crimes on a coordinated basis throughout Ireland. In circumstances where insurance fraud has already occurred, Operation Coatee is designed to maximise the prospect of identifying suspected culprits, and, where possible and appropriate, to initiate criminal proceedings.

I understand that a ‘day of action’ was undertaken at the commencement of Operation Coatee on 24 April 2019. The Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) engaged in operational activity associated with an investigation relating to over 20 insurance claims which have been made and which, in some cases, have already involved payment being made to claimants. Arising from the ‘day of action’, 6 high-value cars and jewellery with a value in excess of €300,000 were seized, along with a substantial amount of documentation and financial records. The evidence seized continues to be analysed. I am informed that on 15 October, Gardaí arrested 5 individuals by way of follow-up to searches conducted on 24 April and that investigations are ongoing.

Question No. 36 answered with Question No. 25.

Garda Deployment

37. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to reports that only two gardaí were on patrol in Cork city in March 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47835/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): The Garda Commissioner has responsibility for managing An Garda Síochána and for the allocation of Garda resources, in light of identified operational demands. This includes responsibility for the manner in which
Gardaí are deployed. As Minister I have no direct role in that matters. I understand however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.

As the Deputy will be aware, a record €1.76 billion was allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to €92 million this year. I am pleased to have secured an overall increase of €122 million to increase An Garda Síochána’s budget for 2020 to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for next year.

This investment is supporting the sustained growth of the organisation. We currently have approximately 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,900 Garda staff.

And as part of the Government’s plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line.

Since the reopening of the Garda Training College in 2014, approximately 2,800 new Garda members have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties in communities throughout the country. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest next week.

I am aware of the media reports referred to by the Deputy, to the effect that on a particular date in March, only 2 Gardaí were available to patrol. I can understand the concern that these reports may have caused to the Deputy, and to the people of the area. I am pleased to confirm to the Deputy that I have raised this matter with the Garda authorities and I am informed that the media reports are incorrect. I have been assured that on the night in question, significantly more than 2 Gardaí were on duty and available to patrol the city.

In relation to Garda resources in Cork City Division more generally, I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that as of the end of October 2019, there are 700 Gardaí assigned to the Cork City Division, supported by 95 Garda staff. Additionally, they are currently supported by 33 Garda Reserve.

The additional 49 Gardaí assigned to the Cork City Division since the end of 2015, represents an increase of 7.5%. The increase in Garda staff numbers from 59 to 95 (equivalent to an increase of 61%) over the same period means that as well as new Gardaí assigned to the Division, additional Gardaí can be redeployed from administrative to operational policing duties, where their training and policing expertise can be used to best effect.

Taken together, it can be expected that the increase in both Garda members and staff numbers represents a real increase in operational policing hours within the Cork City Division. Nationally, over 500 Garda Members have been redeployed to frontline visible policing.

In addition, the next intake of probationer Gardaí will be attested on 29th November, 2019 and transfer to their training stations on 2nd December, 2019. I have been informed that it is the intention of the Commissioner to allocate eight probationer Gardaí to training stations within the Cork City Division on a permanent basis.

The Deputy may be interested to note that for December 2019, the Commissioner has directed the allocation of an additional 24 probationers from this class to be allocated to the Cork City Division on a temporary basis to work on Operation Open City, which involves high visibility road policing duties over the busy Christmas period. These 24 probationers will then be re-allocated after the period concerned to their permanent training stations in Divisions outside the Cork City Division from 2nd January, 2020.

These intended allocation of resources are contingent on the operational demands of An
Driver Licences

38. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the consultation and engagement that has taken place to date with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to extending eligibility for a driver licence to asylum seekers. [47779/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The issuing of driving licences is primarily a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport and the relevant agencies under his remit.

I understand that the issue is currently being examined by his Department. My Department sought background information from the European Migration Network as to the interpretation and implementation of the relevant EU law, Article 12 of Directive 2006/126/EC on driving licences (recast), in other member states. This information has been provided to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport and we would expect that this will assist in bringing the matter to a conclusion in the near future.

*Question No. 39 answered with Question No. 28.*

British-Irish Council

40. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the British-Irish Council; when it last met; and the issues that were discussed. [47906/19]

**The Taoiseach:** I was delighted to welcome the Administration Heads from Scotland, Wales, Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and the British Government to Dublin for the 33rd British Irish Council on the 15th November.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the inaugural meeting of the British-Irish Council and it was agreed that the Council remains a valued strand of the Good Friday Agreement.

The Summit provided an opportunity for Ministers to update the Council on their actions regarding Brexit and discuss the latest domestic political developments across their jurisdictions along with topics of mutual interest such as the economy, trade and ongoing relations with the EU.

The Council also discussed the political situation in Northern Ireland, and regretted that Northern Ireland will not be represented politically at this important forum until the Executive is restored.

Minister for Health, Simon Harris and Minister of State with responsibility for Health Promotion and the National Drugs Strategy, Catherine Byrne held a discussion on substance misuse with their counterparts from the other administrations.

The Ministers explored the links between health and social initiatives and community policing, and their long-term social and economic benefits to communities.

In advance of the Summit meeting (on Thursday evening), Health Ministers from the travelling delegations visited the North-East Inner-City Inclusion Health Hub, a project which focuses on the transformation of the delivery of health services for drug users in the city.
During the course of the Summit, I held bilaterals with the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales. I also took the opportunity to speak with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Cabinet Committees

41. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Taoiseach the Cabinet committee at which public sector broadcasting is discussed. [47907/19]

**The Taoiseach:** There is no Cabinet committee with responsibility specifically for public sector broadcasting. Primary responsibility lies with the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment and the topic would be discussed at Government as appropriate.

Departmental Expenditure

42. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47928/19]

**The Taoiseach:** The Department of the Taoiseach has a contract for the supply of mobile phones and associated services. The current contract was established between the Department and Three Ireland in September 2019 following a public procurement exercise conducted in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement.

It was awarded on the basis of the Most Economically Advantageous Tender when costs of mobile phones, costs associated with ongoing usage, international roaming, data usage and customer support capabilities were considered. The contract is for 24 months and is due to expire in September 2021. It can be extended for a further 24 months.

Prior to 2019 the Department of the Taoiseach had a similar contract in place with a different service provider which was again established in conjunction with public procurement frameworks provided by the Office of Government Procurement.

Mobile phone services are currently provided to 114 staff assigned to the Department of the Taoiseach, commensurate with their role and to facilitate staff in discharging their duties. This includes staff who provide on-call services or staff who are regularly away from their desks.

The usage of mobile phones is outlined in the Department’s ICT Security and Usage Policy which provides that ‘Every officer has a duty to take proper and reasonable care of public funds and Department property and not to use them or permit their use for unauthorised purposes.’

Where available, staff who are travelling in the course of their duties are placed on appropriate tariffs with the mobile phone service provider to reduce costs associated with international roaming. All staff are required to reimburse the Department for any additional expenses incurred which are not related to their role.

Mobile phones are replaced when they are ‘end-of-life’. The Department of the Taoiseach’s current contract provides a mechanism to either purchase the mobile phone outright or to spread the cost of the mobile phone over the term of the contract and avail of further reduced rates.
by doing so. Availing of the discounted rate is the preferred option and applies to all current phones.

Costs associated with purchasing mobile phones for staff for 2016, 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade and excluding VAT, are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>€1,610</td>
<td>€5,580</td>
<td>€3,982</td>
<td>€2,005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer and Service Officer</td>
<td>€230</td>
<td>€310</td>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defence Forces, Engineer, Scientific Grades and Garda Staff</td>
<td>€460</td>
<td>€310</td>
<td>€592</td>
<td>€552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>€690</td>
<td>€1,240</td>
<td>€565</td>
<td>€760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer and Administrative Officer</td>
<td>€1,610</td>
<td>€3,410</td>
<td>€565</td>
<td>€1,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>€690</td>
<td>€4,030</td>
<td>€565</td>
<td>€968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Staff - offices of the Taoiseach, Minister of State, Chief Whip and Independent Ministers</td>
<td>€1,150</td>
<td>€4,960</td>
<td>€5,650</td>
<td>€1,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General, Second Secretary General and Assistant Secretary General</td>
<td>€230</td>
<td>€1,952</td>
<td>€1,130</td>
<td>€552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COST (excl. VAT)</td>
<td>€6,670</td>
<td>€21,792</td>
<td>€13,049</td>
<td>€7,878</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Staff Data**

43. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form. [47954/19]

**The Taoiseach:** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.
Table 1: Department of the Taoiseach Staff by Grade and Gender - 20 November 2019*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Staff (including cleaners)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>216</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*excludes politically appointed staff

Ministerial Advisers Data

44. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; and the commencement and cessation dates in each case. [47971/19]

46. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach the duties and responsibilities of the political staff appointed by him. [48048/19]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 44 and 46 together.

Details of the advisers employed by my Department since I took up office on 14 June 2017 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
<th>Salary Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brian Murphy</td>
<td>Chief of Staff</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Carroll</td>
<td>Head of Policy and Programme Implementation</td>
<td>05 July 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Geoghegan</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary (equivalent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela Flanagan</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philip O’Callaghan</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare Mungovan</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>08 Jan 2018</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Start Date</td>
<td>End Date</td>
<td>Salary Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim D’Arcy</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>04 Sept 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Assistant Principal (Higher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Miller</td>
<td>Spokesman and Communications Adviser to the Taoiseach</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>31 Oct 2017</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fergal Purcell</td>
<td>Government Press Secretary</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>31 Oct 2017</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Miller</td>
<td>Government Press Secretary</td>
<td>01 Nov 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Meade</td>
<td>Assistant Government Press Secretary</td>
<td>31 July 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Halloran</td>
<td>Deputy Government Press Secretary</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark O’Doherty</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>16 October 2018</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Harkin</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>14 Feb 2018</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Carty</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip</td>
<td>12 March 2018</td>
<td>16 October 2018</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Feeney</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip</td>
<td>16 October 2018</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Harper</td>
<td>Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip</td>
<td>16 October 2018</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony Williams</td>
<td>Chief Strategist for the Independent Alliance</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donal Geoghegan</td>
<td>Political Coordinator for Independent Ministers</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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

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

Departmental Data

45. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Taoiseach the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48044/19]

The Taoiseach: No bullying or sexual harassment complaints have been received by my Department from 2016 to date in 2019.

Question No. 46 answered with Question No. 44.

Departmental Staff Data

47. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Taoiseach the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48079/19]

The Taoiseach: No employees in my Department were dismissed or suspended in the years 2016, 2017, 2018 or to date in 2019. However, during the period in question, two employees were not retained following completion of their probationary contracts.

Departmental Expenditure

48. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019. [48197/19]

The Taoiseach: My Department has spent a total amount of €140.97 on bottled water to date in 2019. This water was used for meetings with visiting dignitaries. No disposable coffee cups were purchased to date in 2019.

Freedom of Information

49. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Taoiseach the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014. [48214/19]

The Taoiseach: As required by Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014, and in keeping with the principles of openness, transparency and accountability set out in the FOI Act,
my Department published its FOI publication scheme in 2016 and it can be viewed on the gov.ie website. The publication scheme makes available as much information as possible about my Department’s work in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis under the following headings:

- Information about the Department;
- Services provided or to be provided to the public;
- Decision making process for major policy proposals;
- Financial information;
- Procurement; and
- FOI disclosure log and other information published routinely.

My Department keeps its FOI publication scheme under ongoing review and regularly publishes additional information about its work as it becomes available. For example, the scheme is updated every quarter to include the details of management board meetings, invoices over €20,000 paid and FOI requests granted or part granted in the previous quarter.

**Departmental Expenditure**

50. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form [48253/19]

The Taoiseach: The following table contains the yearly outlays by my Department in these cost areas. The breakdown covers digital advertising consisting of search to ensure that the public is directed to the sites which deliver the services/information they are looking for and sponsored posts to ensure strong dissemination of Government Information. It also includes traditional media such as print and creative production.

The bulk of the 2019 spend is on the provision of communication and public relations work for the IBRC Commission, which is an independent statutory commission established under the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004.

In addition, the 2019 figure includes public information activities for the appointment of judges and the Budget.

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumentation/2019-11-20_pq50-20-11-19_en.xlsx">Table - Yearly Outlays Department of the Taoiseach</a>]

**Departmental Expenditure**

51. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile phones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred
on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47918/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The expenditure on purchasing mobile phones for staff in my Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 is detailed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Spend on Mobile Phones incl. VAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€14,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€20,093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€25,945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 to date</td>
<td>€16,451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobile phones are purchased in batches and allocated/replaced as required. Handsets are also redeployed when staff leave my Department. Accordingly, it is not possible to break down this spend by staff grade. The breakdown of phones currently assigned to staff in my Department by grade is:

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumenta-

tion/2019-11-20_pq51-20-11-19_en.docx">Table - Phones Assigned to Department of Defence

Staff</a>]

All mobile phones are issued to staff based on an approved business case. My Department had a contract with Vodafone for supply of mobile phones, which has now expired. My Department is in the process of moving to the ‘Desktop as a Service’ managed ICT service delivery model provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). As part of this service, the Department will procure mobile phones from the OGCIO’s contract, which will be based on the most up-to-date framework available from the Office of Government Procurement. Using this framework will ensure that my Department will leverage the considerable buying power of the Public Service to ensure the best value for the taxpayer is achieved.

**Departmental Staff Data**

52. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47944/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The following table provides details of the number of civil servants employed in my Department by gender and pay grade at 31 October 2019. As a number of employees are working reduced patterns of attendance, the total number of whole time equivalent posts in my Department is 352. 34.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Total Numbers</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Accountant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advisor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ministerial Advisers Data

53. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47961/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The following table provides details of the advisers appointed by me in my capacity as Minister with Responsibility for Defence:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Adviser</td>
<td>John Coughlan</td>
<td>6 May 2016 to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Adviser</td>
<td>Clare Mungovan</td>
<td>18 May 2016 to 7 January 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Adviser</td>
<td>Niall O’Connor</td>
<td>29 January 2018 to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are the only advisers appointed by me in the period since 6 May, 2016.

Departmental Data

54. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48034/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department employs both civil servants and civilian employees attached to military installations. The following table provides details of the number of complaints of bullying or harassment received by my Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. There were no complaints of sexual harassment during the period in question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complaints received</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Civil Service Dignity at Work Policy was rolled out to all civil service staff in my Department in 2015 and staff are reminded of the aims of the Policy, which deals with bullying, harassment and sexual harassment, annually. The Policy is also provided to all new staff joining my Department and is posted on the Department’s Intranet. The relevant policy for civilian employees attached to military installations is A Positive Working Environment - An Anti Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Bullying Policy for State Industrial Employees.

**Departmental Staff Data**

55. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48069/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department employs both civil servants and civilian employees attached to military installations. The following table provides details of the number of employees that were dismissed or suspended in the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. As only one person was suspended or dismissed during the full period covered by this question, the Deputy will appreciate that it would not be appropriate for me to set out the reasons for that dismissal as to do so may lead to the individual concerned being identified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>To date in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of dismissals</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of suspensions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Expenditure**

56. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48121/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): My Department has spent €196.80 on promotional material in relation to Project Ireland 2040. No further costs were incurred in relation to public relations, promotion and advertising for either Project Ireland 2040 or the National Development Plan 2018-2027, for the period in question.

**Departmental Expenditure**

57. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48187/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe): Drinking water in the Department of Defence is provided primarily through filtered water coolers. A number of water dispensers which use the large 19 litre reusable water containers are provided in conference rooms. As a general rule, the Department does not provide water in individual plastic or
glass bottles. To date, in 2019, expenditure by the Department of Defence on water (19 litre Water dispenser containers) and disposable cups is €833.58. Following the publication of the Climate Action Plan 2019, by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment, the Department of Defence has ceased to use single use plastic cups and only uses either reusable or compostable cups for tea/coffee and water.

Freedom of Information

58. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48204/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** In October 2015, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced the publication of the Model Publication Scheme under the Freedom of Information Act 2014. Subsequently, in line with section 8 of the Act, my Department’s FOI publication scheme was first published on 14 April, 2016.

The scheme was next reviewed in July 2018 during the re-development of my Department’s website. All information published under the scheme is reviewed and updated as required.

Departmental Expenditure

59. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48243/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** My Department did not incur any costs in relation to public relations in the period in question. The following table outlines costs for advertising and promotion for the period in question, and includes payments made to date in 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Promotion and Advertising Costs</th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>92,387.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>97,562.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>110,625.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>94,827.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Defence Forces Reserve

60. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence if a new open recruitment campaign for the Army Reserve and Naval Service Reserve will commence early in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48264/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I am advised by the military authorities that, while there are no specific dates as of yet, it is intended that a recruitment campaign for the Army Reserve (AR) and Naval Service Reserve (NSR) will be opened in March/April 2020.

There were two recruitment campaigns for the AR and the NSR in 2019, one in March and a
second in October. These attracted a total of 2,603 applications, 2,140 to join the AR (including 319 female applicants) and 463 to join the NSR (including 69 female applicants).

This year, as of 31 October, 85 new members have been inducted into the AR (including 8 females) and 17 into the NSR (including 2 females).

The Government remains committed to on-going recruitment in the AR and NSR. Supports being provided to maximise recruitment to the AR and NSR include the use of social media and outreach activities by members.

Ministerial Dialogue

61. Deputy Micheál Martin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has discussed the future of NATO with other European counterparts. [47908/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have not taken part in discussions on the future of NATO. Such discussions are appropriate to members of that organisation.

In the EU context, discussion of NATO is limited to the context of agreed areas of EU-NATO cooperation. All such cooperation takes place with full respect for the decision-making autonomy and procedures of both organisations, and respects the specific character of the security and defence policies of EU Member States, including those, such as Ireland, which are not members of NATO.

Brexit Issues

62. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will engage with the UK Government to resolve the ongoing dispute over the ownership of Lough Foyle in the context of the decision by the UK to withdraw from the London Fisheries Convention, effective upon Brexit. [47904/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The UK Government assertion of jurisdiction over the whole of Lough Foyle has never been accepted by Ireland and this position remains unchanged.

Following discussions in 2011 between the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the British Foreign Secretary, the British and Irish Governments agreed to seek to resolve jurisdictional issues relating to both Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough.

Since that time a series of meetings and contacts have taken place at official level between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and my own Department. This engagement is ongoing and my Department is also continuing to consult with other relevant Departments on specific issues and concerns in relation to licensing of aquaculture in Lough Foyle. The 1964 London Fisheries Convention is not relevant to the jurisdictional issues in Lough Foyle.

The issues involved in these discussions are complex and involve a range of different actors, including the Crown Estates on the British side, but I am satisfied that all sides are committed to reaching a positive resolution as soon as possible.

Departmental Expenditure
63. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47922/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has spent the following amounts on mobile phone purchases from 2016 to date;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€43,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€33,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€15,852</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures above relate to handsets purchased in this country. Missions abroad are responsible for contracts with a large variety of local suppliers.

Information on grades is not maintained. Phones are allocated on the basis of business needs rather than grade. The Department has recently published a request for tenders to replace an expired contract with “Three” using the Mobile Phone Service Framework of the Office of Government Procurement. This will cover both mobile phone purchases and mobile telephony charges and ensure best value for the Department.

**Departmental Staff Data**

64. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47948/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The total number of permanent full-time equivalent staff in civil service grades in my Department as of 30 September 2019; the grades of these officers and the proportion of female and male staff in each grade is set out in the following table.

The Department also employs locally engaged staff in Missions abroad, and temporary staff on a seasonal basis.

My Department is committed to the principles of equality, impartiality and fairness, to valuing the contributions of all staff and to championing gender equality and diversity, including by ensuring that women are represented fully in teams at home and abroad. Diplomatic and consular missions abroad and senior management structures at home need to reflect Irish society and better gender balance will help us achieve one element of that ambition. Advancing gender equality is a key objective in the Department’s Human Resources Strategy 2019-2022.

My Department has an active Gender Equality, Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee of the Management Board as well as two working groups focusing on gender equality and diversity issues. The work underway, through a Gender Equality Action Plan, complements wider efforts towards gender equality being advanced through the Civil Service renewal process.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male total</th>
<th>Female Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor Higher</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Standard</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Higher</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Development Specialist</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Development Specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Legal Adviser</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Secretary</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>134.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Secretary Higher</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Standard</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Higher</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Standard Add ons</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Higher Add ons</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Accountant</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Specialist</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Secretary Higher</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Secretary Standard</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivist Grade III</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer Higher</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>9.05</td>
<td>20.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer Standard</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>89.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Analyst HEO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer Higher</td>
<td>13.75</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>44.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer Standard</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>99.69</td>
<td>170.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Final Staff Nos by Gender as at 30 September 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male total</th>
<th>Female Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer Trainee Systems Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer Higher</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>92.67</td>
<td>117.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer Standard</td>
<td>156.25</td>
<td>290.91</td>
<td>447.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Officer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Attendant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightwatchperson</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Driver</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Appointee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>682.7</td>
<td>883.85</td>
<td>1566.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ministerial Advisers Data

65. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47965/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): Details of Political Advisers employed by my Department since the commencement of this Government are outlined in the following tables. All appointments were made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil” which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Every appointment in my Department is subject to the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

Minister Charles Flanagan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Advisor</th>
<th>Date of Commencement</th>
<th>Date of Cessation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Kavanagh</td>
<td>6th May 2016</td>
<td>15th June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom Fabozzi</td>
<td>27th May 2016</td>
<td>16th June 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Minister of State Dara Murphy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Advisor</th>
<th>Date of Commencement</th>
<th>Date of Cessation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conor Gouldsbury</td>
<td>6th May 2016</td>
<td>21st June 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tánaiste Simon Coveney

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Special Advisor</th>
<th>Date of Commencement</th>
<th>Date of Cessation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caitriona Fitzpatrick</td>
<td>14th June 2017</td>
<td>1st February 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christopher Donoghue</td>
<td>4th December 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Lynch</td>
<td>4th December 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura McGonigle</td>
<td>22nd July 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
66. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding Poland, including EU efforts, to ensure that European values and freedoms are adhered to such as freedom of press and the Judiciary; if the proposed law to criminalise sex education in Poland was raised at the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47989/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Ireland and its EU partners closely follow legislative developments in EU Member States that could impact negatively on fundamental EU principles, including those relating to the operation of the rule of law, as well as freedom of expression.

In relation to Poland, the European Commission activated its rule of law mechanism in January 2016 and formally triggered the Article 7 procedure on 20 December 2017. There have been five hearings at General Affairs Council meetings since then, in which Ireland has actively participated, highlighting the importance we attach to respect for the rule of law.

Some Polish government legislation has given rise to concerns around fundamental principles of the operation of the rule of law, including legal certainty, separation of powers, shielding of the judiciary from undue influence from other State powers, and security of judicial tenure.

The cumulative effect of the reforms of the Supreme Court and Judicial Council on the system of justice has been of concern. European institutions, other Member States and the international judicial community should be able to place their trust in the system of justice in all Member States.

We welcome the legislative steps taken by the Polish Government to address the concerns on rule of law issues raised by the European Commission and also by Member States at the General Affairs Council. We encourage Poland to continue to engage and address the concerns that have been raised.

Regarding the proposed law on sex education in Poland, this was not raised at the most recent EU Foreign Affairs Council.

The proposed law was debated in the last sitting of the outgoing Polish Parliament. We note the resolution passed by the European Parliament on this proposed law which calls on the Polish Parliament to refrain from its adoption.

Ireland is committed to advancing gender equality at the UN and other regional organisations, and in this regard supports the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Beijing Platform for Action states that “the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence”. Central to this right is the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education and health-care services.
We will continue to monitor developments on this issue and on rule of law issues across the EU.

Foreign Policy

67. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding Hungary and EU efforts to ensure that the actions by the Hungarian Government are in keeping with the expectations of an EU member state in terms of adhering to European values and ideals and upholding freedoms and rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47990/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Fundamental values and the rule of law are a shared EU interest.

We have concerns about issues relating to the rule of law in Hungary in the area of civic space, media freedom and the judiciary.

We have concerns over the civic space available for NGOs to continue to operate in Hungary. These concerns have been exacerbated by the passage of legislation aimed at individuals and organisations providing lawful assistance to migrants and asylum seekers.

We also regret that the necessary steps were not taken to ensure the operation of Central European University in Budapest in the long term. As the Taoiseach said previously in this House, the loss of the Central European University will be a loss to Budapest and Hungary.

We note that the Hungarian Government has withdrawn its legislative proposal on establishing an administrative court, which was a source of great concern with regard to the independent functioning of the judicial system in Hungary. Other judicial reforms have now been proposed by the Hungarian Government which are now under consideration by the Hungarian parliament. We hope that these reforms are also properly scrutinised with a view to upholding fundamental values and the principles of the rule of law which all EU Member States must adhere to.

Article 7 proceedings were launched against Hungary on 12 September 2018. The first hearing of Hungary under the Article 7 procedure took place at the General Affairs Council of 16 September 2019. We support the continuation of the Article 7 procedure.

The Minister for European Affairs, Helen McEntee T.D., discussed rule of law issues with Mr Szabolcs Takács, then Hungarian Minister of State for EU Policies and Coordination, when they met in Dublin on 4 April 2019.

At meetings of the General Affairs Council, Ireland has actively participated in discussions highlighting the importance of respect for the rule of law. The 19 November 2019 General Affairs Council included consideration of a proposal for a yearly stocktaking exercise on the state of play and latest developments regarding the Rule of Law in the EU. We support this proposal.

Foreign Policy

68. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the situation in Bolivía; the position of the EU on same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47993/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As the
Deputy will be aware, the elections that took place in Bolivia on 20 October 2019 were followed by reports of violence and excessive force by the authorities.

On 10 November last, the Organisation of American States (OAS) released a preliminary report indicating that it found clear irregularities, and that it could not verify the result of the October elections. It concluded that it was unlikely that Mr Morales had won by the required 10% margin and recommended that a new Electoral Commission be set up before convening fresh elections.

On the same day, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini also released a statement calling for a new Electoral Court to be appointed that could offer guarantees of transparent elections, and also called on parties, particularly the authorities, to assume their democratic responsibilities and take the appropriate decisions to allow quick reconciliation and avoid further violence. Ireland supported this statement.

Following the release of the OAS report, Mr Morales agreed to hold new elections but later in the day (10 November) resigned from his post in an effort to return stability to the country. A number of high ranking officials also resigned, including the Vice President, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, and the President of the Senate. Mr Morales took up Mexico’s offer of political asylum and arrived in the country on 12 November.

According to the Bolivian Constitution, and given the resignation of numerous high ranking officials, the next in line to take on the role of interim President is the Vice President of the Senate, Jeanine Áñez. Ms Áñez took up office on 12 November and on 13 November appointed a new cabinet of 11 Ministers. The caretaker Government now has 90 days to hold new elections, as defined by the Constitution. Ireland, alongside EU colleagues, supports a solution that allows for the interim leadership to prepare for new elections and to avoid a power vacuum which could be seriously damaging to the country.

The EU Delegation in La Paz has been actively supporting mediation on the ground organised by the local Catholic Church to help the Bolivian parties agree on a peaceful path to new elections. I have been in contact with my EU counterparts on how best to support Bolivia in the preparation of these elections. On Monday 11 November, I attended the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels where EU High Representative Federica Mogherini updated Foreign Ministers on the ongoing work in Bolivia. This included a discussion on the possibility of a new EU Mission to the country and of how best to assist in the election of a new Supreme Electoral Court. The EU also deployed an Election Expert Mission to the country and has several projects in support of Bolivia’s strong civil society.

On 15 November, the EU released another statement calling for a return to constitutional normality so that the rule of law, democratic principles and civil rights are respected. Ireland wholeheartedly supports this recent statement from the EU which also calls on law enforcement bodies to guarantee security for the Bolivian people, while respecting human rights at all times. On Sunday (17 November), the EU Ambassador to Bolivia, Leon de la Torre, met with interim President Jeanine Áñez and assured her that the EU would provide support during the transition period and work to ensure credible elections. Ireland is fully supportive of this approach.

My Department will continue to work with our European counterparts to support Bolivia in finding a suitable pathway towards stability. We will continue to monitor developments through our Embassy in Buenos Aires which has a concurrent accreditation to Bolivia.
69. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views on the recent violence in Gaza; the status of recent efforts at EU and international level to restart the Middle East peace process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47994/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There have been far too many deaths in Gaza during this latest outbreak of violence, including, tragically, the deaths of several children. In the conduct of military operations, constant care must be taken to spare the civilian population, civilians and civilian objects. All feasible precautions must be taken to avoid, and in any event to minimize, incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects. This is particularly true in relation to military action in built-up areas. I also condemn the firing of rockets into Israel, which has recklessly endangered civilians in an indiscriminate way.

I was glad to hear reports of a ceasefire, which I would encourage all parties to respect. I acknowledge the efforts of Egypt and the UN in bringing about this de-escalation. I welcome the EU statement that was issued on 12 November in response to the violence.

I have given a high priority to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly the situation in Gaza, over the last two years, and have worked consistently to maintain an international focus on the issue, and support for the two state solution.

I regularly discuss this situation with my counterparts in the EU and the region. For example, in February of this year I convened a small gathering of Foreign Ministers in Dublin in February, to discuss the Middle East Peace Process, and how best to encourage a move towards a just and durable peace.

The Israel-Palestine conflict also featured in several of my discussions and meetings during the High-Level Week of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September. In all my meetings I stressed the need for any viable solution to this conflict to respect the long-standing and broadly agreed parameters for a two-state solution, which have full EU support.

Ireland has long worked to keep attention on Gaza in particular. Ireland contributes humanitarian assistance to alleviate the worst of this suffering, including through our support for UNRWA, which is a key provider of public services, health and education in the area. I have also initiated an Irish-funded solar power project in Gaza, which will be co-located with a waste water facility and will help improve water quality in the area, and thus also quality of life.

However, the roots of the problem in Gaza are political and cannot be solved by funding alone. What is needed is the lifting of the blockade, so that normal life and normal economic activity can resume. Gaza faces other challenges, including oppressive rule by Hamas, but the blockade dominates peoples’ lives in Gaza to such an extent that it is difficult to address other issues. I have raised the issue of the blockade with both Israeli and Palestinian leaders.

I will continue to ensure that the Middle East Peace Process and the situation in Gaza remain high on the international agenda.

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70. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the status of the situation in Venezuela; the position of Ireland on the ongoing political crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48025/19]
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): The current crisis in Venezuela continues to be of deep concern and is having a worsening impact on the Venezuelan people, whose needs are acute. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 25% of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance, with serious health and medical needs and a severe lack of access to basic goods, services and medicines and medical care. Ireland is fully supportive of the UN-coordinated response mechanism for humanitarian aid in the country, and of the €117 million in funding provided by the EU since 2018 for humanitarian assistance.

The ongoing humanitarian, economic, social and political crisis is also having an ever-growing effect on neighbouring countries, which are hosting approximately 80% of the 4.6 million Venezuelan refugees and migrants that are estimated by the UN High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) to have left the country since 2015. It is essential that these countries are supported and the EU has responded to this need by hosting an International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Brussels on 28 and 29 October. This conference was co-hosted by the UNHCR and the IOM, and Ireland was represented at official level.

I also discussed the situation in Venezuela with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, H.E. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, during his visit to Dublin in September this year. Nowhere has the impact of the Venezuelan crisis been felt more strongly than in Colombia, which has received over 1.5 million Venezuelan migrants and refugees since 2015, more than any other country.

I have already authorised the deployment of two Rapid Responders to assist the UNHCR in supporting the Colombian Government’s response to the humanitarian needs of Venezuelans in Colombia. Ireland has also contributed €1 million to UNHCR towards this effort. We stand ready to assist further as the situation evolves.

I continue to firmly believe that this crisis can only have a political, peaceful, democratic solution, excluding the use of force, through the holding of free, transparent and credible Presidential elections as soon as possible. I, along with my EU partners, have regularly voiced support for the Oslo Talks process, facilitated by Norway. While these talks have now been suspended, Ireland encourages both sides to engage in good faith in an inclusive, serious and results-oriented process.

Ireland also supports EU efforts, including through the International Contact Group (ICG) and Special Adviser Enrique Iglesias, who is engaging with all relevant actors and stakeholders in efforts to secure and support a Venezuelan-owned solution to the current crisis. I welcome the ICG statement issued on 1 November that reaffirms the Group’s view that only a negotiated transition that leads to credible elections with international observation, the re-institutionalisation of public powers, and guarantees that allow political coexistence, can bring a lasting solution to the crisis. The statement also notes that Special Advisor Iglesias will visit Caracas to engage with all relevant national stakeholders in the near future, and I look forward to receiving a report of this visit after it occurs.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Venezuela and to engage on the issue until a lasting solution to the crisis is found.

Departmental Data

71. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48038/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade examines all formal complaints made to its HR Unit notwithstanding the category they fall under. Complaints in relation to bullying and sexual harassment are addressed under the Dignity at Work: An Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy for the Irish Civil Service policy, which came into operation in 2015.

In circumstances where a complaint of bullying or sexual harassment is made, and where these complaints are found to be upheld by means of investigation, appropriate action is taken in accordance with the Civil Service Disciplinary Code.

In 2016, 2017, 2018 and to date in 2019, the HR Unit of the Department has received a small number of complaints under the categories referenced. Four of these complaints were formally investigated. A further two complaints are currently under investigation.

**Departmental Staff Data**

72. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48073/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has dismissed six employees since 2016. Four employees were not established at the end of their probationary contract. Two employees were dismissed following a disciplinary process. It would not be appropriate for my Department to provide additional details as so doing could potentially identify the individuals in question.

My Department did not suspend any employees in 2016, 2017, 2018 or to date in 2019.

My Department applies the provisions of Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars in relation to disciplinary and probationary matters, including that all civil servants must be treated in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

**Passport Applications Administration**

73. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if an application for a passport by a person (details supplied) will be expedited due to extenuating circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48112/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am advised by the Passport Service that the applicant referred to became an Irish citizen through entry on the Foreign Birth Register in August of this year.

My Department will be in contact with the family to assist them with making a passport application.
74. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48125/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has made no expenditure on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040.

75. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48191/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has spent €4,992.19 to date this year at headquarters on bottled water. The Department has a contractual commitment to bottled drinking water until 2021 for two of twelve HQ buildings, at which stage drinking water provision will be switched to mains supply. The cost of the contracts to-date in 2019 was €2,803.27.

The Protocol Division of the Department also purchases bottled water for catering purposes, at a cost of €2,102.95 so far this year. Also, following the recent boil water notices issued by Irish Water and Fingal County Council, a small supply of bottled water costing €75.27 was purchased for the staff of the Passport Office in Balbriggan. There was also an issue recently with the water supply to our Limerick office and bottled water costing €10.70 was purchased. Bottled water is also purchased by a number of our Missions abroad, in locations where potable water is not available on tap.

The Department keeps expenditure on bottled water to a minimum in line with Government commitments to sustainability. At headquarters, with the small number of exceptions already mentioned, our policy and practice is to supply staff with filtered mains water dispensed via centrally-located water coolers. The majority of staff at headquarters have also been supplied with reusable water flasks so that they can have fresh water at their desks and to remove the need for the recycling of disposable cups.

With the exception of €18.65 spent on paper cups for an off-site protocol function, my Department has not purchased any disposable coffee cups in 2019.

76. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48208/19]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department takes a proactive approach to the publication of official information and regularly updates its Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. This provides information about the
Department, including activities and policies. The scheme includes links to relevant pages on our official website. My Department is committed to making available as much information as possible as part of our normal business activities and to review and update this information periodically as required.

Information on payments for goods and services valued at €20,000 or more is published quarterly in arrears and can be found in the publication scheme. The last update was in July.

A central tenet of my Department’s commitment to transparency and accountability is the public disclosure of all non-personal Freedom of Information requests. The policy is to publish all non-personal Freedom of Information requests and the responses on the website of the Department. Where records pertaining to the request exist, the associated schedule of records is also published. Records that have been granted or part-granted are made available to the public on request. The most recent update on the website includes all requests up to the end of August this year.

Departmental Expenditure

77. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48247/19]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department engages in public awareness advertising where there is important information that needs to be brought to the attention of citizens. Examples of where my Department has advertised during 2019 have included public information campaigns in relation to the Online Passport Renewals Service and on the theme of ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’. Details of such advertising and commercial firms that have assisted in this regard to date are as follows:

- Online Passport Renewals Service

In November 2018, my Department expanded the Online Passport Renewal Service to allow for online renewal of children’s passports, a passport card for children and a wider cohort of adults eligible to renew online. This expanded service means that all Irish citizens can now renew their passports online 24/7 from anywhere in the world.

Throughout 2019 my Department ran a number of national public information campaigns which highlighted the Online Renewals Service as a fast and secure way for adults and children to renew their passports, including through advertisements on social media platforms and via print and radio channels. The success of this campaign has led to a significant increase in online renewal applications.

The direct costs of advertising to raise public awareness in this regard so far in 2019 are set out in Table 1 below.

- ‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’

The objective of the Government’s Brexit preparedness public information campaign to date has been to ensure that key audiences are aware of the potential impact of a No Deal Brexit and the mitigation measures that they can take, with the support of Government where appropriate and with particular reference to the gov.ie/Brexit website.
My Department has worked closely with the Department of the Taoiseach and other Government Departments on this information campaign which has been underway since September 2018. Costs incurred so far during 2019 in relation to campaign activities across TV, radio, print, internet and social media platforms are outlined in Table 1 below:

- **Rugby World Cup 2019 Consular Awareness**

  The State’s duty of care towards Irish citizens was the pre-eminent concern of my Department during the Rugby World Cup. As the third-largest sporting event in the world, an estimated 20-30,000 Irish citizens travelled from Ireland and elsewhere to attend the tournament.

  In this context, the initial phase of the public awareness campaign aimed at an audience of rugby fans who were likely to travel to the tournament. The goal of that campaign was to reach this core audience with messaging about the Department’s travel advice, as well as information on what measures to take in the event of a consular emergency or crisis while in Japan. This information remained available and was updated on the dedicated Rugby World Cup page on my Department’s website over the tournament.

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

  On July 2nd 2018, the Taoiseach and I publicly launched Ireland’s campaign to secure a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in June 2020 for the 2021-2022 term. Ireland’s campaign is premised on three themes: Empathy, Partnership and Independence. My Department has since continued to promote public awareness of Ireland’s ongoing campaign through online channels and costs incurred so far in 2019 in this regard are set out in Table 1 below.

- **St Patrick’s Day**

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

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

  Team Ireland overseas delivered a total of 1,796 events in support of Ireland’s interest over the 2019 St. Patrick’s Day period in this context. To coincide with and complement these activities, a small amount of expenditure was incurred by my Department in relation to online promotion of an accompanying St. Patrick’s Day video as outlined in Table 1 below.

- **Global Ireland: Ireland’s Strategy for the US and Canada 2019-2025 and Global Island Summit**

  ‘Global Ireland’ is an all-of-Government programme which aims to double Ireland’s impact in the world by 2025. The programme was launched by the Taoiseach and myself and Ministers Humphreys, Madigan and McEntee in June 2018 and sets out Ireland’s ambitions in relation to how we trade, the bilateral and multilateral partnerships that we seek to build and our wider contribution to the world.
Global Ireland: Ireland’s Strategy for the US and Canada 2019–2025 is Ireland’s first whole-of-Government strategy for the US and Canada. Its aim is for Ireland to build strong, strategic political partnerships with the US and Canada and assume a lead role in building stronger transatlantic relations.

To coincide with the programme of St. Patrick’s Day-related activities held there earlier this year, a small amount of expenditure was incurred by my Department in relation to the online promotion of a video that outlined the Strategy’s key objectives insofar as the US is concerned.

In July, to mark the 1st anniversary of the launch of Global Ireland programme, my Department held the Global Island summit in Dublin Castle. At the summit it was announced that Ireland plans to double its impact in the Asia Pacific region, as part of the next phase of Global Ireland 2025. Alongside myself and the Taoiseach, Government Ministers, Ambassadors and key stakeholders spoke at the Summit. To coincide with this event a video was produced and promoted via social media.

- **Other Projects**

My Department has also engaged in public information advertising via print and social media channels to build awareness of certain other initiatives and projects that relate to Ireland’s foreign policy priorities and activities. So far in 2019 these have comprised:

- Recruitment of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Cultural Director

- Promotion of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade/Irish Aid-supported Simon Cumbers Media Fund

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

Details of expenditure in each case are set out in Table 1 below.

Total Expenditure for 2016, 2017 and 2018 are outlined in Table 2 below

### Table 1: Public Information and Awareness Advertising Expenditure - 2019 to date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign/Theme</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Cost to date in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online Passport Renewals</td>
<td>PHD Media, TBWA and Outsource Media</td>
<td>€ 568,166.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Getting Ireland Brexit Ready’</td>
<td>PHD Media, TBWA and Irish Times (re 12 April Brexit Supplement)</td>
<td>€1,475,537.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby World Cup 2019 Consular Awareness</td>
<td>Outsource Media</td>
<td>€28,931.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN Security Council Public Information</td>
<td>PHD Media</td>
<td>€9,641.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Patrick Day 2019</td>
<td>PHD Media &amp; Adventure Publishing</td>
<td>€13,376.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Ireland: Ireland’s Strategy for the US and Canada 2019-2025 and Global Island Summit</td>
<td>PHD Media and BigO Media</td>
<td>€14,457.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2:  Public Information and Awareness Advertising Expenditure – 2016, 2017 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campaign/Theme</th>
<th>Supplier</th>
<th>Cost to date in 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of Department of Foreign Affairs &amp; Trade Cultural Director</td>
<td>Mediavest</td>
<td>€2,214.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Cumbers Media Fund &amp; ‘A Better World’</td>
<td>Facebook &amp; Twitter</td>
<td>€663.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pensions Reform

78. **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. [47900/19]

79. **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. [47901/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 78 and 79 together.

The Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG) is chaired by the Department of Finance and includes members from the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER); Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP); the Revenue Commissioners and the Pensions Authority. The Group was tasked with a number of actions from the Government’s Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 and has prepared a draft report on various pensions matters, including *inter alia* a review of Approved Retirement Funds.

The Group have prepared a report which represents a significant piece of work in this broad policy area and this report has very recently been submitted to me. As this is a complex and detailed piece of work, I will have to carefully consider its contents before taking any decisions on these matters.

Brexit Issues

80. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Finance the projected increase in the net contribution by Ireland each year to the EU from 2021 to 2027 in the event of Britain leaving the EU with a deal on 31 January 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47905/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Given that the UK represents one of the largest net contributors to the EU Budget, Brexit is likely to have a significant impact on the contributions of all Member States, including Ireland. The exact impact will be dependent on the nature of the final agreement between the EU and the UK regarding its involvement with the EU Budget post-Brexit.

Under the Withdrawal Agreement between the EU and UK, the UK had agreed to continue to pay into the EU Budget for the remaining years of the current Multiannual Financial Frame-
work (MFF), as if it was still a member. This would result in no additional impact on Ireland’s contributions or receipts up to the end of the current Multiannual Financial Framework in December 2020.

The European Commission proposal for the 2021-2027 MFF (published May 2018) has been prepared on the basis of a UK departure. The overall 2021-2027 MFF proposal is 1.11% of the post-Brexit EU-27’s Gross National Income (GNI). This is the starting point of an important ongoing debate on the future of the EU Budget. There has been no final agreement on the size of the MFF yet however.

The contributions of each Member State to the EU Budget include Traditional Own Resources (Customs Duties) and a portion of VAT, with the remainder coming from GNI.

Ireland is forecast to see significant growth in our contributions as part of the next MFF as a result of continued economic growth, increased expenditure and the departure of the UK.

My Department monitors and analyses the potential impact of Brexit on our EU budget contributions on an ongoing basis. The following table shows the projected contributions Ireland would make in each of the years 2021-2027 under the Commission’s proposal. This analysis is based on the best information and data available at the time in question.

**Projected Irish Contributions to the MFF 2021-2027 under Commission Proposal (€bn) (current prices)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2021</th>
<th>2022</th>
<th>2023</th>
<th>2024</th>
<th>2025</th>
<th>2026</th>
<th>2027</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total (round, €25m)</td>
<td>€2.900</td>
<td>€2.950</td>
<td>€3.125</td>
<td>€3.275</td>
<td>€3.500</td>
<td>€3.675</td>
<td>€3.850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question Heading for question(s) 81**

81. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47921/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the Department of Finance has a mobile phone policy which defines the acceptable usage and management of official mobile phones. When staff are assigned mobile phones, they are entered into a contract bundle which gives allowances for calls, texts and data services.

Generally in the Department of Finance, staff at Secretary General, Assistant Secretary, Principal Officer and Assistant Principal Officer grades are assigned mobile phones where relevant for work purposes. In 2016 the provision of mobile handsets cost €7,263.17. This breakdown by grade is not readily available for 2016. The following table provides data relating to the amount spent by grade on purchasing official mobile phones in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
ICT systems, including mobile phone procurement, within the Department of Finance are provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform currently has a contract in place with Three Ireland for the supply of Mobile Phone Services & Handsets, this contract is due to expire in April 2020. My Department also has a small number of handsets registered with Vodafone.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is currently undertaking a market exercise for the successor contract run under the Office of Government Procurement’s Mobile Phone Framework. Public procurement measures ensure that there are robust steps in place in the process and that the tenders are evaluated and awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender, thus providing the best value to the taxpayer.

Departmental Staff Data

82. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Finance the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47947/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the number of staff in the Department of Finance by gender and pay grade, as of 11th November 2019, is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General / Second Secretary / Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer / Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone stock pending business require-ments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Civil Service is strongly committed to equality of opportunity in all its employment practices. Throughout their working lives, civil servants can be assured of equality of participation in their Department/Office, regardless of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religious belief, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

83. *Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin* asked the Minister for Finance the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47964/19]

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

Special Advisers employed by my Department and the Minister/Minister of State since the commencement of this Government, the commencement and cessation dates in each case are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister / Minister of State</th>
<th>Name of Special Adviser</th>
<th>Appointment date of Special Adviser</th>
<th>Cessation date of Special Adviser</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Michael Noonan, former Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Mary Kenny</td>
<td>Re-appointed 10/03/2016</td>
<td>14/06/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Michael Noonan, former Minister for Finance</td>
<td>Sean Kinsella, Civil Servant</td>
<td>Appointed 13/06/2016</td>
<td>14/06/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure &amp; Reform</td>
<td>Deborah Sweeney</td>
<td>Appointed 06/05/2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure &amp; Reform</td>
<td>Stephen Lynam</td>
<td>Appointed 06/05/2016</td>
<td>16/03/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister / Minister of State</td>
<td>Name of Special Adviser</td>
<td>Appointment date of Special Adviser</td>
<td>Cessation date of Special Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure &amp; Reform</td>
<td>Ed Brophy</td>
<td>Appointed 12/02/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael D’Arcy, Minister of State (with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance)</td>
<td>Barry Harrington, Civil Servant</td>
<td>Appointed 12/02/2018</td>
<td>29/04/2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael D’Arcy, Minister of State (with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance)</td>
<td>Caroline Hofman</td>
<td>Appointed 04/06/2019</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

(a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –

(i) providing advice,

(ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and

(iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

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

**VAT Rate Application**

84. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the fact that utility companies are adding VAT onto the total charge of consumption, including the carbon tax, indicating that VAT is being charged on the carbon tax itself; if this was the intention of the carbon tax when it was constituted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47997/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that what constitutes consideration for a supply of goods or services is defined in EU VAT law and consists of everything which the supplier is entitled to receive in return for goods or services supplied including taxes, duties, levies and charges, excluding the VAT itself. Therefore, VAT is chargeable on the carbon tax element of domestic utility bills.
85. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will address a matter (details supplied) regarding VRT delays in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47998/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am advised by Revenue that the appointed agents for the registration of vehicles, Applus, currently provide VRT facilities in 29 centres located throughout the country. Revenue advises that it is very careful to monitor the level of service provided by the service provider Applus on an ongoing basis and is satisfied that the service currently provided is reasonable given the level of demand for appointments. The service can be stretched at times but overall the service provision is reasonable. In the event that the demand increases beyond the current capacity of the NCTS network of centres, Revenue works with Applus to ensure that additional resources are deployed as required.

In relation to this specific query, I am advised by Revenue that the average appointment waiting time for the last 2 months in the Blarney centre was 19 days with the current waiting times standing at 16 days. Based on this data, Revenue is satisfied that current resources are reasonable and sufficient to meet the demand.

Revenue also provides additional facilities to assist authorised motor dealers including the provision of a pre-inspection facility which involves mobile units calling to individual dealerships to pre-inspect vehicles and set them up on the Revenue system for registration. This removes the necessity of attending an NCTS centre and allows the registration of the vehicle on the Revenue ROS service at the point of sale. Details are on the Revenue website at this link: https://www.revenue.ie/en/importing-vehicles-duty-free-allowances/guide-to-vrt/authorised-dealers-and-processes/pre-inspection-by-national-car-testing-service-ncts.aspx. This facility is not available to non-motor dealers and Revenue recommends that it is used to avoid delays in registration.

There are currently no plans to open any additional centres in Cork as there are currently two centres serving this area.

**Departmental Data**

86. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Finance the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48037/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I wish to inform the Deputy that the Department takes any claims of bullying and sexual harassment very seriously and any such claim are dealt with under the Dignity At Work policy. The Department had one claim of bullying and/or harassment made between 2016 and 2019 to date, please see following table. This case underwent independent investigation and the result is confidential. However the matter is resolved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Complaints of Bullying/Sexual Harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Department has provided copies of the Dignity at Work policy to all staff and it is also
given to new staff at Induction. The policy on bullying and harassment is also included in the
Staff Handbook which is provided to all staff. All of these documents are also available on the
Department’s internal HR website.

Departmental Staff Data

87. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Finance the number of employees of his
Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason
for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period;
and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48072/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I wish to inform the Deputy the number
of employees of this Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to
date 2019, the reason for the dismissal of each employee and the number of employees sus-
pended in the same periods and the reason for the suspension of each in the following tables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Dismissed Employees</th>
<th>Reason for Dismissal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 to Date</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grave and serious misconduct outside the workplace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The dismissal procedure was followed and adhered to, in accordance with the Civil Service
Disciplinary Code (Circular 19/2016)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Suspended Employees</th>
<th>Reason for Suspension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 to Date</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Related to the Disciplinary Case above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The one case of suspension was the same individual member of staff who was dismissed as
mentioned in the above paragraph.

National Treasury Management Agency

88. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Finance the status on the creation of
a housing fund under the remit of the National Treasury Management Agency; and if he will
make a statement on the matter. [48084/19]

89. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Finance the status of the National
Treasury Management Agency special purpose vehicle to deliver additional social housing as
part of mixed-tenure developments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48085/19]
Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 and 89 together.

I am informed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) that this delivery mechanism has been superseded by the Enhanced Long-Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme, which was launched on 31 January 2018.

The NTMA, in its role as the National Development Finance Agency, acted as financial advisor to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of the development of this long-term leasing model, however the NTMA has no role in relation to implementation of the scheme.

The Enhanced Long Term Social Housing Leasing Scheme is one of a suite of measures introduced under Pillar 2 of “Rebuilding Ireland: An Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness” aimed at private investment in order to deliver social housing at scale.

The principal objective of that scheme is to encourage increased levels of private investment in social housing while ensuring that the resulting leasing arrangement is off-balance sheet in respect of Government expenditure.

The scheme is targeted at new build or new to the market properties to be delivered at scale and will complement the existing long-term leasing arrangements, which will continue to be available for leasing existing properties. The scheme was launched in 2018 and the first closing was completed in June 2019.

The Housing Agency is the national co-ordinator of this scheme and manages and administers it on behalf of the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and local authorities.

Further detail on this initiative is available at: https://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/leasing/enhanced-long-term-social-housing-leasing-scheme.

Interdepartmental Committees Reports

90. Deputy Noel Grealish asked the Minister for Finance if the interdepartmental report on pensions simplification has been referred to him for sign-off; the date of proposed publication of the report; if there will be a consultation period subsequent to the publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48110/19]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): The Interdepartmental Pensions Reform and Taxation Group (IDPRTG) is chaired by the Department of Finance and includes members from the Departments of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER); Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP); the Revenue Commissioners and the Pensions Authority. The Group was tasked with a number of actions from the Government’s Roadmap for Pensions Reform 2018-2023 and has prepared a draft report on various pensions matters, including inter alia consideration of reform and simplification of the existing supplementary pensions landscape.

The Group have prepared a report which represents a significant piece of work in this broad policy area and this report has very recently been submitted to me. As this is a complex and detailed piece of work, I will have to carefully consider its contents before taking any decisions, including publication of the report.
91. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48124/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I can confirm to the Deputy that the Department of Finance has no expenditure on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018.

92. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48190/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** In response to the Deputy’s Question, the Department of Finance manages provisions in the areas mentioned by the Deputy both for itself and for the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The figures for 2019 to-date for both Departments are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 2019 to-date</th>
<th>Finance</th>
<th>Public Expenditure and Reform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bottled Water*</td>
<td>€3,249</td>
<td>€4,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable Coffee Cups</td>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>€3,249</td>
<td>€4,873</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These units are the large 18.9 Litre spring water bottles that fit onto floor-mounted dispensers.

In addition the Office of Government Procurement, which is a division of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and has its own vote, had an expenditure of €2,078.91 to-date in 2019 in respect of bottled water.

93. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48207/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 requires FOI bodies to prepare and publish information in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis.

The Department of Finance “Freedom of Information Publication Scheme” is implemented in compliance with the guidelines as prescribed in the “Model Publication Scheme Guidance 2016”, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
The Publication Scheme and relevant material published under it, is available on the Department of Finance website (https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-finance/), the contents of which are regularly and routinely updated as appropriate.

My Department has initiated four reviews to date, one in 2016, two in 2018, and another review in May 2019.

Departmental Expenditure

94. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Finance the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48246/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The details of the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising including multimedia in my Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are provided in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mortgage Arrears Communication Campaign</td>
<td>€73,136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Switch Your Bank*</td>
<td>€24,682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Broadcasting of National Economic Dialogue</td>
<td>€17,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Switch Your Bank*</td>
<td>€717,746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Broadcasting of National Economic Dialogue</td>
<td>€17,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information notice re: Beneficial Ownership</td>
<td>€2,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graphic Design: Public Awareness Campaign</td>
<td>€480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertising: Switch Your Bank</td>
<td>€73.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertising: European Financial Forum</td>
<td>€24.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Switch Your Bank*</td>
<td>€402,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside Broadcasting of National Economic Dialogue</td>
<td>€13,616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advertising: Board Recruitment</td>
<td>€1,707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish Language Notice (The Department’s Irish Language Scheme)</td>
<td>€1,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irish Language Notice (The Department’s Irish Language Scheme)</td>
<td>€983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to date)</td>
<td>Advertising: Vacancy for Governor of Central Bank of Ireland</td>
<td>€12,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The cost of the Switch your Bank campaign is fully recoupable by AIB and Permanent TSB in the context of their restructuring plans. These costs relate to a Public awareness campaign as part of a range of competition measures agreed with the European Commission to raise awareness and promote customer switching of financial products. The Department of Finance facilitates this campaign as part of its remit to ensure that consumers are protected within the financial sector in Ireland and to ensure a healthy level of competition.

Ministerial Meetings

95. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to meet the new chief of the IMF and the new President of the European Central Bank (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48270/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** As the Deputy will be aware Ms Kristalina Georgieva was selected Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on 25 September 2019 and assumed her position on 1 October 1, 2019. I briefly met Ms Georgieva shortly thereafter during my visit to Washington DC from 16-19 October to attend the Annual Meetings of World Bank/IMF.

This short meeting did not have a formal agenda. I took the opportunity to congratulate Ms Georgieva on her appointment and wish her well in her new and challenging role. I used the opportunity to brief her on developments in the Irish economy and the outlook for the period ahead. Our discussions also touched on EU and international economic and financial developments. The new IMF MD spoke about the main priorities of her tenure. During the course of this meeting I also invited Ms Georgieva to visit Ireland and while no visit has yet been scheduled, my officials are liaising with the IMF to make the necessary arrangements.

As the Deputy will also be aware, Christine Lagarde was appointed as President of the European Central Bank (ECB) on 18 October 2019, and she took up duty on 1 November 2019. As part of my ongoing international engagements, I will meet with President Lagarde in Frankfurt later this month. In any discussions with Madame Lagarde, or other officials of the ECB, I will, of course, be mindful and respectful of the ECB’s independence.

The ECB’s mandate is to maintain price stability in the euro area. The Central Bank of Ireland contributes to the formulation of monetary policy at Eurosystem level, and the Bank’s Annual Report provides further details of this contribution.

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union prohibits the ECB from seeking or taking instructions from EU institutions or bodies, from any government of an EU Member State, or from any other body. These requirements are set out in Article 130 of the Treaty and ensure that the principle of central bank independence is respected and there is no influence on the members of the ECB’s decision-making bodies.

Corporation Tax

96. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the position and value of the escrow account for corporation tax due from a company (details supplied) pending the appeal to the EU General Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48271/19]

**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.

As the Deputy will know, the State has now recovered the alleged State aid from Apple. The total amount recovered is approximately €14.3 billion, this is the principal amount and relevant EU interest. These sums have been placed into an Escrow Fund with the proceeds being released only when there has been a final determination in the European Courts over the validity of the Commission’s Decision.

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 proceedings that the Government and Apple have brought. In general terms, all income and expenses, including any gains or losses, will accrue to the Escrow Fund.

Annual accounts for the Escrow Fund are compiled and audited by the Office of the Controller and Auditor General. The latest publicly available set of accounts are for 2018 and show that as at 31 December 2018, the financial assets held in the Escrow fund amounted to €14.271 billion.


Stability and Growth Pact

97. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance if he is making submissions to the EU institutions regarding amendments to the rules of the Stability and Growth Pact; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48272/19]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The EU’s fiscal rules, as set out in the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), are an integral part of the EU’s broader economic governance framework. This framework has evolved significantly over the past two decades, particularly following the economic and fiscal crisis, which saw the SGP strengthened through the adoption of the so-called Six- and Two-pack legislative packages.

The European Commission is obliged under the legislation to publish a review of the Six- and Two-packs every five years. The next review is due to be published by the end of 2019. These reviews evaluate, inter alia, the effectiveness of the regulations in ensuring closer co-ordination of economic policies and convergence of Member States’ economic performances, and, if appropriate, will be accompanied by proposals for amendments to the rules.

To date, the Commission has not requested any formal submissions regarding improvements to the European fiscal rules ahead of the publication of the review. However, the European Fiscal Board has published an assessment of the EU’s fiscal rules and this report was discussed at September’s ECOFIN meeting.

I welcome the preliminary discussions on this topic at EU level, with which my officials and I will continue to actively engage.

Departmental Expenditure

98. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan
2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form. [48131/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people, integrating, for the first time, the national spatial and investment strategies. The projects under these plans which include roads, schools, primary care centres, housing, sporting and cultural amenities and business activation facilities impact villages, towns, cities and regions across the length and breadth of Ireland.

Since taking responsibility for communications for Project Ireland 2040, €92,954.26 has been spent by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on public information measures including the launch of the first Annual Report - see breakdown in Table A. Measures included three 2-week tranches of transit advertising on public transport networks throughout Ireland, with the specific aim of empowering members of the public to find out what is happening under Project Ireland 2040 in their local area. During each phase, the material was displayed on the Red and Green Luas lines as well as approximately 500 Dublin Buses, 50 Irish Rail carriages and 100 Bus Shelters in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and nationwide. The material directed the audience to gov.ie/2040. That website has received more than 50,000 hits in the period.

The Annual Report contained in-depth information about what has happened under the plan and what is yet to come. It was launched in the Glucksman Library at the University of Limerick, one of the early projects supported by Project Ireland 2040 in the heart of Limerick, a key growth city under the plan.

**Table A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Media-Buy</th>
<th>Printing</th>
<th>Annual Report Launch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€34,687.23</td>
<td>€46,401.72</td>
<td>€4,273.02</td>
<td>€7,592.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The cost for a wide-ranging, multi-media public awareness campaign was met by the Department of the Taoiseach including: content production, digital promotion* media partnerships and cinema campaign, public transport network campaign (content production only – space was provided free of charge) - details are set out in Table.

*Digital promotion includes search engines, to ensure the public is directed to the sites that deliver the services/information they are looking for, space on social media, including Twitter Facebook and Youtube, to ensure strong dissemination of Government information.

**Table B - Project Ireland 2040 - multi-media public awareness campaign**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>€</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content creation</td>
<td>252,892.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital (including Facebook Twitter, Youtube and search)</td>
<td>75,394.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content partnerships</td>
<td>325,500.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media launches etc</td>
<td>98,345.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema campaign</td>
<td>96,975.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>849,108.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Departmental Expenditure

99. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47926/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform currently have a contract in place with Three Ireland for the supply of Mobile Phone Services & Handsets, this contract is due to expire in April 2020. All mobile phones are currently procured from the Three Ireland contract, the contract was awarded on foot of a public procurement competition for the Provision of Mobile Phone Services and Handsets. The Department is currently in the process of a market exercise for the successor contract run under the Office of Government Procurement’s Mobile Phone Framework. Public procurement measures ensure that there are robust steps in place in the process and that the tenders are evaluated and awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender thus providing the best value to the taxpayer.

**Amount spent on purchasing Mobile Phones by year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€16,863.30</td>
<td>€18,443.37</td>
<td>€10,132.74</td>
<td>€7,206.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Staff Data**

100. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47952/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The number of staff in my Department by gender and pay grade, as of 31 October 2019, is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary / Director</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Medical Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Adviser</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ministerial Advisers Data

101. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47969/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Details of special advisers contracted by my Department since the commencement of this Government are outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deborah Sweeney Special Adviser</td>
<td>Appointed as SA to DPER on 06/05/2016. Reappointed as SA to DPER &amp; Finance on 15/06/2017.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-civil service appointments in my Department are made in line with “Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil”, which include “Guidelines on staffing of Ministerial offices” issued by my Department.

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

(a) assist the Minister or Minister of State, as the case may be, by –

(i) Providing advice,

(ii) Monitoring, facilitating and securing the achievement of the Government objectives that relate to the Department, as requested by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be, and

(iii) Performing such other functions as may be directed by the Minister or the Minister of State, as the case may be that are not otherwise provided for in this Act and do not involve the exercise of any specific powers conferred on the Minister or the Minister of State as the case may be or any other office holder by or under any other Act.

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

Public Sector Pensions Legislation

102. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No.150 of 12 November 2019, if the question of the clear unfair anomaly between former public servants taking up employment again in the public sector against those that take up employment in the private sector will be addressed; his views on whether it is a positive disincentive for such persons, many of whose skills are still sought in the public sector, for them to take up employment there; his plans to address the issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47973/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I am not of the view that there is an anomalous distinction between the approach for retired public servants taking up employment in the public service as compared to those who take up employment in the private sector.

In 2012, the then Government, in legislating to extend abatement to include re-employment anywhere in the public service, acknowledged issues around recruitment of skilled personnel. Section 52(4) provides for the granting of a waiver of abatement where the particular skills, training or experience required for a specific position are such that those skills, training or experience cannot be met other than by the engagement of a retired public servant.

Such waivers are granted in exceptional circumstances for a limited period of time and each
waiver application is assessed on its merits.

Overall, the extension of abatement across the public service represents a suitable response to legitimate concerns about simultaneous payment of pension and salary in the public service.

National Botanic Gardens

103. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding will be allocated to the OPW to provide extra parking spaces for cars, coaches and buses for visitors at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin 9; if so, when work will commence in view of the fact there is no sufficient parking spaces to deal with the number of visitors parking during the peak season; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47977/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, which is managed by the Office of Public Works, has an existing public carpark which accommodates 72 cars and up to 4 coaches. Car Parking facilities are therefore available but, during busy periods, may be insufficient to meet demand. In line with OPW principles of sustainability, visitors are encouraged, where possible to walk, cycle or use public transport when travelling to the site. The Gardens are well served by Dublin Bus routes 4, 9, 83 and 155. Additional visitor parking is available at Glasnevin Cemetery and visitors can access the Gardens through the gate that connects the Gardens and the Cemetery.

The National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin attracts over 600,000 visitors a year. During the recent half term period, the Gardens experienced unprecedented numbers of visitors (>8,000) on two particular days, creating traffic problems in the locale. Even doubling the available car parking space, even if that were possible, would have had little or no impact on the thousands of cars attempting to reach the site on such occasions.

The work of the Gardens, particularly in its fundamental role of conservation, research and education, is highly dependent on the vital propagation facilities and space of the nursery, which is, in effect, the powerhouse of the Gardens. When the first public carpark was constructed 19 years ago over a quarter of the original nursery area of the Gardens had to be sacrificed. Every area of the site is intensively used for the business of the Gardens and therefore it is not proposed to substantially increase car parking facilities on site.

I can confirm nevertheless that the Office of Public Works is in consultations with Dublin City Council on the issue. A number of measures have been put in place to deal, in particular, with the issue of vehicles parking on footpaths which is the primary cause of traffic congestion in the vicinity. It is anticipated that with increased monitoring and enforcement of the 7-day cycle lane, traffic issues should be alleviated.

In line with the sustainable living ethos of the Gardens, and as part of the Government’s Climate Action Plan, OPW encourages those for whom driving is not a necessity, to reduce the carbon intensity of their travel. The Garden’s website and social media channels will continue to encourage users to consider walking or cycling to the Gardens and to provide details on bus numbers and routes as alternatives.

Garda Station Refurbishment

104. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if fund-
Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works has yet to receive a request from An Garda Síochána for refurbishment works to the canteen at Coolock Garda station. On receipt of any such request, details of the requirements will be agreed and a cost estimate will be provided to Garda Estate Management for funding approval.

Office of Public Works Properties

105. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the acreage in each local authority area owned by the Office of Public Works; the portion of the land that are heritage sites; the portion in use for public services; the portion that is vacant; the portion that is vacant and suitable for residential development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48002/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): The Office of Public Works (OPW) manages over 2,500 properties on behalf of the State which include office accommodation, heritage properties, visitor centres, Garda stations, warehouses and sundry others.

I am advised by the Commissioners of Public Works that some of the information sought by the Deputy is not readily available and is currently being collated as completely as possible. A detailed response will issue to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Office of Public Works Properties

106. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the acreage of property owned by the OPW that has been transferred to local authorities for residential development in each year since 2015, by local authority in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48003/19]

107. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the OPW has undertaken an audit of its property portfolio to assess the number of properties that would be suitable for residential development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48004/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 107 together.

The role of the Commissioners of Public Works is to provide office accommodation for use by Government Departments and other State bodies. In addition, the Commissioners of Public Works, on behalf of the State, manage a diverse portfolio of heritage properties, visitor centres, Garda stations, former customs posts, former coastguard stations and sundry other properties located throughout the country. While the Commissioners of Public Works engage with the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government and local authorities where there may be surplus properties in our ownership that could be made available to them, the provision of social/affordable housing is not a function of the Commissioners.

In the past two years, the OPW has provided information on properties to the Department
and, more recently, to the Land Development Agency, who assess those properties for suitability for residential use.

This engagement process identified a number of OPW-owned properties as being feasible for adaptation for residential use. These include:

**Properties transferred**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Transferred To</th>
<th>Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 residential units in Dublin City Centre</td>
<td>Dublin City Council</td>
<td>Peter McVerry Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property at Clonard Road, Crumlin, Dublin</td>
<td>Dublin City Council (under Licence)</td>
<td>Family Hub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 properties, Templemore, Tipperary</td>
<td>Tipperary County Council</td>
<td>Social Housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Properties in process of transferring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Transferring to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Former Garda residence, Buttevant</td>
<td>Cork County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former Met Station, Kilkenny</td>
<td>Kilkenny County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 acre site Thomastown Kilkenny</td>
<td>Kilkenny County Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following expressions of interest have been made to the OPW to acquire sites that are surplus to our requirements, for residential development –

**Expressions of interest in property**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Expression of interest from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 acre site Kill O The Grange</td>
<td>Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.45 acre site Thurles</td>
<td>Tipperary County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 acre site Crosshaven Cork</td>
<td>Cork County Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The OPW actively manages its property portfolio on an ongoing basis. If a particular site or property is deemed to be surplus to requirement it is offered for transfer to public bodies such as the local authorities prior to any decision being taken on disposal. On the establishment of the Land Development Agency a full examination of OPW properties was completed to identify any that might be suitable for residential development. From that examination, the Land Development Agency only identified the Central Mental Hospital as a site suitable for residential development when the relocation of the Hospital by the HSE takes place.

**Public Sector Pensions**

108. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to review the application of pension abatement for certain retired members of the Defence Forces that subsequently take up another role in the public service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48005/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The principle of abatement of a public service pension is longstanding within the rules of various public service pension schemes. Abatement is an important aspect of the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012 (the Single Scheme Act). Section 52(1) to 52(5) provides for the abatement of a public service pension where a retired public servant, whose pen-
Questions - Written Answers

Abatement policy remains a key component of the Single Scheme Act and addresses valid concerns about simultaneous payment of both pension and salary in the public service. Consistency in the application of abatement principles across the public service is also important to ensure that the policy is implemented. While the high level operation of abatement is monitored on an ongoing basis, there are no current plans to review the application of overall pension abatement policy to specific sectors of the public service.

Departmental Data

109. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48042/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy’s question, I wish to state that there have been no complaints of bullying and sexual harassment in respect of this Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Departmental Staff Data

110. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48077/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): In response to the Deputy’s question, I wish to state that there have been no dismissals in respect of this Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Departmental Expenditure

111. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 146 of 12 November 2019, the amount spent in his Department on the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since February 2018 and November 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48114/19]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe): Project Ireland 2040 is the Government’s long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people, integrating, for the first time, the national spatial and investment strategies. The projects under these plans which include roads, schools, primary care centres, housing, sporting and cultural amenities and business activation facilities impact villages, towns, cities and regions across the length and breadth of Ireland.

Since taking responsibility for communications for Project Ireland 2040, €92,954.26 has been spent on public information measures including the launch of the first Annual Report. Measures included three 2-week tranches of transit advertising on public transport networks.
throughout Ireland, with the specific aim of empowering members of the public to find out what
is happening under Project Ireland 2040 in their local area. During each phase, the material was
displayed on the Red and Green Luas lines as well as approximately 500 Dublin Buses, 50 Irish
Rail carriages and 100 Bus Shelters in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Waterford and nation-
wide. The material directed the audience to the public information website gov.ie/2040. That
website has received more than 50,000 hits in the period.

The Annual Report contained in-depth information about what has happened under the plan
and what is yet to come. It was launched in the Glucksman Library at the University of Limer-
ick, one of the early projects supported by Project Ireland 2040 in the heart of Limerick, a key
growth city under the plan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative</th>
<th>Media-Buy</th>
<th>Printing</th>
<th>Annual Report Launch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€34,687.23</td>
<td>€46,401.72</td>
<td>€4,273.02</td>
<td>€7,592.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Freedom of Information**

112. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date
of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his De-
partment as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make
a statement on the matter. [48212/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Depart-
ment’s FOI Publication Scheme provides information about the operations of the Department
in an open and accessible manner on a routine basis, in line with Section 8 of the Freedom of
Information Act, 2014. The Scheme allows for the publication of information outside of FOI
where the provision of information is not prohibited by law. My Department is proactive in pub-
lishing such material regularly, which is reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure new material
is added as and when it becomes available. Suggestions for additional publications are encour-
gaged and can be made by contacting my Department’s Corporate Office. Details of the material
currently published by my Department in its FOI Publication Scheme can be found at the fol-

**Departmental Expenditure**

113. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the
amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his De-
partment in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular
form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48251/19]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The informa-
tion requested by the Deputy in respect of my Department, as of 18th November 2019, is set
out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department of Public Expenditure and Reform</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>€5,417 *</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€7,592</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€54,753</td>
<td>€27,158</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Institutes of Technology Funding

114. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the status of steps to establish funding mechanisms for institutes of technology to support the development of their student accommodation capacity. [48104/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Funding provided to the Institute of Technology (IoT) sector currently impacts on the General Government Borrowing (GGB). Borrowing for capital development, including student accommodation, is included in the State’s balance sheet and therefore impacts on the Government’s available fiscal space. The National Student Accommodation Strategy includes actions to explore, with the sector, an off-balance sheet solution to allow IoTs to access funding for the development of purpose built student accommodation. The IoT sector is examining with the Department of Education and Skill and the assistance of the NDFA options to progress the provision of student accommodation for the technological sector on this basis.

School Transport

115. **Deputy Noel Grealish** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to increase the upper age limits for school bus drivers beyond 70 years of age; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48111/19]

**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.

It is Bus Éireann policy that the normal retirement age for all staff is currently 66 years. Bus Éireann part-time school bus drivers and drivers nominated by private operators as school bus drivers may continue to perform this role, subject to completing an annual medical examination up to the retirement age of 70 years.

This criteria is applied to all drivers who provide services as part of the School transport scheme that is operated by Bus Éireann, on behalf of the Department of Education and skills.
As this age limit has been examined previously and the retirement age extended to 70 years, there are no plans to extend this limit further at this point in time.

**Special Educational Needs Service Provision**

116. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 251 of 5 November 2019, if he has explored the possibility of the provision of an ASD unit in the present location of the school in the event that the new school building is delayed due to planning appeals. [47876/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The school referred to by the Deputy is currently located in interim accommodation.

Subject to availability of accommodation, it is open to the school to establish a special class within its existing accommodation.

In such circumstances, funding is available from my Department to re-configure existing spaces within the school building to accommodate the class.

**School Accommodation Provision**

117. **Deputy Pat Buckley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to develop new primary and second-level schools in Midleton and east County Cork to respond to a growing population of primary school students and longer term projections in population growth for the future. [47882/19]

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

Major new residential developments in a school planning area have the potential to alter demand in that area. In that regard, as part of the demographic exercises, my Department engages with each of the local authorities to obtain the up-to-date information on significant new residential development in each area. This is necessary to ensure that schools infrastructure planning is keeping pace with demographic changes as there is a constantly evolving picture with planned new residential development.

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

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

As the Deputy will be aware, in April 2018 the Government announced plans for the es-
establishment of 42 new schools over the next four years (2019 to 2022), including three new primary schools and one new post-primary school in Cork.

While the 2018 announcement did not include a new school for the Midleton_Carrigtwohill school planning area, the requirement for new schools will be kept under on-going review and in particular will have regard for the increased rollout of housing provision as outlined in Project Ireland 2040.

The following new schools were established in recent years in the Midleton_Carrigtwohill school planning area:

- Carrigtwohill Community College, a new 1,000 pupil post-primary school established in 2016 to serve the Midleton_Carrigtwohill school planning area; and

- Scoil Cliodhna Community National School, a new 16 classroom primary school established in 2015 to serve the Midleton_Carrigtwohill school planning area.

Under Project Ireland 2040, my Department continues to make progress to increase the infrastructural capacity in the schools sector, in order to meet demographic and other demands.

The Capital Programme details the school projects that are being progressed under Project Ireland 2040. I wish to advise the Deputy that the current status of large-scale projects being delivered under Project Ireland 2040 may be viewed on my Department’s website, www.education.ie and this information is updated regularly. In addition, a list of large-scale projects completed from 2010 to date may also be viewed on the website.

The Capital Programme also provides for devolved funding for additional classrooms, if required, for schools where an immediate enrolment need has been identified or where an additional teacher has been appointed. Details of schools listed on this programme can be found on my Department’s website www.education.ie and this information is also updated regularly.

The building project for Carrigtwohill Campus is being delivered under the Department’s Design and Build Programme. This delivery programme uses a professional external Project Management team to progress the project through the stages of architectural planning, tendering and construction.

An application for Planning Permission in respect of the works was submitted to the relevant Local Authority in July 2019. A request for further information was received in August 2019.

The Department’s Design and Build Project Management team are actively working on this Request for Further Information (RFI) and a response will be issued as soon as possible.

As with all school projects, the exact timeframe for delivery of the project will be dependent on the grant of planning permission.

**Departmental Expenditure**

118. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47919/19]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department’s current mobile phone contract was awarded to Vodafone Ireland, following a procurement process under the OGP Framework Agreement for the provision of Mobile Voice and Data Communications. This contract is due to expire in May 2022 subject to terms and conditions in this agreement. The monthly tariff provides for all calls, texts and a limited data allowance. The standard mobile device is provided at no cost. Mobile phones are purchased, on an exceptional basis, for accessibility, functionality or specific business purposes that cannot be met effectively by the standard device.

Details of gross costs for mobile phone devices for the period 2016-2019 are set out below. The function, not the grade, of the Officer is the key determinant in the provision of phones. Therefore, in this regard, grade related information is not readily available.

My Department’s policy on mobile telephony, both voice and data, sets out the relevant procedures and protocols that govern the use of mobile phones. This policy is acknowledged, and adherence to the terms and conditions governing usage is confirmed, by all subscribers. Charges arising are reviewed and must be approved. Where personal charges arise, these are recouped by the subscriber to the Department’s Vote.

### Mobile Phone Costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€2,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€5,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to November)</td>
<td>€1,215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools Building Projects

119. **Deputy Gino Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the difficult conditions under which staff and students are working and learning at a school (details supplied) in County Dublin; the steps he will take to move the school extension and refurbishment project beyond stage 2b as a matter of urgency especially in view of the recent withdrawal of the quantity surveyor and architect; if assurances will be given that the necessary work will continue without delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47934/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I was delighted to visit Scoil Áine Naofa earlier this month and meet the principal and staff to discuss this building project.

The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is part of a joint project. The project is at an advanced stage of architectural planning, Stage 2(b) Detailed Design which includes the application for Planning Permission, Fire Cert and Disability Access Cert and the preparation of tender documents. All statutory approvals have been secured.

In June 2019, at a meeting with the schools, their design team and officials from my Department, discussions took place regarding the current conditions at the schools. My Department advised the schools to submit an application for consideration, for replacement/additional temporary accommodation required to address their current accommodation needs pending the delivery of the major school building project.
At that meeting the consultant Design Team Quantity Surveyor advised that the company is withdrawing from the project.

In early October 2019, the Design Team Consultant Architect advised that it is forced to withdraw from the project as the firm has gone into liquidation. A tender process to replace both the design team Architect and Quantity Surveyor will commence shortly.

This project is included in the Department’s Construction Programme which is being delivered under the National Development Plan.

Departmental Staff Data

120. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47945/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following tabular statement.

**Staffing in the Department of Education and Skills: Breakdown by grade/gender**

**Administrative Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male Headcount</th>
<th>Female Headcount</th>
<th>Total Headcount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer (incl. special-ist HEOs)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Clerical Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Inspectorate: Non-Administrative Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male Headcount</th>
<th>Female Headcount</th>
<th>Total Headcount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Inspector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chief Inspector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Chief Inspector</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Inspector</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Primary Inspector</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20 November 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Divisional Inspector</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Inspector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Years Inspector</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS): Non-Administrative Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director of NEPS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Psychologist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Non-Administrative Staff/ Professional and Technical staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Quantity Surveyor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity Surveyor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Architect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural Assistant</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Statistician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistician</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Executive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Counsel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siolta Coordinator</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Services Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor of Cleaners</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaners</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Operative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephonist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Driver</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>432</td>
<td>1057</td>
<td>1489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Above figures exclude staff on long term leave and staff loaned/seconded out

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

121. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement
of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47962/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The following tables give details of the special advisers appointed in my Department since the current Government came into office on the 14th June 2017.

Mr. Richard Bruton, T.D.
Minister for Education & Skills
14/6/17 to 16/10/2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Cluskey</td>
<td>14/6/17 to 16/10/18</td>
<td>Transfer to Department of Communications, Climate Action &amp; Environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conor Quinn</td>
<td>14/6/17 to 23/9/17</td>
<td>Redundancy/Severance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah O’Neill</td>
<td>25/9/17 to 16/10/18</td>
<td>Transfer to the Department of Communications, Climate Action &amp; Environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. Joe McHugh, T.D.
Minister for Education & Skills
17/10/18 to Present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark O’Doherty</td>
<td>17/10/18 to Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Carty</td>
<td>17/10/18 to Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ms. Mary Mitchell O’Connor, T.D.
Minister of State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roy Dooney</td>
<td>14/6/17 to Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynda McQuaid</td>
<td>25/7/17 to Present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mr. John Halligan, T.D.
Minister of State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SERVICE</th>
<th>REASON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michelle Clancy</td>
<td>21/6/17 to 18/5/19</td>
<td>Resignation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony McFeely</td>
<td>29/5/19 to Present</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Sick Pay Scheme**

122. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) will be cleared to return to teaching; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48000/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The provisions of the Sick
Leave Scheme for Registered Teachers employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools are contained in my Department’s Circular Letter 0054/2019 which issued on 01 September 2019 and is published on my Department’s website.

The granting of Sick Leave to a teacher who is ill is intended to provide an adequate opportunity for that teacher to recover from the illness and its’ effects so that he/she may make an early return to duty without a likelihood of a relapse into illness.

Employers have a duty under Section 8 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 to “ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the safety, health and welfare at work of his or her employees”. In order to discharge their management responsibilities effectively, it is essential that employers have access to professional occupational health advice on medical fitness for work. An Occupational Health Service (OHS) is in place to provide employers with occupational health advice in relation to teachers’ fitness for work.

The teacher referred to by the Deputy is in permanent employment and is currently on paid sick leave. His employer has made a referral to the OHS for an independent medical assessment on the teachers’ fitness for work in accordance with the terms of the Sick leave Scheme.

**School Transport Eligibility**

123. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if students that cannot obtain a placement in a post-primary school (details supplied) in County Kerry will be made eligible for school transport to the next nearest post-primary school; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48019/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually. The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Children who are eligible for school transport and who complete the application process on time are accommodated on school transport services where such services are in operation. Children who are not eligible for school transport, but who complete the application process on time, are considered for spare seats that may exist after eligible children have been facilitated; such seats are referred to as concessionary seats. Where the number of applications from ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available, tickets are allocated using an agreed selection process.

In cases where the Department is satisfied that the nearest school is full, eligibility for school transport will be determined based on the distance that children reside from their next nearest school having regard to ethos and language. If a family has further information in regard to the closest school being full they should contact School Transport Section of my Department. Further information in this regard is available on my Department’s website www.education.ie.
124. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) will receive funding. [48022/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is currently reviewing the long term accommodation needs of the school in question.

The National Development Plan (NDP) provides for an €8.4 billion investment in school buildings over the period 2018 to 2027 to deliver on NDP and National Planning Framework objectives through addressing the twin priorities of catering for demographics and ensuring a strengthened focus on refurbishment of existing school stock. This investment will result in an almost doubling of the capital budget for school buildings - €540m in 2018 rising to an annual average of circa. €1 billion in the second half of the NDP period.

**Departmental Data**

125. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48035/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** I can confirm to the Deputy that in the event that a member of staff in my Department is concerned about bullying, harassment or sexual harassment at their place of work they are advised of the anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy for the Irish Civil Service, entitled “Dignity at Work”, which is published by the Department of Public Expenditure & Reform.

During the period stated in the Deputy’s question, my Department has not received any complaints under the said policy.

**School Transport Eligibility**

126. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to providing additional school transport for a student (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48055/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):** School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

There are currently over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres annually. The purpose of the scheme is, having regard to available resources, to support the transport to and from school of children who reside remote from their nearest school.

In general children are eligible for school transport if they meet the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

Bus Éireann endeavours to ensure that a reasonable level of transport service is provided for each eligible child. In general, transport for children with special educational needs is provided
from home to school and from school to home during normal school opening and closing times.

Bus Éireann has advised that they can accommodate the child referred to by the Deputy on a school transport service to their home on Wednesday afternoons but it is not possible to facilitate alternative school transport arrangements.

Grant Payments

127. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Education and Skills the estimated cost in 2020 if the ancillary grant increased by €7 per pupil; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48061/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The estimated full year cost of increasing the rate of ancillary grant by €7.00 per pupil in primary schools is circa €4 million.

Improvements have been made in recent years for the restoration of grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant has increased by €22 since 2016, in order to enable primary schools to implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

Departmental Staff Data

128. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48070/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): During the period stated in the Deputy’s question no officials at my Department were dismissed or suspended from duty.

Departmental Expenditure

129. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48122/19]


A launch event for this announcement took place in Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, Balbriggan. The costs for this launch are set out in the following table.
### School Transport Provision

130. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if consideration will be given to provide additional transport by Bus Éireann for students (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48160/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy John Halligan):**

School transport is a significant operation managed by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department.

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

In the 2018/2019 school year over 117,500 children, including over 13,000 children with special educational needs, were transported in over 5,000 vehicles on a daily basis to primary and post-primary schools throughout the country covering over 100 million kilometres at a cost of over €200m in 2018.

Children are generally eligible for school transport if they satisfy the distance criteria and are attending their nearest school.

All children who are eligible for school transport and who completed the application process on time have been accommodated on school transport services where such services were in operation for the 2019/20 school year.

Children who are not eligible for school transport may apply for transport on a concessionary basis only and were facilitated where spare seats were available after eligible children have been accommodated. Where the number of ineligible children exceeds the number of spare seats available Bus Éireann allocates tickets for the spare seats using an agreed selection process.

In regard to the area referred to by the Deputy, Bus Éireann has confirmed that all eligible and concessionary children who completed the application and payment process within timelines have been accommodated on transport services in the current school year.

### Departmental Expenditure

131. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48188/19]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh):** My Department spent €4,190.30 on bottled water during the period 1st January, 2019 to 31st October, 2019. My Department has not incurred any costs with regard to disposable coffee cups.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Event Management by OPW (stage, lighting, sound)</td>
<td>€12,405.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production of video for launch</td>
<td>€11,869.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>€418.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>€24,693.50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
132. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48205/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): My Department takes a proactive approach to the publication of a wide range of official information and the ‘publication scheme’ is regularly updated in accordance with the “Model Scheme” provided for in section 8 of the FOI Act, 2014. The scheme is readily accessible and prominently published under the Freedom of Information section of my Department’s website www.education.ie.

A Model Scheme was first published in April 2016 following cross departmental agreement on the contents to be included therein. It was subsequently updated as part of an upgrading of my department’s website in November 2017. Information is published under six key headings:

1. Information about the Department of Education and Skills
2. Services provided or to be provided to the public
3. Decision making process or major policy proposals
4. Financial information
5. Procurement information
6. FOI Disclosure Log

The practice within my Department is for routine publication of appropriate information to avoid the need for an FOI request. Rather than any scheduled overall update, the information within the scheme is under constant revision to ensure that it is kept relevant and up to date by the respective business units.

Schools Facilities

133. Deputy Brendan Smith asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for the upgrading and provision of new facilities by a school (details supplied) will be progressed without further delay; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48217/19]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department is in receipt of an application, for additional school accommodation, from the school authority in question.

The application is currently under assessment. The school authorities will be contacted directly as soon as the assessment process is completed.

Departmental Expenditure

134. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48244/19]
Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Joe McHugh): The Department’s costs in relation to photography, advertising, video production and major press launches for the years specified are available at the following links..

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumenta-

Citizenship Applications

135. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question No. 100 of 13 February 2019, if the case of the persons in County Mayo will be re-examined in view of the decision by the Court of Appeal to overturn as unworkable the High Court finding that applicants for citizenship must have unbroken residence here in the year before they apply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47897/19]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I can inform the Deputy that the position remains as advised in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 100 of 13th February 2019.

The statutory conditions for naturalisation set out in the Irish Nationality & Citizenship Act 1956, as amended, require that an applicant have a period of 1 year’s continuous residence in the State immediately before the date of application. In addition, an applicant must have four years residence in the State during the 8 years immediately preceding that period (in the case of an application based on being the spouse or civil partner of an Irish citizen the Act reduces this further period to 2 years during the preceding 4 years).

Applicants must therefore establish that they have been resident in the State for these periods in order to be eligible for naturalisation. To this end, applicants should submit evidence with their application verifying that they satisfy the residency requirements for naturalisation.

Applicants should also note that compliance with the statutory conditions for naturalisation set out in the 1956 Act does not automatically mean that an applicant will be granted a certificate of naturalisation as the grant of a certificate of naturalisation is, by law, discretionary.

It is therefore very important for applicants to note that any absences from the State in excess of six weeks during the year immediately preceding the date of their application could result in a refusal to grant a certificate of naturalisation notwithstanding that they may have satisfied the statutory conditions for same set out in the 1956 Act.

Where applicants are absent from the State in excess of six weeks during the year immediately preceding the date of their application the policy is to only grant a certificate of naturalisation if satisfied that the travel was demonstrably unavoidable or due to exceptional circumstances. Applicants who find themselves in this position should submit as much information as possible with their application to verify that any travel outside of the State in excess of six weeks during the year immediately preceding their application was unavoidable or due to exceptional circumstances.

Every application for naturalisation is considered having regard to circumstances of the
individual applicant, the statutory conditions for naturalisation set out in the 1956 Act and the policy on the need for applicants to be physically present in the State for the full duration of the year immediately preceding the date of application.

The applications for naturalisation in respect of the persons referred to by the Deputy were reviewed and the position remains as stated in the original decision. The applicants were informed of this by letters dated 24 October 2018.

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 conditions for naturalisation prescribed in the Act.

Queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to 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 is, in the Deputy’s view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### Departmental Expenditure

136. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47925/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The availability of mobile devices is a critical enabler which supports the work carried out across my Department and its Agencies. These devices are subject to the IT Acceptable Use Policy and specific policies with respect to mobile device use and security.

The following table sets out the amount spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff under my Department’s ICT Shared Service for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. Mobile phone costs in the Department are not broken down by grade.

The ICT Shared Service covers the core Department and 33 other public sector bodies (agencies, executive offices, commissions of inquiry etc.), two which are in other Departments – the Charities Regulator in the Department of D/Community and Rural Development and the Children’s Detention Campus in Oberstown, which is under the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>YEAR TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€136,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€142,635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€117,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 to date</td>
<td>€150,495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My Department has a contract with Vodafone to supply mobile phones which is next due to expire on 1 March 2020.
The contract was procured in accordance with public sector procurement guidelines and under the relevant framework of the Office of Government Procurement. OGP frameworks are designed to ensure that the most economically advantageous tender is selected in each case. My Department has a billing arrangement under the contract for an agreed set bundle cost per user, which covers mobile phone calls, texts and pooled data. This prevents users from exceeding their own bundle and incurring higher costs for non-bundle calls, texts or data. In addition, all users are precluded from sending premium texts and appropriate roaming settings are applied for officials travelling abroad for work.

Departmental Staff Data

137. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47951/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise 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.

Ministerial Advisers Data

138. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47968/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Ms. Sarah Kavanagh and Ms. Caroline Murphy are currently employed as special advisers in my Department. Ms. Kavanagh serves as a political and policy adviser and Ms. Murphy serves as a communications adviser.

Ms. Kavanagh was appointed on 15 June 2017, following my appointment as Minister for Justice and Equality. Ms. Murphy was appointed on 10 April, 2018, replacing Mr. Tom Fabozzi who served as a special adviser in my Department from 15 June 2017 until 6 April 2018.

Having regard to the significant legislative programme that I am responsible for, Mr. Robert Bourke BL was appointed to the position of legal adviser in my Department from March to December 2018.

During the period of office of Ms. Frances Fitzgerald as Minister for Justice and Equality, Ms. Marion Mannion, Mr. Stephen O’Shea and Mr. Matthew Lynch served as special advisers. All were appointed in May 2016 and served in their respective roles until June 2017.

There are no special advisers appointed to the Minister of State in my Department, Mr. David Stanton T.D.

Mr. Pat Breen T.D. is the Minister for State for Data Protection at my Department and the Department of the Taoiseach. He is also Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise and Innovation and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Mr. Finian McGrath T.D. is the Minister of State with my Department with special responsibility for Disability issues. He is also Minister of State at the Department of Employment
Affairs and Social Protection and the Department of Health.

The staffing arrangements in respect of both Minister of State Breen and Minister of State McGrath are the responsibility of their respective parent Departments.

**Garda Transport Data**

139. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda cars, jeeps and motorcycles attached to the Garda Dublin north roads policing unit as of 31 December 2018 and 12 November 2019, in tabular form; if the number of Garda vehicles allocated to the unit has decreased over the past few years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47979/19]

**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.

**National Traveller-Roma Integration Strategy**

140. **Deputy Jim O'Callaghan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy Steering Group has meet in 2018 and to date 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47995/19]

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

The Government is committed to improving the quality of life of members of the Travelling community. As the Deputy will be aware, in June 2017, I published the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021 (NTRIS). The Strategy represents a whole of Government approach to bring about meaningful change and progress for the Traveller and Roma community in Ireland. It brings government departments and agencies together along with representatives of both Traveller and Roma communities to bring a focus to the issues which affect them most in a structured way.

I chair the quarterly meetings of the NTRIS Steering Group, which held its most recent meeting on 16 October, 2019. The Group met three times in 2018 (March, July and October) and four times in 2019 (January, April, July and October).

**Departmental Data**

141. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48041/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Department of Justice and Equality is committed to protecting dignity and respect across the organisation and ad-
hers to the Dignity at Work Policy, an anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy for the Civil Service which is available at https://hr.per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/here.pdf

This Policy aims to promote respect, dignity, safety, and equality in the workplace, and sets out several core principles, including:

- Every member of staff has a right to work in an environment free from bullying, harassment and sexual harassment;
- Each individual has a responsibility to ensure that his/her behaviour reflects a culture of dignity and respect;
- All complaints or queries raised in respect of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment will be treated seriously, fairly and in confidence.

The Policy also sets out procedures as to how complaints and queries are handled, and highlights the use of mediation as a valuable tool in addressing issues where appropriate.

During the period referred to by the Deputy, the Department has received and investigated six complaints, broken down by year in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Garda Warrants

142. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of outstanding bench warrants as of 14 November 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48047/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have asked An Garda Síochána to provide information in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy. The information requested is detailed and it was not possible to complete the task in the time available. I have requested the Commissioner to provide me with this information and I will provide it directly to the Deputy once it is received.

Garda Transport Data

143. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Garda cars and vans attached to each Garda district in the Donegal Garda division as of 31 December 2018 and 11 November 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48059/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The resources provided by Government to An Garda Síochána have reached record levels, with an allocation for 2019 of €1.76 billion and this is increasing further to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for 2020.

Very significant capital investment is also being made in An Garda Síochána. €10 million
was made available for the Garda fleet this year. A further €9 million will be provided next year as part of an overall investment of €46 million in the Garda fleet between 2016 and 2021. I am informed that this year’s funding is being used for the purchase and fit-out of over 300 vehicles. My intention is that a further €1 million funding for the fleet will be included in additional funding to be provided to the Garda Vote before the end of the year.

It is important to be clear that under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner has responsibility for management of An Garda Síochána. He is responsible for the allocation and efficient use of Garda resources, in light of operational demands. As Minister I have no direct role in these matters. I understand however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review, to ensure their optimum use.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that a total of 65 vehicles were assigned to the Garda fleet in Donegal Division as at 31 December 2018; and a total of 62 vehicles were assigned to the Garda fleet in Donegal Division as at 18 November 2019. The following table, provided to me by the Garda authorities, sets out the breakdown of those totals by category of vehicle and District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>2018 Cars</th>
<th>2018 Vans</th>
<th>2019 (as of 11 November) Cars</th>
<th>2019 (as of 11 November) Vans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballyshannon</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buncrana</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letterkenny</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Deputy may also wish to be aware that a further 12 vehicles are due to be allocated in the near future to the North West Region in which Donegal is located.

**Immigration Data**

144. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons in the asylum process that were granted programme refugee status, convention refugee status, subsidiary protection, permission to remain under the International Protection Act 2015 and leave to remain under section B of the Immigration Act 1999 at first instance and final decision stage, respectively to date in 2019, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48063/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I can inform the Deputy that my Department does not grant Programme Refugee Status so I am unable to provide figures on this. Programme Refugees who come to Ireland do so at the invitation of the Irish government. They are interviewed by my officials and undergo security screening through an Garda Síochána prior to their arrival in the State and arrive with status as refugees already granted.

Figures in relation to convention refugee status, subsidiary protection and permission to remain under the International Protection Act 2015 at first instance and final decision stage are set out in the table below. Permissions granted under Section 3 of the Immigration act 1999 do not have first instance decisions just a final decision.
Recommenda-
tions to grant
Refugee Status
Recommenda-
tions to grant
Subsidiary
Protection
Decisions to
grant Permis-
sion to Remain
under the
International
protection Act
2015
Decisions
to Granted
Permission to
Remain under
the International
Protection
Act following
review
Permissions
granted under
Section 3 of the
Immigration
Act 1999

First Instance 597 117 242 141
Final Decision Stage 657 56 267

* Figures for October are provisional. While the statistics are correct at time of issuing, they may change due to data cleansing. Final decisions made by my Department relate only to decisions made in the year not when the application was made.

Departmental Staff Data

145. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48076/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Compliance with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour is a condition of employment within the Department of Justice and Equality. When a concern arises about the conduct or performance of an individual, their line manager will initially address it as a management issue through discussion and appropriate assistance.

If no resolution is reached, or, where more serious circumstances arise, the Civil Service Disciplinary Code (Circular 19/2016) is applied. This Code outlines the procedure for dealing with disciplinary matters, including grounds for dismissal in the Civil Service and is available online at:


New entrants to the Civil Service are appointed on the basis of a one-year probationary contract. If the new entrant does not reach the required standards during this period, the termination of their contract is carefully considered. The legislative provisions governing probation are set out in the Civil Service Regulation Act 1956 (as amended).

Since 2016, there have been nine dismissals from my Department, as outlined in the table below. Given the small number of individuals in question, it is not possible to set out the reasons for dismissal in these cases, as to do so may lead to a disclosure of personal information with respect to identifiable individuals.

There were no suspensions during the period referred to.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of staff dismissed by year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>* 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legal Services Regulation

146. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if members of an authority (details supplied) are required to provide a tax clearance certificate under the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015 (as amended); if so, his views on same; his plans to take further action on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48113/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Legal Services Regulatory Authority, which is independent in the performance of its functions, comprises eleven members including a lay majority and a lay Chair whose names are put forward for nomination by ten nominating bodies prescribed in the Act to represent a balance of interests between legal service providers and those consumers who avail of their services. The members of the Authority are appointed from those nominees by the Government, a resolution approving such appointment having been passed by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

Under this framework, the terms of membership of the Legal Services Regulatory Authority are governed by the relevant provisions set out in Part 2 of the Legal Services Regulation Act 2015, particularly section 9 of the Act which sets out the relevant membership qualifications, criteria and procedures.

Beyond that, it would not be appropriate for me to comment specifically on the issue raised by the Deputy as I understand it concerns matters that are the subject of ongoing court proceedings and are, therefore, *sub judice*.

Departmental Expenditure

147. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48128/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to inform the Deputy that no expenditure was incurred by my Department on public relations, promotion or advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 or Project Ireland 2040.

Garda Strength

148. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the strength of An Garda Síochána at the latest stage of audit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48163/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 as amended, the Garda Commissioner has responsibility for management of An Garda Síochána and for the allocation and efficient use of Garda resources. This includes responsibility for deployment of personnel. As Minister I have no direct role in these matters. I understand however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.
A record €1.76 billion was allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019 and this is increasing to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for 2020. With the benefit of this sustained investment, An Garda Síochána is a growing organisation.

We currently have approximately 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,900 Garda staff. And as part of the Government’s plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line. Since the reopening of the Garda Training College in 2014, approximately 2,800 new Gardaí members have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties in communities throughout the country. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest at the end of this month.

A breakdown of Garda numbers is available on my Department’s website and is updated every month with the latest data provided by An Garda Síochána. This information is available at the following link:


Information on Garda staff is available at the following link:

http://justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Staff

For more general information on the Garda workforce and additional Garda facts and figures, the Deputy may also wish to see the information on the links below:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Garda Data

149. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí available for duty in the past six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48165/19]

**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.

A record €1.76 billion was allocated to the Garda Vote for 2019, as well as capital investment amounting to €92 million this year. I am pleased to have secured an overall increase of €122 million to increase An Garda Síochána’s budget for 2020 to an unprecedented €1.882 billion for next year.

This investment is supporting the sustained growth of the organisation. We currently have approximately 14,200 Gardaí nationwide, supported by over 2,900 Garda staff.

And as part of the Government’s plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, there is ongoing and increased recruitment both of new Gardaí as well as Garda staff, allowing for redeployment of Gardaí to operational duties at the front-line.

Since the reopening of the Garda Training College in 2014, approximately 2,800 new Garda
members have attested and been assigned to frontline policing duties in communities throughout the country. Another 200 probationer Gardaí are due to attest next week.

Further, the Garda Commissioner’s decision to recruit a net 600 Garda staff in 2019 will allow for the redeployment of approximately 500 experienced Gardaí to frontline and visible policing duties by the end of this year. The funding provided in Budget 2020 will also allow for the recruitment of up to 700 new Gardaí and additional Garda staff, the balance of which will be for the Commissioner to decide based on operational needs.

The information requested by the Deputy is available on my Department’s website at

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Garda_Workforce

For more general information on Garda facts and figures, the Deputy may also wish to see the information on the link below:

http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/An_Garda_Siochana_facts_and_figures

Garda Data

150. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of women members of An Garda Síochána; the extent to which this number has fluctuated in the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48166/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am informed by the Commissioner that the total number of women in all ranks of An Garda Síochána as of the 31 October 2019, the latest date for which figures are currently available was 3,807 or approximately 27% of total Garda strength. This compares favourably with the total of 3,130 or 21.7% of the total strength on 31 December 2008.

For the Deputy’s information the following table, as supplied to me by the Commissioner, sets out the number of women in An Garda Síochána over the past five years, as requested by the Deputy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2019 (at 31 October)</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>3807</td>
<td>3759</td>
<td>3592</td>
<td>3392</td>
<td>3324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures as at 31 October 2019

As this table shows, the number of women in An Garda Síochána has steadily increased. This is particularly so in the last decade- the percentage of women in An Garda Síochána has risen from 18.5% in 2006 to just under 27% today. I understand that this is above the European average. In the same period, I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of female superintendents, inspectors and sergeants has doubled in the organisation.

The Deputy may be interested to know that in the course of its work, the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland (CoFPI) held semi-structured focus group discussions with female Garda members to explore the experiences of female Garda personnel regarding their careers, training and development and future prospects. Among the recommendations made in the CoFPI report, which the Government adopted in December 2018, is the reform of the current roster and greater flexibility of work practices which would enhance the attractiveness and job satisfaction of a career in An Garda Síochána.
In addition, the report also recommended that An Garda Síochána should reflect the diversity of Irish society, not only in gender and ethnicity, but also in terms of socioeconomic, educational and geographical backgrounds and that they would need to develop recruitment strategies which reach a more diverse intake.

A concerted effort is being made to encourage women and minority communities to consider a career in An Garda Síochána so that its membership reflects the community that it serves. Recent recruitment campaigns have made a significant effort through online videos and other media to attract candidates from minority communities and diverse social groups. In the most recent recruitment campaign a series of videos and text were produced in multiple languages including English, Irish, French, Spanish, Italian and Arabic. They were published on the Garda Facebook page which has more than 180,000 followers.

While the current number of women members in An Garda Síochána is broadly in line with the percentage of women in police services across England and Wales, there is clearly scope for further improvement. I expect that the above steps being taken by An Garda Siochana will ensure that the membership of the organisation can evolve to more closely reflect the society that it serves.

Courts Service Data

151. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons male and female, respectively, on bail in respect one or more offences and repeat offences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48167/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have made enquiries with the Courts Service in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy and I am advised that the information sought is not available in searchable format. Compiling the data requested would require manual examination of each court record, which would require a disproportionate use of resources.

More generally, I note that the decision to grant bail in any particular case is a matter for the presiding Judge, who is independent in the exercise of his or her judicial functions. There is also a Constitutional presumption in favour of the grant of bail as, under Irish Law, a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The Criminal Justice Act 2017 strengthens the operation of the bail system with the aim of making the law as effective as possible in protecting the public against crimes committed by persons on bail.

Under the Act, a Court, in considering an application for bail, is required to have regard to persistent serious offending by an applicant for bail and the nature and seriousness of any danger presented by the grant of bail to a person charged with an offence that carries a penalty of 10 years’ imprisonment or more. The Act also provides for the Court to have the power, in certain circumstances, to hear evidence from the victim of an alleged offence before a decision on bail is taken.

Where an accused person is granted bail, the Act provides for stricter bail terms for repeat serious offenders, strengthens Garda powers to deal with breaches of bail, increases the use of curfews, and, where requested by Gardaí, allows for the introduction of electronic tagging for those on bail in certain circumstances.
20 November 2019

Missing Persons Data

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons listed as missing persons; the extent to which this number has fluctuated in the past six years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48168/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Deputy will appreciate that in accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the administration and management of An Garda Síochána is a matter for the Garda Commissioner.

I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matters raised by the Deputy. I will write directly to the Deputy once I receive it.

Judicial Appointments

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies for judges at District, Circuit or High Court level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48169/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** Judicial appointments are made by the President acting on the advice of the Government in accordance with articles 13.9 and 35.1 of the Constitution. Accordingly, it is my intention to bring forward, in the coming weeks, a Memorandum for Government, seeking approval for the filling of the remaining vacancies. Ensuring access to justice, including maintaining adequate judicial resources within the courts, is a priority for Government.

I wish to advise the Deputy that there are currently 7 judicial vacancies between the District Court, Circuit Court and High Court (5 of which were addressed at Cabinet last week) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Court</th>
<th>Number of vacancies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Court</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circuit Court</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Court</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At its meeting of 11 November 2019 the Government agreed to nominate five ordinary judges for appointment, by the President of Ireland, to the High Court (to fill 1 vacancy which arose on 17 June 2019 and 4 vacancies which arose on 4 November 2019). Arrangements are currently being made with regard to their appointments.

Organised Crime

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the degree to which An Garda Síochána remains in contact with Europol and Interpol in the pursuit of organised crime; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48170/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** An Garda Síochána is making important progress in tackling organised crime and targets organised criminal groupings with all available resources. This includes cooperation at levels - local, national and international level - in partnership with relevant stakeholders and in particular other policing agencies.
I am informed that at the international level, An Garda Síochána utilises the available international mechanisms for police cooperation and training including CEPOL, Interpol, and Europol. Garda Liaison Officers are based, on a full-time basis, in other EU Member States, including the Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, Spain and Portugal.

Garda Liaison Officers are also based at Europol. I am informed by the Garda authorities that in accordance with the Europol Act 2012 An Garda Síochána has a permanent Garda representation in Europol Headquarters, The Hague. An Garda Síochána is also represented on the Management Board of Europol and on the Heads of Europol National Units.

The Irish Liaison Bureau in The Hague together with the Europol National Unit based in Garda Headquarters ensure continuous contact between An Garda Síochána and Europol on all areas of Europol mandated competence. In particular, I am informed that Gardaí from Special Crime Operations and the Special Detective Unit regularly interact with Europol and are involved in thematic and operational meetings.

I am further informed that two Garda members are seconded to Interpol Headquarters in Lyon, France and An Garda Síochána is represented on the Interpol European Committee. An Garda Síochána engages the Interpol network on a daily basis in the investigation of organised crime both nationally and internationally.

Finally I am advised that An Garda Síochána also continues to participate in joint and multi-disciplinary and multi-jurisdictional investigations, within the European Union and worldwide. Successful investigations, prosecutions and disruptions of criminal activities continue to be achieved in this way.

Prison Service Data

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of prison places available nationally; the degree to which overcrowding exists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48171/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** To ensure that information is made available to the widest possible range of stakeholders, the Irish Prison Service collates and publishes the prisoner population breakdown on a daily basis. This information is available on the website of the Irish Prison Service website www.irishprisons.ie (in the Information Centre, under Statistics & Information – Daily Prisoner Population). The number of prisoners incarcerated and the bed capacity in each prison is included in that information.

I can inform the Deputy that the total number of prisoners in custody on 18 November 2019 was 4,009, compared to a bed capacity of 4,244. This represents an occupancy level of 94%. Almost all of the closed institutions are operating at or near full capacity.

It is important to note that the Irish Prison Service must accept all prisoners committed by the Courts. The prisoner population varies over time depending on a range of factors.

An audit of existing accommodation is underway, in order to identify where additional spaces can be brought on stream. The construction of the female prison in Limerick as well as a new wing for Limerick male prison are underway. Together they will provide 158 new spaces.

I am further advised that plans are advanced for the re-opening of accommodation not currently being used within the prison system. This includes the re-opening of the Training Unit which will provide over 90 additional spaces.
Where the number of prisoners exceeds the maximum capacity in any prison, I am informed that the Prison Service makes very effort to deal with this through a combination of inter-prison transfers and Temporary Release. Decisions in relation to temporary release are considered on a case-by-case basis. The safety of the public is paramount when those decisions are made.

The Deputy may be interested to know for example that Community Return is an initiative whereby carefully selected prisoners, serving sentences from one to eight years, can be granted reviewable temporary release coupled with a requirement to do community service work. Since its inception, 2,279 prisoners have been released to take part in this scheme. There were also 2,460 prisoners serving sentences between 3 and 12 months released to take part in the Community Support Scheme.

**Garda Promotions**

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of unfilled promotional positions throughout An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48172/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The Garda Commissioner is responsible for management of An Garda Síochána and for the allocation and efficient use of Garda resources, including deployment of personnel. As Minister, I have no direct role in the matter. I am assured however that Garda management keeps the distribution of resources under continual review in the context of crime trends and policing priorities, to ensure their optimum use.

Appointments to the ranks of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner are made by Government on the nomination of the Authority.

Since 1 January 2017, the process of selecting and appointing members to the ranks of Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and Superintendent lies with the Policing Authority. As Minister, I have no role in the selection and appointment of candidates to these ranks with the exception of members of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), whose appointment by the Authority must be approved by the Government. I understand that the Authority held competitions for each of these ranks in 2017 and for Superintendent and Chief Superintendent ranks in 2018. A panel of candidates for both ranks was established by the Authority. The existence of panels ensures that as vacancies arise they can be filled without any undue delay.

Appointments to the ranks of sergeant and inspector are a matter for the Commissioner under section 14 of Garda Síochána Act 2005.

I am advised by the Commissioner that competitions for promotion to the rank of sergeant and inspector were held last year in order to bring the number in these ranks up to the full strength as agreed under the Employment Control Framework (ECF). The allocation of successful candidates is currently underway, with 423 newly promoted Sergeants and 190 new promoted Inspectors having been appointed to date.

The Policing Authority is responsible for approving the number and grades of Garda Staff (with the consent of the Ministers for Justice and Public Expenditure and Reform) and since taking over this function has given approval for 378 positions in An Garda Síochána. Of these 378 positions, I am advised by the Garda authorities that a total of 56 positions are currently vacant and that recruitment is in train. In some cases, the Authority, in approving posts, advises on the way in which they are to be filled, particularly in the case of professional, technical and specialist posts.
In common with Government Departments, An Garda Síochána also conducts internal promotional competitions as appropriate, which affords staff the opportunity to progress in their careers within the organisation if they so wish.

All positions at Executive Officer grade and above are potential promotional opportunities for Garda Staff. I am informed by the Garda Authorities that An Garda Síochána is recruiting through the Public Appointments Service for posts from Principal Officer level to Executive Officer level. There is also a live internal Assistant Principal Officer competition underway and I understand that it is planned to hold an internal competition at Higher Executive Officer level early next year. Panels created as a result of these competitions will be used to fill posts as approved by the Policing Authority and in accordance with centrally agreed sequences.

In addition, Garda Staff in An Garda Síochána are civil servants of the state and as such are entitled, if otherwise qualified, to participate in interdepartmental competitions for promotion or open competitions for any post within the Civil Service conducted by the Public Appointments Service.

For the Deputy’s information I have set out in the following table the vacancies at each rank as compared to the ECF as of 18 November 2019, the latest date for which figures are currently available, as supplied by the Garda Commissioner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vacancies at each rank as compared to the ECF as of 18 November 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D/Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sergeant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Expenditure**

157. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48194/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** The policy of my Department is, in accordance with best practice and the principles of sustainability, to reduce, reuse and recycle. Further, as the Deputy may be aware, a decision of Government in January 2019 instructed Government Departments to avoid the direct or indirect purchase of single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery or drinking straws.

Accordingly, as a matter of Department policy, plastic cups are no longer supplied. Disposable cups are not generally provided at staff water dispensers and reusable cups are available. Where dispensers are made available for use by visitors or members of the public and it is not practical to provide reusable cups, the Department provides fully compostable drinking cups.

Similarly, where catering is supplied by outside providers, those providers are informed that single-use plastics should not be used.
Bottled water is provided only in exceptional circumstances and where alternatives are not available. This may arise, for example, when large numbers are attending an event, or in the case of outdoor events.

The spend on disposable cups to date in 2019 is €678. The spend on bottled water in the same period is €4,814.

Freedom of Information Data

158. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48211/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, the Freedom of Information Act 2014 requires public bodies to have a Publication Scheme. My Department’s Publication Scheme is available at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/Freedom_of_information. The information published in the scheme is, where possible, made available on the Department’s website or through links to other websites and individual elements are reviewed periodically as changes arise.

My Department has recently undertaken an extensive programme of organisational change. A central element of this programme has been to deliver greater openness around our work and improve the Department’s approach to public engagement. To this end a dedicated Transparency function has been established within my Department. This function provides a focal point for information management and will proactively determine where there is a need for information to be communicated or published.

The Department’s approach to Freedom of Information is consistent with this goal of enhanced openness, and a review of FOI processes is currently underway to ensure that the Department achieves best-in-class standards. This review incorporates an evaluation of the current model in place for dealing Freedom of Information requests and how to adapt or revise this model in the context of the new Departmental structure. The Publication Scheme will be also be reviewed in this context, and the Department is currently in the process of reviewing its broader online presence.

Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service Administration

159. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of the ongoing delays for INIS appointments; the steps he is taking to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48219/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As outlined in responses to previous parliamentary questions, my Department became aware in September 2018 of customers experiencing difficulties booking registration appointments. Some of these difficulties had arisen because third party agents had been able to secure multiple appointments through the use of automatic software.

A set of software fixes was introduced in mid-September 2018 to prevent this abuse of the system. As far as can be determined, this software update has been successful in preventing the block booking of appointments by third party agents. The system is being regularly monitored
in this regard.

However, I am aware that some third party agents continue to book individual appointments with information supplied to them by customers. My Department strongly advises our customers not to provide sensitive personal data to these unregulated agents.

My Department will shortly be tendering for a replacement online appointments system, which is being designed to prevent the block-booking of appointments. This new system will also assist in streamlining and improving the current online booking process. As part of the Service Improvement Plan 2018-2020 for Immigration Service Delivery, a number of other options are also being considered with a view to improving customer service and efficiency as well as meeting the growing demand for registration in Ireland.

Departmental Expenditure

160. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48250/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I wish to advise 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.

Alcohol Sales Legislation

161. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to proceed with the sale of alcohol Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48268/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** It is proposed that the Sale of Alcohol Bill will contain proposals to update the law relating to the sale, supply and consumption of alcohol in licensed premises and registered clubs, by replacing both the Licensing Acts 1833 to 2018 and the Registration of Clubs Acts 1904 to 2008 with streamlined provisions more suited to modern conditions.

These legislative proposals are among a large number of bills under consideration in my Department. It is not possible to indicate when this complex bill will be published at this juncture.

Drug and Alcohol Testing

162. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on recent reports from An Garda Síochána of increasing incidents of drivers driving under the influence of drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48269/19]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I have asked An Garda Síochána to provide information in relation to the matter raised by the Deputy. The information requested is detailed and it was not possible to complete the task in the time available. I have requested the Commissioner to provide me with this information and I will provide it directly to the Deputy once it is received.
163. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within her Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if her Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to her Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47914/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Many of the staff in my Department and its Offices carry out duties which regularly require them to work away from their office location. It is imperative that those staff are provided with technologies that allow them to be as efficient outside of the office as they would when at their desks. In addition, the use of mobile technologies has allowed staff of my Department to carry out tasks while away from the office which traditionally could not be completed until they returned to their desks and this in turn allows their office-based colleagues to be more efficient.

The amount spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff within my Department and its Offices is shown in the following table. A significant project to upgrade older mobile phones was undertaken recently to replace older devices which were becoming unfit for purpose and for which the most up to date operating system and security patches were becoming unavailable. This is reflected in the cost figures for 2019 to date. Costs for 2020 are expected to return to levels comparable with previous years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€15,972.80</td>
<td>€15,678.45</td>
<td>€21,023.10</td>
<td>€123,629.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobile phones are often bought in batches rather than individually for each user and therefore my Department does not have full historical records of costs per grade for each of those years. However, records show the number of mobile phones currently assigned to staff per grade are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>No. of mobile phones assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Operations Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chairman</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Head Services Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective Garda (ODCE)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective Sergeant (ODCE)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forensic Accountant</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Services Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advisor</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Member - Labour Court 7
Minister 3
Ministers Driver 2
Principal Officer 47
Secretary General 1
Service Officer 7
Solicitor 2
Special Advisor 3
Total 306

* The majority of mobile phones assigned to Executive Officer and Higher Executive Officer grades are assigned to Workplace Relations Commission Field Operatives which involves working a large part of their time outside of the office environment.

My Department recently completed a competitive procurement process under the ‘Framework Agreement for the provision of Mobile Voice and Data Communications and Associated Products and Services’ operated by the Office of Government Procurement. Following that process a contract was awarded to Vodafone for two years up to August 2021 with an option to extend the contract for a further period of two years up to August 2023. Choosing the most cost-effective voice, text and data bundles was a significant element considered in the award of this contract.

In addition to choosing the most cost-effective voice, text and data bundles, my Department maintains a number of policies and procedures to ensure that ongoing costs are kept to a minimum and that achieve best value for the taxpayer. These include:

- Requiring a valid written business case, approved at Assistant Secretary level, for all grades below Principal Officer who request the use of a business mobile phone.

- Requiring all staff who are assigned a smart phone to sign an “iDevice Policy”, which sets out, among other things, instructions on how best to minimise usage costs e.g. staff are reminded to connect to local free Wi-Fi connectivity whenever possible.

- Enforcing mobile data roaming caps.

- The regular checking of mobile bills by admin staff.

Departmental Staff Data

164. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of staff in her Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47940/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): Staffing resources are an ongoing priority to ensure my Department’s continued ability to facilitate the wide mission and volume of work in a range of challenging policy areas. This will continue with ongoing day-to-day review of the appropriate staffing mix across my Department in response to known and probable priority areas.

My Department liaises directly with the Public Appointments Service (PAS) and Top-Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) in relation to the filling of posts.
The Secretary General of my Department is one of four Secretaries General leading the delivery of Action 8.5 of the Civil Service Renewal Plan – “To improve gender balance at each level by reviewing supports and policies to ensure these measures are impactful and measurable”.

My Department operates an equal opportunity policy to ensure women and men are assigned equal share of high visibility positions across the Department and its Offices. The Department operates a best fit for the job policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary General</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary (equivalents)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal (and equivalents)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal (and equivalents)</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examiner of Patents (pay relativity to AO)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Officer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Attendant</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ministerial Advisers Data

165. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47957/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Appointments to the positions of Special Adviser are made in line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Instructions to Personnel Officers - Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

Please find below the names of the Special Advisers appointed to Ministers in this Department since the commencement of the Government, the commencement dates of the employment of each and their cessation date where applicable, in the following tabular statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Special Adviser</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jim McGrath</td>
<td>13/6/2016</td>
<td>21/1/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ellen LynchRoy</td>
<td>9/1/2017</td>
<td>13/6/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dooney</td>
<td>23/1/2017</td>
<td>13/6/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Departmental Data**

166. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48030/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department is committed to upholding the key aims of the Dignity at Work Policy, the Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment policy for the Irish Civil Service. My Department is also committed to providing a work environment free from any form of bullying, harassment or sexual harassment. Such behaviour is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Any complaints or issues raised in this area are treated seriously, fairly and in strict confidence. Informal resolution and the use of mediation are strongly encouraged and explored before proceeding to formal investigation, and in many instances have proved successful in resolving matters.

During the period in question, one complaint was lodged in 2017 under Dignity at Work – the Civil Service Anti-bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Competition and Consumer Protection Commission Staff**

167. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of vacant posts at the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission; the length of time each has been vacant for; when the vacancies will be filled; and if she will make

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Special Adviser</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frances Fitzgerald, Tánaiste and Minister for Business Enterprise and Innovation</td>
<td>14/6/2017 to 29/11/2017</td>
<td>Marion Mannion, Matthew Lynch, Aoife Sweeney, Stephen O’Shea</td>
<td>14/6/2017</td>
<td>29/11/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heather Humphreys, Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation</td>
<td>30/11/2017 to date</td>
<td>Lucy Moylan, Pauric McPhillips</td>
<td>30/11/2017</td>
<td>N/AN/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister Pat Breen, Minister of State for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection</td>
<td>19/5/2016 to date</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister John Halligan, Minister of State for Training, Skills, Innovation, Research and Development</td>
<td>19/5/2016</td>
<td>Michelle Clancy, Anthony Feely</td>
<td>14/11/2016</td>
<td>18/5/2019</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to the fact that Minister Halligan’s responsibilities span two departments (this Department and the Department of Education and skills), the Special Adviser to Minister of State John Halligan T.D. is appointed by the Department of Education and Skills.
a statement on the matter. [48062/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) is the statutory body responsible for the enforcement of domestic and EU competition law in the State. Section 9 (5) of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014 provides that the Commission is independent in the performance of its functions. As staffing matters generally are part of the day-to-day operational work of the Commission, I, as Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation, have no direct function in these matters.

The information sought by the Deputy in relation to vacant posts at the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission is set out in the attached table.


Departmental Staff Data

168. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of employees of her Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48065/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): My Department operates within the Civil Service policy framework for Human Resources, and in this regard it carries out its functions in accordance with the circulars and policies set down by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

I have provided information in the statistical table below relevant to my Department.

It should however be noted, that the specific reason for the sanction / action is personal information relevant to the individual concerned and it is the Department’s practice not to share such information to ensure that confidentiality is protected. The sanction / action would however broadly relate to some kind of misconduct as defined under the Disciplinary Code, or relate to an officer not meeting the departmental requirements in respect of satisfactory performance / attendance under the Guidelines on Probation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dismissal/Termination of Contract</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Expenditure

169. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48117/19]
Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The following table provides details of expenditure incurred by my Department and its Offices on the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Promotion/Advertising /PR e.g. radio advertising, print advertising etc.</th>
<th>Amount Spent in 2018 €</th>
<th>Campaign/Project Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted LinkedIn campaign and newspaper advertising to promote awareness among the business and research communities of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the launch of the first call for funding</td>
<td>13,419</td>
<td>To promote awareness of the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and the launch of the first call for funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Promotion/Advertising /PR e.g. radio advertising, print advertising etc.</th>
<th>Amount Spent in 2019 €</th>
<th>Campaign/Project Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Video Production</td>
<td>4,684</td>
<td>Video production for Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund Campaign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brexit Preparations**

170. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which she has identified job creation prospects likely to fill voids arising from Brexit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48161/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): As the Deputy will be aware, a number of studies have been conducted on the economic and trade impacts of Brexit that point to the significant challenges that Brexit presents for employment in key sectors of the economy, and in certain regions of the country that are most exposed to Brexit.

Government has been upfront all along signalling that Brexit is damaging for the economy, gives rise to very few opportunities and is an exercise in damage limitation. Nonetheless, we are working across Government to create the best environment for businesses to grow, to innovate, to be competitive and ultimately, to create jobs.

In previous replies to the Deputy on this issue, I have set out the broad range of Brexit supports and measures put in place by Government as well as through the State Agencies under my remit, principally Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, the Local Enterprise Offices and InterTradeIreland. These initiatives are all aimed at helping businesses to compete, to diversify into new markets, to grow exports and to sustain valuable employment.

The Deputy will also be aware that Budget 2020 was framed from the perspective of a No Deal Brexit. In such a scenario, my Department will have immediate access to an emergency support package of €110 million. Funding will be available on day one of a crash-out to acti-
vate four specific schemes and other measures supporting those businesses most affected. The schemes will be available to vulnerable but viable firms with verifiable Brexit-exposure to help them adjust to the new trading reality and to develop new products and processes for export to new markets.

On a positive note, our economy has performed strongly in recent years with record numbers in employment as evidenced from the latest CSO figures that puts the unemployment rate at 4.8%. However, this strong economic performance cannot be taken for granted and must evolve to meet future challenges.

That is why, in March this year, I launched the Future Jobs Ireland initiative. This is an ambitious, medium-term framework to create a sustainable, resilient and future-oriented economy in Ireland over the years to 2025. Future Jobs Ireland aims to ensure that as our economy changes, and traditional industries and practices are disrupted, workers and enterprises are able to transition successfully. If we adapt now, our enterprises can stay competitive and our society resilient.

On 7 November my Department hosted a Future Jobs Ireland Summit with two hundred attendees from enterprises, representative bodies, academia, public sector and civil society. The aim of the Summit was for attendees to exchange ideas and input to the development of Future Jobs Ireland 2020. Along with the Department of the Taoiseach, my Department is working with other Government Departments and stakeholders to develop new commitments for Future Jobs Ireland 2020 which is expected to launch in early 2020.

Regional development is also a key priority for Government. The Regional Enterprise Plans to 2020 aim to continue to deliver jobs across the country, in every region, and to address the challenges we face, including Brexit. The Plans, which are shaped from the ‘bottom-up’ by regional stakeholders, and overseen by my Department, are crucial in meeting the Government’s ambition to create an additional 200,000 jobs, of which 135,000 are outside the Dublin region, by 2020.

A key objective of each of the plans is to have a further 10 to 15 per cent at work in each region by 2020, with the unemployment rate of each region within one percentage point of the national average. We want to ensure that we are creating quality jobs that are sustainable in the longer term, so that we can secure Ireland’s economic success, in line with the Future Jobs Ireland initiative.

Job Creation

171. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the extent to which innovation and technology continues to be a feature in the creation of new and replacement jobs in the future through innovation and technology; the degree to which she identified the full potential in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48162/19]

Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys): The environment in which our enterprise must grow and thrive is changing. Technological innovation is radically transforming our lives and will continue to do so. Automation, AI and other forms of technological innovation are expected to radically change many jobs, enterprises, and entire industries. The move to a low-carbon economy will also radically change important sectors of the economy and present new opportunities to those firms on the cutting edge of this transition.
Technological change is already impacting several sectors, such as manufacturing, finance, retail and transport. This presents challenges but also new possibilities - certain job roles will disappear or be redefined, and brand-new job roles will appear requiring new and different skillsets. We want Ireland to be at the frontier of technological developments by rapidly adopting new technologies to boost productivity and ensure that Ireland continues to be competitive internationally. To do this, we must enable and encourage innovation across sectors and firms. Increasing investment in research, development and innovation (RD&I) and promoting strong links between enterprise and the research community will assist in ensuring Ireland keeps its relative advantage in the tech world and increase the pace of development of the green economy.

On 10 March 2019, the Government launched Future Jobs Ireland 2019, the first in a series of annual reports as part of a multi-annual framework to ensure our enterprises and workers are resilient and prepared for future challenges and opportunities. This is a whole of Government approach and forms a key part of Ireland’s economic agenda over the medium term.

Future Jobs Ireland focuses on five key Pillars, namely:

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.

Each Pillar sets high level targets for 2025. For Pillar 1: Embracing Innovation and Technological Change, Future Jobs Ireland is targeting an increase in Gross Expenditure on Research & Development intensity from 1.4% to 2.5% of GNP by 2025. It is also aiming for substantial increases in the share of SMEs introducing product or process innovations and with marketing or organisational innovations.

Overall, Future Jobs Ireland 2019 includes 26 meaningful and impactful ambitions supported by 127 deliverables for completion in 2019. Future Jobs Ireland is delivering on a range of Ambitions in Pillar 1: Embracing Innovation and Technological Change. These are:

1. Position Ireland as a leading pioneer in technology adoption by investing in demonstrator sites and developing enabling frameworks and standards
2. Implement a strategic approach to maximise the benefits from digitalisation
3. Position the Public Service to be a leader in technology adoption and innovation
4. Establish Top Teams to realise opportunities presented by technological changes and the move to a low carbon economy
5. Increase the capacity of SMEs to engage in research, development & innovation
6. Incentivise SMEs to invest in new technologies
7. Develop Transition Teams to assist workers and sectors likely to be most challenged by our changing economy

Through Future Jobs Ireland we have issued a further call under the Disruptive Technologies Innovation Fund and are developing further incentives to innovate; we are working to develop Ireland as a centre for developing and testing new technologies; we are delivering policy initia-
tives including an Industry 4.0 Strategy, a National Digital Strategy, and a National Artificial Intelligence Strategy; we are establishing Top Teams in Artificial Intelligence, GovTech and offshore renewables; we are further developing eHealth opportunities; and we are embracing the digital transformation of public services.

I also recognise the importance of innovation in securing a resilient enterprise base. This was reflected in Innovation 2020, Ireland’s national strategy for research and development, science and technology. My officials have now commenced work on a successor strategy to Innovation 2020 which will reflect our priorities in relation to research and innovation. I envisage this being ready for implementation from 2021 on.

My Department and the Department of the Taoiseach are currently working with the other Government Departments and other stakeholders to develop new commitments for inclusion in Future Jobs Ireland 2020 which is expected to launch in early 2020.

Departmental Expenditure

172. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by her Department to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48183/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The expenditure incurred in 2019 to date by my Department and its Offices on bottled water and disposable coffee cups is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department / Office</th>
<th>Bottled Water</th>
<th>Disposable Coffee Cups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department [across 3 Dublin based buildings]</td>
<td>€6,019.48</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Companies Registration Office including the Registry of Friendly Societies [across 2 buildings – Dublin &amp; Carlow]</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Court, Lansdowne House, Dublin 4.</td>
<td>€1,337.03</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement, 16 Parnell Square, Dublin 1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patents Office, Kilkenny</td>
<td>€1,244.04</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Relations Commission [across 5 locations – Carlow, Cork, Dublin, Shannon, Sligo. ]</td>
<td>€4,329.94</td>
<td>€20 *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Incurred in early January 2019 on foot of an order placed in late 2018, prior to the Government’s banning of certain single use plastics.

My Department has a very active “Green Team” with over 30 members spread across the Department and its Offices, and the members drive a range of green initiatives voluntarily in addition to their respective business unit roles.

The work of the “Green Team” focuses on four pillars as part of our internal response to...
the climate action challenge. The four pillars span energy, water usage and conservation, waste management and plant life.

Bottled water coolers are typically provided across the various locations in areas which are accessed by members of the public such as reception and waiting areas, hearing rooms, meeting rooms and by Civil Service staff in our training rooms.

In 2019 we have reduced the number of water coolers in use across the Department offices in the Kildare Street, Dawson Street and the Earlsfort Centre buildings by over 60% and have replaced them with mains water filtration systems, where possible.

The Department does not purchase nor use disposable coffee cups. Staff are encouraged to use keep cups and reusable biodegradable bottles supplied by the Department.

Over the summer 2019, the “Green Team”, in conjunction with the Office of Public Works, undertook some adjustment works on the water flow system underpinning the toilet facilities in the Kildare Street building. Thus far, this has yielded a significant daily saving on water usage by reducing the unaccounted for water by over 50%. We are exploring such adjustments in our other buildings.

In many offices we have also consolidated the use of single waste bins per staff member and moved to centralised bins per floor including enhanced recycling bins and food waste bins. This has significantly reduced the level of general waste along with plastic bags being used for waste collection.


Freedom of Information Data

173. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of her Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48200/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Freedom of Information publication scheme for the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation was last updated and published via its website in August 2018. In line with the provisions of section 8(1)(c) of the FOI act, 2014 the scheme will be reviewed again within 3 years of that date. Material published under the scheme is updated on an ongoing basis.

Departmental Expenditure

174. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48239/19]

**Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The attached table provides details of expenditure incurred by my Department and its Offices on public relations promotion and advertising including multi-media over the period 2016 to date.
20 November 2019

[<a href="https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/debates/questions/supportingDocumenta-
tion/2019-11-20_pq174-table-1-20-11-2019_en.docx ">Table 1</a>]

**Health Services Staff**

175. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if pay restoration issues for section 39 organisation staff have now been fully resolved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48273/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The WRC agreement reached in October 2018 in relation to pay restoration for section 39 organisations provided for pay restoration in relation to 50 ‘pilot organisations’ in the first instance. Pay restoration for these bodies commenced in April of this year with further payments due in 2020 and 2021 as appropriate.

The WRC agreement also states:

“It is recognised that some of the remaining Section 39 organisations (estimated 250 approximately) are likely to have pay restoration issues and a process to address these will be agreed and the parties will commence engagement on this issue during 2019”

There have been initial engagements in recent months between the parties on this matter under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission. It has been acknowledged by management that the resources available to deliver on this initiative will be a significant challenge for the HSE. It is also recognised that significant preparatory work will be required to determine the exact costs for pay restoration to this wider group.

I can confirm that this issue is being progressed by the parties at the Workplace Relations Commission.

**Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

176. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Health his plans in relation to a centre (details supplied) in County Dublin which has reported a funding shortfall of €7 million since 2012 due to the gap between funding from the nursing home support scheme and the significant costs of meeting the high dependency needs of persons living with dementia and has indicated it will need to close its day care facility at the end of 2019. [47878/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** The Nursing Homes Support Scheme, commonly referred to as *Fair Deal*, is a system of financial support for people who require long-term residential care. Participants contribute to the cost of their care according to their means while the State pays the balance of the cost. The Scheme aims to ensure that long-term nursing home care is accessible and affordable for everyone and that people are cared for in the most appropriate settings.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is expected to support 23,042 people at any one time in 2019. The NHSS budget for 2019 saw an increase of €24.3m over 2018 making a total budget of €985.8m for 2019. In 2020, the NHSS will see a further investment in its budget of €45 million, bringing the total annual budget for NHSS to €1.03bn. This substantial investment will provide ongoing long-term residential care over the course of 2020 ensuring that the Scheme continues to deliver affordable and accessible nursing home care for our citizens with long-term care needs.
The National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) has been designated as a body authorised to negotiate with proprietors of non-HSE registered nursing homes to reach agreement in relation to the maximum price(s) that can be charged for the provision of long-term residential care services to Nursing Homes Support Scheme residents. The NTPF established processes are the appropriate mechanism for engagement. The established processes include provision for an NTPF review mechanism where agreement is not initially reached in relation to the price.

The NTPF has statutory independence in the performance of its function and negotiates with a nursing home on an individual basis. The Minister for Health does not have any role in this regard. I understand that the negotiation process is very active at present, with a meeting between the organisations held last week. I strongly encourage continuation of this engagement through the established mechanisms.

In relation to the day care service, the HSE has been in extensive engagement with the St John of God Hospitaller Services Group at St Joseph’s and this engagement is also ongoing. The HSE met with representatives from St. Joseph’s last week on this matter and I understand that this was a positive engagement that will continue over the next short while and I hope it will conclude in a resolution between the parties.

Respite Care Services Provision

177. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health when additional respite services will be provided (details supplied) in counties Cavan and Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47885/19]

**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.

Services for People with Disabilities

178. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when funding will become available to a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47886/19]

**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.

Dietician Service Provision

179. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of dietitians there should be in place per head of population in each CHO under Sláintecare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47894/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Sláintecare is a high-level delivery programme, tasked with delivering a health and social care service that meets the needs of all our population. As part of the implementation of Sláintecare, there will be an introduction of resource allocation models to be implemented on a regional basis. These resource allocation models will be based on the population profile of the regions, which, it is intended, will capture the differing health needs of the region. As committed to in the Sláintecare Action Plan 2019, work is ongoing under the Population-Based Planning Programme to establish population quantum and profile by region, which includes factors such as age, deprivation and ability, with a view to developing a methodology for determining resources and integrated services on a regional basis.

Home Care Packages Data

180. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for home care package applications in County Kildare; the number of open home care package applications being considered in the area; the number of individual homecare packages being provided in the area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47895/19]

**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.

Primary Care Reimbursement Service Payments

181. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health if he will request the HSE PCRS to re-examine the case of a person (details supplied) who has been refused phased dispensing without explanation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47898/19]

182. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the process by which the HSE PCRS sanctions or refuses phased dispensing for individual patients; if a registered medical doctor is consulted in either the decision or in the appeal; if an appeal is permitted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47899/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 and 182 together.

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.

Departmental Expenditure
183. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer [47923/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The table outlines the number of mobile phones and the total cost of purchasing for the specified years. The figures broken down by grade are currently being compiled and I will arrange for them to be forwarded to the Deputy in the coming days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 to date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of phones</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost (£)</td>
<td>5,289</td>
<td>3,795</td>
<td>19,342</td>
<td>25,387</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My Department previously had a contract with Vodafone for the provision of mobile and telephony services, including the provision of mobile phones, which expired in 2016.

In 2016 the Office for Government Procurement advised that my Department continue with the existing supplier until a new framework was established. This new OGP framework is now in place. However, the tender competition to replace this contract was delayed due to competing priorities following the Department’s HQ move to Miesian Plaza.

My Department is at an advanced stage of preparation with the OGP in relation to this tendering process and I expect that process to commence shortly. Use of this OGP framework will ensure value for the taxpayer in relation to these costs.

My Department offers a standard smartphone to officials at Assistant Principal grade and above. Requests for staff at other grades must have a clear business need and be supported by a business case. In exceptional circumstances, a higher specification phone and/or increased data package may be appropriate. Such requests are considered on a case by case basis and must be supported by an appropriate business case. My Department also monitors usage on an ongoing basis to ensure the most economical packages are assigned to each account.

### Hospital Waiting Lists Data

184. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health the waiting times for ENT appointments at Letterkenny University Hospital, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47931/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Reducing waiting time for patients for hospital operations and procedures is a key priority for Government. In this regard, the Government is committed to improving waiting times for hospital appointments and procedures.

Budget 2020 announced that the Government has further increased investment in tackling waiting lists, with funding to the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) increasing from €75 million in 2019 to €100 million in 2020.

My Department is working with the HSE and National Treatment Purchase Fund to develop the Scheduled Care Access Plan 2020. The National Service Plan 2020 will set out HSE
planned activity level for the year ahead, while the NTPF will work with the hospital system to provide additionality to improve access to inpatient/daycase treatment and with a particular focus on hospital outpatient services.

In this regard, I would encourage all hospital groups and individual hospitals to engage with the NTPF to identify waiting list proposals for the remainder of this year and for 2020.

The information requested by the deputy is outlined in the following table.

Letterkenny University Hospital ENT Outpatients Waiting Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waiting Period</th>
<th>0-3 Months</th>
<th>3-6 Months</th>
<th>6-9 Months</th>
<th>9-12 Months</th>
<th>12-15 Months</th>
<th>15-18 Months</th>
<th>18-21 Months</th>
<th>21-24 Months</th>
<th>24-36 Months</th>
<th>36+ Months</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>482</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>271</td>
<td></td>
<td>334</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>4214</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Staff Data

185. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Health the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47949/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The breakdown of the staff in my Department by gender and pay grade as of October 2019 is set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Headcount</th>
<th>FTE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO Equivalent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>122.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP Equivalent</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adviser</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>89.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temp. Clerical Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ministerial Advisers Data

186. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47966/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The information requested is detailed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister/Minister of State</th>
<th>Special Adviser</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date of Applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simon Harris T.D.</td>
<td>Joanne Lonergan</td>
<td>25/05/2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sarah Bardon</td>
<td>20/09/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Majella Fitzpatrick</td>
<td>30/05/2016</td>
<td>14/06/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kathyann Barrett</td>
<td>14/06/2017</td>
<td>07/09/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finian McGrath T.D.</td>
<td>Damian O’Farrell</td>
<td>09/05/2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gerard Maguire</td>
<td>12/09/2016</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Daly T.D.</td>
<td>Darren Hourihane</td>
<td>07/09/2017</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Byrne T.D.</td>
<td>Nicola Clavin</td>
<td>01/05/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Home Care Packages Administration

187. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) will be assessed by the HSE for further homecare hours. [47981/19]

**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 Waiting Lists

188. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Cork will receive an appointment to see a paediatric consultant rheumatologist at Our Lady’s Children’s Hospital, Crumlin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47982/19]

**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 sched-
uled 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.

Nursing Home Services

189. Deputy Stephen Donnelly asked the Minister for Health the infection control measures in place in nursing and residential homes to prevent and tackle flu outbreaks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47985/19]

Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was established in 2007. HIQA is an independent authority established to drive high-quality and safe care for health and social care services in Ireland.

HIQA’s mandate extends across a range of public, private and voluntary sector services. Reporting to the Minister for Health and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, HIQA’s role is to develop standards, inspect and review health and social care services and support informed decisions on how services are delivered.

HIQA operates under the Health Act 2007, which sets out the functions which the Authority is to carry out. HIQA has responsibility for setting standards for healthcare services, and monitoring compliance with those standards. It also regulates facilities providing care for the elderly and those with disabilities, and has a role with regard to inspecting some of the social care services which are accessed by children to determine if they are meeting the relevant National Standards. Section 9 of the Act sets out the grounds under which HIQA may undertake an investigation into a particular service, or may be requested to undertake such an investigation by the Minister for Health.

Following a statutory consultation process and Ministerial approval, HIQA published specific national standards for community health and social care services in Ireland (including nursing and residential homes), which cover infection prevention and control and antimicrobial stewardship. The standards outline 20 standard statements and cover important areas such as communicating well with people who use community health or social care services, involving people in making decisions about their care, providing care in a clean and safe environment and prescribing antimicrobial medication in a safe manner.

Standard 3.4 of this document sets out measures to ensure that outbreaks of infection (including influenza infection) are identified, managed, controlled and documented in a timely and effective manner that such premises are required to implement. These measures are as follows:

- Staff report to their line manager any signs or symptoms of infection in individuals or groups of people or residents to facilitate prevention, early detection and control the spread of infection.

- Staff know who to contact for advice in the event of a suspected or confirmed outbreak and are encouraged to ask for advice from colleagues, such as a community infection prevention and control nurse, the local Department of Public Health and or a consultant microbiologist, if uncertain about the best course of action.

- Any suspected or confirmed outbreaks of infection are promptly notified to the medical officer of health in the relevant Department of Public Health, in line with legislation. Registered
providers of designated centres are also required to report outbreaks of notifiable diseases to HIQA.

- All facilities where care is delivered have a documented outbreak management plan appropriate to the services provided, detailing the action to be taken in the event of an outbreak of infection, in line with relevant national guidelines where they exist.

- Staff clearly communicate with and support people affected by an outbreak in a timely and effective manner.

- All staff implement outbreak control measures as soon as possible to help reduce the impact of the outbreak. Consideration is given to the impact of visiting restrictions on residents and their families.

- A nominated person from the residential care service liaises with specialist staff, such as the community infection prevention and control nurse and the local Department of Public Health, and provides all information necessary to assess and control the outbreak.

Vaccination Programme

190. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if the HSE monitors the number of nursing home patients, public and private, that have been vaccinated against flu; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47986/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Vaccination remains the most effective means of preventing infection by seasonal influenza viruses and can reduce severe disease that can lead to hospitalisation and death.

As the Health Service Executive collects and collates influenza statistics, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Vaccination Programme

191. **Deputy Stephen Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health if private hospitals have been asked to vaccinate staff against the flu; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47987/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Vaccination remains the most effective means of preventing infection by seasonal influenza viruses and can reduce severe disease that can lead to hospitalisation and death.

Each year the HSE reviews, and updates its influenza plans, taking into account lessons learned from previous years with a view to targeting key groups in order to create the greatest impact in terms of people receiving the influenza vaccine. The seasonal influenza vaccination is recommended for persons aged 65 years of age and older, health care workers and people in at risk groups.

On 10th of October, I officially launched the HSE influenza flu vaccine campaign for 2019/2020. This year, for the first time, on foot of a recommendation from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee a quadrivalent influenza vaccine will be used instead of the standard trivalent vaccine. The provision of a quadrivalent vaccine will offer a substantially greater level of protection to the population when compared to the trivalent vaccine provided in recent years.
I am informed by the HSE that they have not written specifically to private hospitals. However, the HSE influenza campaign advises that all staff who work in any healthcare setting should be offered influenza vaccination, in order to protect themselves, their families and their patients.

Pharmacy Services

192. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health the rationale for the decision of his Department to propose significant cuts to pharmacy fees from January 2020 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48001/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Minister for Health I recognise the significant role community pharmacists play in the delivery of patient care and the potential for this role to be developed further in the context of health service reform and modernisation.

The regulations governing the current pharmacy fee structure were made under section 9 of the FEMPI Act 2009 and are set to expire at the end of 2019. Under the Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017, these regulations must be replaced on 1 January 2020 to maintain a statutory basis for contractor payments and to prescribe the fees payable from that date. The fees to be set are determined by the Minister for Health, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

In keeping with my obligations under Section 43 of the 2017 Act, Department of Health officials have begun a process of consultation with the IPU, as the representative body, prior to the introduction of new fee regulations. My officials have met with an IPU delegation on two occasions and a detailed submission was received from the IPU on 8 November.

That submission is currently being considered by my Department in the context of the statutory fee-setting process as referred to.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

193. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons in County Wexford awaiting a hearing aid for more than six, 12, 24 and 36 months, respectively; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48007/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

194. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the capital funding required to complete the upgrades needed to maintain services at a resort (details supplied). [48016/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Government is committed to providing services and supports for people with disabilities which will empower them to live independent lives, provide greater independence in accessing the services they choose and enhance their ability to tailor the supports required to meet their needs and plan their lives. This commitment is outlined in the Programme for Partnership Government,
which is guided by two principles: equality of opportunity and improving the quality of life for people with disabilities.

The Programme for Partnership Government states that the Government wishes to provide more accessible respite care to facilitate full support for people with a disability.

As the Deputy’s question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

195. **Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice** asked the Minister for Health the reason the quality of day services offered by the Sacred Heart Hospital, County Roscommon for elderly persons has diminished recently; the reason the length of time such persons are allowed to stay has shortened; the reason the number of vehicles used to transport persons to and from the hospital has been dropped to just one; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48017/19]

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

Medical Conditions

196. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the measures he is taking to improve access to treatments for persons with multiple sclerosis here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48020/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The HSE has statutory responsibility for medicine pricing and reimbursement decisions, under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013. The Act specifies criteria for decisions on the reimbursement of medicines. HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess a drug’s clinical and cost effectiveness as a health intervention.

As a country, we invest heavily in medicines, to the tune of almost €2 billion annually. As of October 2019, there have been 29 new medicines and 5 new indications for existing medicines approved for reimbursement in the public healthcare system. The approvals to date represent an additional investment by the HSE over five years of approximately €220m in providing access to new and innovative treatment for Irish patients. It is expected that over 3,000 patients will benefit from access to these new medicines over the next 5 years. Notwithstanding the significant progress on drug costs achieved from price reductions under the pricing framework agreed with industry and commercial negotiations conducted by the HSE, the Health Service is still facing very significant challenges in relation to the affordability of medicines. The industry continues to develop very expensive products, particularly in the high-tech medicines area and the costs involved are a challenge for health systems even in countries with much greater resources than Ireland. The Government wants new and innovative medicines to be available to our citizens as quickly as possible but this can only be achieved if medicines are priced by the pharmaceutical industry in a viable and sustainable manner.
My Department and the HSE are working on making greater efficiencies in medicines usage through a range of initiatives both domestically and internationally to ensure the greatest possible access to new treatments for patients in Ireland.

The HSE’s Medicines Management Programme (MMP), incorporating the Preferred Drugs initiative, is overseeing the implementation of a number of actions to bring about greater value for the taxpayer through cost-effective provision of medicines. These measures include the designation of preferred products with a focus on high-cost prescribing areas, in particular optimising the use of biosimilars.

I and officials have also been engaging over the past number of years with a number of voluntary EU forums. In June 2018, I signed the Beneluxa Initiative on Pharmaceutical Policy. This Agreement is in line with my objective to work with other European countries to identify workable solutions, in an increasingly challenging environment, to secure timely access for patients to new medicines in an affordable and sustainable way. In June 2019, Ireland became a Founding Member of the International Horizon Scanning Initiative which is being established as part of the work programme of Beneluxa.

The HSE received 2 applications for pricing and reimbursement of ocrelizumab (Ocrevus) in Multiple Sclerosis. Application 1 is for use of Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with relapsing forms of Multiple Sclerosis (RMS) with active disease defined by clinical or imaging features. Following a number of rounds of commercial negotiations, an agreement was reached in relation to the commercial terms which will apply to this indication. The HSE intends to progress ocrelizumab for the RMS indication, which has been approved for funding from October 2019, on a patient-specific basis for this indication. Application 2 is for the use of Ocrelizumab for the treatment of adult patients with early primary progressive multiple sclerosis (PPMS) in terms of disease duration and level of disability, and with imaging features characteristic of inflammatory activity. On 4 October 2018 the NCPE completed its assessment for this indication. They did not recommend that Ocrelizumab be reimbursed for this indication. The HSE and the manufacturer have had a number of rounds of commercial negotiations in relation to this indication. Commercial discussions have concluded and the medicine has been reviewed by the HSE Drugs Group. The HSE Senior Leadership Team have received the Drugs Group recommendation. The HSE’s final decision on reimbursement will take into consideration the criteria contained in the 2013 Health Act.

The HSE has also received an application for reimbursement of Delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol/Cannabidiol, THC/CBD (Sativex) which is indicated as treatment for symptom improvement in adult patients with moderate to severe spasticity due to multiple sclerosis who have not responded adequately to other anti-spasticity medication and who demonstrate clinically significant improvement in spasticity related symptoms during an initial trial of therapy.

The HSE commissioned a full HTA with respect to this indication in April 2018. On 25 September 2019, the NCPE received the applicant’s submission and the HTA is currently underway.

Departmental Data

197. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48039/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Civil Service Dignity at Work Policy applies to the staff of the Department of Health. In line with the policy, every member of staff
has been made aware that all forms of bullying and sexual harassment are unacceptable and that every member of staff has a duty to behave in an acceptable and respectful manner.

There has only been one complaint in my Department in relation to bullying and sexual harassment during the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. The finding of the subsequent external investigation was that the complaint was not upheld.

National Dementia Strategy

198. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position in relation to the level of community and home supports that will be available for persons with dementia nationally in 2020; the position in relation to the recruitment of dementia advisors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48046/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The level of community and home supports that will be available for older people, including people with dementia, will be set out in the 2020 National Service Plan (NSP). In 2020 the HSE will deliver over 19.2 million hours of home support to older people, including those with dementia. This represents a substantial increase of 1 million hours more than this year’s target.

The Government has also decided to fund an additional ten dementia advisers as part of an expansion of health care delivery in the community in Budget 2020 to deliver on the vision of Sláintecare. As the issue of recruitment is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Paediatric Services

199. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a replacement has been hired to replace a person (details supplied) when they cease employment at the end of November 2019; and if not, the procedure in place to ensure sufferers of juvenile arthritis can still avail of pain relief, such as, lidocaine infusions. [48051/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Children’s Health Ireland to respond to you directly, as soon as possible.

Home Care Packages Provision

200. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Health if there is a 30 hour a week home care package available for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48057/19]

**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
Departmental Staff Data

201. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Health the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48074/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I wish to advise the Deputy that nobody in my Department has been dismissed or suspended in any of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

Departmental Expenditure

202. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48126/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** To date, the Department of Health has incurred no spend on public relations, promotion or advertising in relation to the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040.

Ambulance Service Provision

203. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in Country Donegal was not provided with ambulance transport back to the county following an operation in Galway University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48155/19]

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

Hospital Admissions

204. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health if a bed will be provided in the woodville ward, St Joseph’s Community Hospital, County Donegal for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48156/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

205. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details sup-
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.

Rehabilitative Training Allowance Payments

206. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health if the rehabilitative training allowance for new entrants will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48158/19]

207. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the inequality new entrants are encountering caused by the decision to cease the rehabilitative training allowance for new entrants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48159/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath): I propose to take Questions Nos. 206 and 207 together.

This 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. The 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 payment of the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus came into place on the transition of Rehabilitative/Training Programmes to the HSE following the dissolution of the National Rehabilitation Board in June 2000.

The decision to phase out the Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus payment is designed to bring equity and consistency between people with a disability attending HSE funded rehabilitative training programmes who receive the payment, and those attending similar HSE funded Day Services or in other State schemes such as further education and training, who do not.

This action will ensure all HSE funded Day Services are provided on an equitable basis and will also ensure that the use of finite resources is maximised.

The Rehabilitative Training (RT) Bonus Payment is a historical payment, introduced in July 2001, aligned with a similar FÁS Training Bonus. However, during 2011 the FÁS Training Bonus was reduced to €20.00 and then eliminated the following year while to date the RT Bonus Payment has continued to be paid in the Health Sector.

It is worth remembering that:

- There is no cut in the number of RT places available
- There is no cut in payment of the bonus - those who have it will continue to receive it for the remainder of their RT Placement

- The majority of attendees of HSE Disability Services, including Rehabilitative Training programmes, qualify for Disability Allowance, paid at the rate of €203 per week, which also qualifies them for a Free Travel Pass.

- No expectation of an additional RT bonus payment has been created by HSE for 2019 participants

The redirected funding (€3.7 m over 4 years), which will be ring-fenced, will facilitate either 148 new full day placements or 370 enhanced day places nationally based on priority need (a mixture of both is likely).

Each CHO will have the flexibility to redirect its own savings to address local service requirements. The HSE will put in place a monitoring system and regularly report the additional placements realised to the Department of Health.

**Departmental Expenditure**

208. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48192/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** My Department is working closely with the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment identifying specific actions aimed at promoting public sector behaviours which are consistent with the Government’s environmental policy.

As a Department, we are well advanced in these areas and have initiated multiple internal initiatives including the elimination of the purchase of single-use bottled water and single-use plastic cups in Q3 2018.

We do provide water using refillable water dispensers within the Department. All our water dispenser bottles are collected and subsequently reused. The following table outlines the costs involved to date in 2019.

Disposable coffee cups were provided for staff up until August 2019, the cups supplied were all compostable cups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Water Bottles</th>
<th>Disposable Coffee cups</th>
<th>Water Cooler Bottles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>€</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>€147.49</td>
<td>€15,571.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Freedom of Information Data**

209. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48209/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The requirement, under section 8 of the
Freedom of Information legislation, to publish a Publication Scheme was completed, by my Department, within the legislative timeframe.

Our Publication Scheme is primarily made up of links to the relevant pages on our website. Therefore, the Scheme is continually being updated in accordance with updates made by all Units within my Department.

Other information (e.g. log of Freedom of Information requests received etc.) is updated quarterly in arrears. The latest update was in March of this year and the second and third quarter information is currently being worked on and it is hoped to have it published shortly.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

210. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons awaiting placement under the fair deal scheme as of 15 November 2019 or the latest date available; the average waiting time; the number of persons awaiting placement under the scheme by local health area in tabular form; and the length of time waiting. [48220/19]

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

Home Help Service Data

211. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Health the number of home support hours being provided in each LHO area as of 15 November 2019 or the latest date available; the way in which this compares to target in each LHO for the same time period; the number of persons on the waiting list for home support hours in each LHO area; and the number waiting 0 to three, three to six, six to 12 and more than 12 months, respectively in tabular form. [48221/19]

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

Services for People with Disabilities

212. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if correspondence (details supplied) will be reviewed; if his attention has been drawn to the gravity of this matter; if he will prevent the closure of the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48223/19]

**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.

**HSE Reviews**

213. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health if the findings of the review of the HSE reimbursement and pricing decision-making process undertaken by a firm (details supplied) will be published; the date his Department received these findings; if his Department will be implementing recommendations received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48230/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Work on the review of the HSE reimbursement and pricing decision-making process is ongoing. The review, conducted by Mazars, is progressing and on completion my officials will consider its findings.

The review will make recommendations, as considered appropriate, in respect of any required improvements to the HSE’s systems, structures, processes, governance arrangements or use of specialist resources in respect of the review.

**Medicinal Products**

214. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of the implementation of the HSE’s best-value biologics process; if the HSE has plans to review this process to drive greater adoption of the designated best-value biological drug; if the HSE will expand this programme to further therapy areas in which a biosimilar drug is available here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48231/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Health Service Executive has operational responsibility for best-value biological medicines, thus the matter has been referred to the HSE for their attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

**Medicinal Products**

215. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Health the status of the planned development of a national biosimilar medicines policy statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48232/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Since 2017, my Department has been engaged in public consultation activities and in the exploration and implementation of a number of operational policy levers to both increase awareness and to facilitate the use of biosimilar medicines.

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

The HSE is also working on identifying barriers to the prescribing of biosimilars, with a specific focus on education and support. It is seeking to increase understanding of biosimilars.
through targeted presentations to clinicians and hospitals. This is proving promising, for example the prescribing rate for the biosimilar drug Infliximab increased from 5% in 2017 to 40% in 2018.

In May 2019, the HSE Medicines Management Programme completed the evaluation process for the identification of the best-value biological (BVB) medicines for TNF-α inhibitors on the High-Tech Drug arrangements. In June 2019 the HSE introduced a system of gain-share to encourage the prescribing of the BVB medicines.

Drawing together all of these initiatives my Department, in collaboration with a number of agencies, is currently developing a National Biosimilar Medicines Policy Statement. The aim of the statement and supporting documentation is to highlight and endorse the many initiatives that are already underway in Ireland and thereby to promote confidence in biosimilar use among healthcare professionals.

Health Services Staff Recruitment

216. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Health if a case (details supplied) will be reviewed; if the matter will be investigated and referred to the HSE for reply; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48233/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have referred this matter to the HSE for direct reply to you.

Disability Services Funding

217. **Deputy John Curran** asked the Minister for Health if his Department and the HSE will review the funding being made available to an organisation (details supplied) who provide preschool for children with intellectual disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48237/19]

**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.

Departmental Expenditure

218. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48248/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have provided below, in tabular form, the
details of the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising including multimedia by the Department of Health for the years 2016 through 2018, and to date in 2019. I have also included a summary below.

2016: €32,746.17
2017: €25,354.70
2018: €433,677.74
2019: €898,902.46

Midwifery Services

219. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the staffing levels of midwives in HSE maternity units and hospitals; the number by which these staff numbers fall short or exceed the birthrate plus metric; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48260/19]

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

Medicinal Products Availability

220. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on the availability of the new medicine trikafta for persons with cystic fibrosis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48261/19]

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

Reimbursement is for licensed indications which have been granted a market authorisation by the European Medicines Agency or the Health Products Regulatory Authority. With respect to Trikafta, no such market authorisation has been granted by the European Medicines Agency.

In line with the 2013 Act and the Framework Agreement on the Supply and Pricing of Medicines 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.
As outlined in the Framework Agreement, and in line with the 2013 Act, the HSE will decide, within 180 days of receiving the application (or a longer period if further information is sought from the company), to either add the medicine to the reimbursement list or agree to reimburse it as a hospital medicine, or refuse to reimburse the medicine.

HSE decisions on which medicines are reimbursed by the taxpayer are made on objective, scientific and economic grounds, on the advice of the National Centre for Pharmacoeconomics (NCPE). The NCPE conducts health technology assessments (HTAs) for the HSE and makes recommendations on reimbursement to assist HSE decisions. The NCPE uses a decision framework to systematically assess whether a drug is cost-effective as a health intervention.

**Tobacco Control Measures**

221. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his views on plans to regulate vaping; if he is considering an outright ban on the practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48262/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In October of this year I received Government approval to draft the Public Health (Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Bill. The Bill will include provisions to prohibit the sale of nicotine inhaling products, including e-cigarettes, to and by persons under 18 years and will introduce a licensing system for the retail sale of nicotine inhaling products.


The Regulations provide for mandatory safety and quality requirements for e-cigarettes and refill containers, including maximum nicotine concentrations for e-cigarettes containing nicotine, and maximum volumes for cartridges, tanks and nicotine liquid containers. In addition, the Regulations require e-cigarette manufacturers or importers to notify the Health Service Executive of all products that they place on the market and, if a manufacturer, importer or distributor has a reason to believe that a product is not safe, they are required to immediately notify the Health Service Executive and to explain what corrective action has been taken.

Under the Regulations there must be health warnings on packaging which advise consumers that e-cigarettes contain nicotine which is a highly addictive substance. Finally the Regulations prohibit advertisements for e-cigarettes on television and radio, online, and in printed publications, other than publications directed at persons in the e-cigarette industry or publications outside the EU.

The current position on e-cigarettes is based on advice from the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) in its 2017 Health Technology Assessment of Smoking Cessation Products and Services. In relation to the safety of e-cigarettes the HIQA assessment concluded that this remains an evolving area of research and that while potentially safer than smoking, evidence on long-term safety has yet to be established.

Although the HIQA assessment was published only in 2017, in March of this year I asked the Health Research Board to undertake a review of the evidence on the health harms of e-cigarettes, their effectiveness as an aid to smoking cessation and whether they act as a gateway to smoking tobacco products. This review is expected to be completed in March 2020 and its findings will contribute to informing any additional regulation in this area.
222. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the response of his Department to a recent EPA study carried out for the HSE which highlights the relationship between poor air quality, breathing conditions such as asthma and hospital admissions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48263/19]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Policy responsibility for air quality is a matter for the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment.

Air quality is an important environmental determinant of health and in this regard the HSE has a priority to identify and advise the general public on strategies to reduce their risk of adverse effects during episodes of poor air quality. To this end, the HSE and the EPA established a collaboration to look at the relationship between short-term changes in ambient air quality and hospital admissions due to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases in Dublin city and county between 2014 and 2018. The Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) was the measure used for ambient air quality (Available URL: http://www.epa.ie/air/quality/index/).

The preliminary findings from this work have highlighted that the ambient air quality in Dublin is predominantly good (i.e. Good: 96% ; Fair: 3% ; Poor: 1% ; and Very poor: < 1%). Other findings are comparable to reports within the literature, but uniquely show the Irish experience.

The report is currently being finalised for publication.

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**Departmental Administrative Arrangements**

223. **Deputy Eugene Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to deal with the current and ongoing information technology problems in the payments section of his Department which is leading to ongoing delays in relation to processing files which have already been inspected and awaiting payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47884/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** EU regulations governing the administration of the Basic Payment Scheme, the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme and other area-based schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including Ground or Remote Sensing (Satellite) inspections where applicable, are fully completed to ensure eligibility with the various schemes requirements before any payments issue. There are certain minimum numbers of inspections that must take place annually under the various schemes.

It is important to note that, in many cases, the existence of an inspection will not necessarily be delaying payment. In relation to the ANC Scheme, this scheme is subject to a range of eligibility and compliance criteria such as the requirement to meet a minimum stocking density in addition to maintaining minimum livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. At this stage, a number of farmers are not eligible to receive payment as they have not met scheme-specific criteria. When an applicant meets these criteria, they will become eligible for payment, which will be processed promptly. Factors that may impact on payment issuing under BPS include, for example, applications to transfer entitlements, request for change in ownership etc., and officials in my Department are actively processing such cases.

Some 8,000 applicants have been selected for a Land Eligibility inspection in respect of the
various 2019 area-based schemes. As of 19th November, inspections results have been received for over 90% of these inspections, of which 92% have been advanced to payment stage processing. The balance of these cases fall into a number of categories, namely, applicants have been notified of the inspection outcome where an area over-declaration has been identified and a response is awaited; applicants have chosen to submit comments on notified inspection outcomes - these are currently being examined and are subject to final processing. The balance of the outstanding inspection results are currently being finalised and will then be advanced through the final stages of processing promptly.

My Department continues to finalise the outcome of both Ground and Remote Sensing inspections on a daily basis to ensure that BPS and ANC Schemes payments due are issued as quickly as possible.

Forestry Sector

224. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the majority of forestry licences were taking 99 days plus prior to the introduction of the new appropriate assessment procedure (details supplied) when the licence process will be capable of delivering a sustainable work flow to the forest industry in view of the fact that the sector is facing significant redundancies in January 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47887/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I acknowledge that changes made to internal Appropriate Assessment Procedures (AAP) has resulted in delays to many files. These are beyond my Department’s control as we are obliged to implement changes to AAP that were required following important Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) decisions and their subsequent interpretation by the Forestry Appeals Committee and others. All forestry licences issued by my Department undergo a legal consent process. Since 2017, all afforestation licence and forest road applications received have been subject to a statutory public notification system and all afforestation, forest roads and felling decisions issued are subject to a statutory appeal system operated by the Forestry Appeals Committee (FAC).

Most appeals have been in connection with our Appropriate Assessment (AA) procedure. The Habitat Directive (Article 6.3) requires that where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura site, either individually or in-combination with other plans or projects, it must undergo an appropriate assessment of its implications for that Natura site. In this regard, the introduction of the 15km assessment buffer around potential forestry sites is necessary and is an industry norm.

Currently, we are amending the AA procedure in order to introduce a robust and workable system which will address the issues now faced. Introducing this system involves the recruitment of additional ecological expertise and changes in procedures for the forestry inspectorate. My Department recently advertised for additional ecologists and we also have access to external ecological support, which will be supplemented in due course. Inspectors have already undergone training and will receive appropriate support in delivering these new procedures. A categorisation of files affected by these requirements is also underway in order to best assess further action needed and by whom.

Notwithstanding that this has led to a temporary disruption in issuing afforestation licences, we know that the sector has approximately 3,200 hectares of approvals issued this year which are shovel-ready and yet to be planted.
I am fully aware of the concerns of the sector in relation to the AA process. My officials are in regular communication with stakeholders and they have been fully apprised of the issues involved and of my Department’s efforts to address them. They have also been advised of steps they can take to ensure that applications received are completed to an acceptable standard and to take account of any issues relating to sensitive habitats.

Furthermore, for my part, I have commissioned a consultant to review my Department’s processes and procedures on forestry applications and approvals similar to an exercise undertaken in Scotland. I expect to receive this report by the end of November and that it will provide an opportunity to make our processes more effective and efficient going forward.

**Harbours and Piers Funding**

225. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the necessary funding will be provided to complete the breakwater at Greencastle Harbour, County Donegal, a project that his Department previously funded to its current stage. [47902/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** Greencastle Harbour is owned by Donegal County Council and responsibility for its maintenance and development rests with that Local Authority in the first instance and its parent Department, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government thereafter.

My Department owns, operates and maintains six designated State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres, located at Castletownbere, Dingle, Dunmore East, Howth, Killybegs and Ros An Mhil under statute. In addition, my Department also has responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of North Harbour at Cape Clear, as well as the maintenance of a small number of specific piers, lights and beacons throughout Ireland, in accordance with the Marine Works (Ireland) Act 1902, and piers, lights and beacons constructed under the auspices of the Congested Districts Board.

My legislative remit does not extend to Greencastle Harbour, and given that the ownership of, and overall responsibility for Greencastle Harbour rests with the County Council, it is the Council who will decide on any further development, repair or maintenance of Greencastle Harbour.

Any further programme of works, the costings and timescales for those works, would have to be considered further in the context of Government priorities and Project Ireland 2040.

My Department does provide limited funding to assist coastal Local Authorities in carrying out small scale projects for the development and repair of Local Authority owned piers, harbours and slipways under the annual Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme, subject to available Exchequer funding and overall national priorities. Since 2010, Donegal County Council has received funding of €2.9m under this programme.

I have approved funding of €2.2m for the Local Authority element of my Department’s 2019 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. Donegal County Council has secured €172,500 of funding for six projects under this year’s programme. A key element in the determination of the projects to be funded is the priority placed on them by the Local Authority, and while an application was received in relation to Greencastle, the approved projects received a higher prioritisation by Donegal County Council.

Should any application be submitted by Donegal County Council in relation to Greencastle
under any future programme, it will be given due consideration, taking into account the terms and conditions of the scheme, the priority attached by the Council and available funds.

**Bord Iascaigh Mhara**

226. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a funding application has been received from Bord Iascaigh Mhara for the construction of a new sea survival centre at the National Fisheries College in Greencastle, County Donegal in 2020; and if the necessary funding as announced in 2016 will be provided. [47903/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** This proposed project by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) is currently under review in the wider context of the provision of existing professional sea survival training facilities within the State and the cost, both construction and operational, of such a facility. The existing professional sea survival training facilities based at the National Maritime College of Ireland, Ringaskiddy, Co Cork, are unique in Ireland and designed both for fundamental safety training and specialised survival training, to increase survival ability in emergency situations. Those purpose built facilities are available for the provision of all necessary and required training for fishermen.

At the present time, there is no provision or plans to proceed with this additional project and funding has not been requested by Bord Iascaigh Mhara for 2020, nor has it been provided, for this proposed additional facility within the State.

**Departmental Expenditure**

227. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile phone company (details supplied) to supply mobile phones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile phones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related phones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47913/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The following table shows the costs incurred in purchasing Mobile phones by year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€5,792.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€14,699.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€910.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€11,253.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The allocation of mobiles phones is not based on grade but on business requirements.

The Department has a contract with Vodafone, which runs for an initial two year period with an option to extend by up to four 12 month terms. The initial two year term ends on December 4th 2020.

The contract was awarded following the completion of a robust tendering process undertaken in conjunction with the Office of Government Procurement and under the Framework Agreement for the provision of Mobile Voice and Data Communications and Associated Products and
Services. Vodafone, as the successful bidder, was deemed to have offered the Department and the taxpayer the best overall value in terms of costs, technology, support and ancillary services.

**Beef Industry**

228. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the timeline for progress of beef taskforce meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47932/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As the Deputy will be aware, the inaugural Beef Taskforce meeting scheduled for 14th October was prevented from proceeding. However, since then the independent chair and my Department continue to engage proactively with Taskforce members with a view to implementing the provisions of the agreement.

My Department and its agencies continue to progress the commitments which they signed up to under the Agreement.

**Departmental Staff Data**

229. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47939/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The break-down of staff in my Department by grade and gender is provided in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Counsel Grade 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Counsel Grade 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural Inspector</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area Superintendent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst Agricultural Inspector</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asst Harbour Master</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asst Principal</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemist</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Inspector</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Veterinary Officer</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>620</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Worker</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsman</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chief Analyst</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director Of Laboratories</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Superintendent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Grade 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Grade 2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Grade 3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Technician Grade 2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Assistant Solicitor</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Ecologist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Inspector Grade 1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Inspector Grade 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Inspector Grade 3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Operative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harbour Constable</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harbour Master</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Of Agricultural Laboratories</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Seed Analyst</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Apprentice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Foreman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspector Grade 2</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory Analyst</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory Attendant</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Librarian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minister’s Staff</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Accountant</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Officer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed Analyst</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Inspector</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Senior Laboratory Analyst</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Research Officer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Seed Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Serological Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serological Assistant</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Staff</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Solicitor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintending Senior Research Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintending Veterinary Inspector</td>
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<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising Serological Assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisory Agricultural Officer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Agricultural Officer</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Inspector</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholetime Temporary Veterinary Inspector</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

230. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47956/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The 31st Government of Ireland was formed following the appointment of Leo Varadkar TD as Taoiseach on 14 June 2017. Appointments of special advisors on or after that date are as follows:

**S.I. 417 of 2017**

Aine Kilroy and Jonathan Hoare appointed as special advisors to Minister Michael Creed, effective 14 June 2017 to the present date.

**S.I. 24 of 2018**

Ultan Waldron appointed as special advisor to Minister Michael Creed, effective 6 November 2017, until 14 September 2018.

**S.I. 521 of 2018**

Avril Cronin appointed as special advisor to Minister of State Andrew Doyle, effective 1 October 2018 to the present date.

Ministerial Advisers are appointed under the Appointment of Special Adviser (Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine) Orders. Additional information in respect of all appointments is provided to the Oireachtas at the time the appointments take place.

**Beef Industry**

231. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if, under the beef exceptional aid measure, some registered farm partnerships with more than two herd numbers can receive payments per partner while other registered farm partnerships are limited to one payment; if so, the reason therefor; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The objective of the Beef Exceptional Aid Measure (BEAM) is to provide temporary exceptional adjustment aid to farmers in the beef sector in Ireland. BEAM is funded by a combination of EU aid and Exchequer support, provided in light of the difficult circumstances that Irish beef farmers have been facing as a result of market volatility and uncertainty.

Payments under BEAM are made on the basis of eligible animals within an eligible herd rather than per individual or per partnership. Any herd that satisfies the criteria outlined in the scheme T&Cs located on the Department website at https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmer-schemespayments/beam/ is eligible for payment at the rates specified. If a partnership has more than one herd, each herd may be entitled to payment subject to the eligibility criteria.

Areas of Natural Constraint Scheme Appeals

232. Deputy Pat Deering asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of the appeals process for the ANC scheme; when those in the appeals process will receive a decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48024/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): Under the current Rural Development Regulation (and subsequent amendments under the Omnibus Regulation), Member States were required to change the approach to the designation of land under the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme. Previously, my Department had been identifying eligible areas using a range of socio economic indicators such as family farm income, population density, percentage of working population engaged in agriculture, and stocking density.

From 2019, eligible areas must instead be designated using the following list of bio-physical criteria:

- Low temperature
- Dryness
- Excess soil moisture
- Limited soil drainage
- Unfavourable texture and stoniness
- Shallow rooting depth
- Poor chemical properties
- Steep slope

In tandem with the process to designate relevant lands under these biophysical criteria, Member States were also required to undertake a fine tuning process. This process was required to identify areas where significant natural constraints were identified with reference to the above-listed biophysical criteria, but where objective criteria, such as arable land use or stocking density levels, would indicated that these constraints have been overcome.

Finally, Member States could also identify areas for inclusion as Areas of Specific Constraint where it is necessary for land management to be continued in order to conserve or improve the environment, to maintain the countryside, to preserve the tourist potential of the area,
This three-phased process was a lengthy project, involving protracted technical engagements with the EU DG for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Joint Research Centre in the EU Commission. The technical process was completed in late 2018 and, at that time, further to a series of consultation meetings with key stakeholders, I published full details in relation to the outcome of the review project, which can be summarised as follows. The vast majority of land that was eligible under the existing Scheme remains eligible under the new approach. Some 700 townlands that would have previously been eligible are not eligible under the new designation. Farmers impacted financially by this change will receive a degressive phasing out payment in 2019 and 2020. Over 2,000 townlands will now be eligible under the new approach and will be eligible to receive a payment for the first time in 2019.

An independently chaired Appeals Committee was appointed to examine any requests received by my Department for a full review on the status of a townland under the 2019 ANC Scheme. This process is currently under way and it is anticipated that the process will be completed in the coming weeks.

Departmental Data

233. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48029/19]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed): The Civil Service is committed to protecting dignity and respect across the organisation and my Department implements the Civil Service wide anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy ‘Dignity at Work’. I am satisfied that the policy is being implemented effectively throughout my Department.

All staff in my Department are reminded annually of their responsibilities under the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, which includes the duty to show due respect for their colleagues at work and to abide by the Civil Service anti-bullying policy. Furthermore, all new recruits to my Department are required to familiarise themselves with both the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour and the Dignity at Work policy.

From time to time, staff have raised a variety of issues regarding workplace difficulties including bullying & harassment. Issues raised are carefully considered under relevant Civil Service and Departmental policies, including in particular the Dignity at Work policy.

The following table lists the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment received by my Department from 2016 to present:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bullying/Harassment</th>
<th>Sexual Harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
234. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48064/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The following table lists the numbers of employees of my Department either dismissed or suspended from 2016 to date:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of employees dismissed</th>
<th>Number of employees suspended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Nil Dismissals</td>
<td>2016 - One employee suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Nil Dismissals</td>
<td>2017 - Nil suspensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Nil Dismissals</td>
<td>2018 - One employee suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>One Dismissal</td>
<td>2019 - One employee suspended</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the confidential nature of disciplinary processes, and given that divulging the reasons for dismissal and/or suspension is likely to identify the person who was dismissed and/or suspended, I consider this to be personal information that is held by my Department on the understanding that it would be treated as confidential.

As such, it is not considered appropriate to furnish this aspect of the requested information.

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235. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48116/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** I wish to advise the Deputy that my Department has not spent any amount on public relations, promotion or advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 nor the Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018.

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236. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48182/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** In January this year, the Government approved a number of environmental initiatives by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment. It was decided that Government Departments and public bodies should lead the way in reducing generation of single use plastics and waste. This decision recognises that the public sector must demonstrate its commitment to sustainable development and use its influence to persuade others of the changes required to reduce our impact on the environment.

In this regard, the information requested by the Deputy is not readily available in respect of all the Department’s locations and is currently being compiled. It will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.
237. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48199/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** My Department is currently in the process of reviewing the FOI Publication Scheme for 2019.

The last full review of the FOI Publication Scheme was carried out in August 2018. Reviews were also carried out in May 2016 and November 2017.

**Organic Farming Scheme Data**

238. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the breakdown of the 2018 organic farming scheme ranking and selection criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48216/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) was re-opened in November 2018 on a targeted basis on foot of the recommendation of the Organic Sector Strategy Group. The Organic Sector Strategy Group included representatives from a broad range of stakeholders, among them the Farming Representative Organisations, processors and Organic Control Bodies. Following assessment by the Group and based on market demand and supply deficits in organic horticulture, cereals and dairy, the Group recommended the re-opening of the OFS targeting expenditure towards the areas in deficit. Selection criteria with revised marking which would facilitate such a targeted reopening were agreed by the Group.

Under the Organic Farming Scheme ranking and selection criteria, marks were awarded under the following criteria:

- Existing OFS participants and licensed organic operators whose contracts expired in 2013/2014/2015 (Maximum 5 marks);
- Sectoral Balance Enterprise (based on Animal Health Computer System/Basic Payment System database or as per application form - Maximum 50 marks);
- Total Conversion vs Partial Conversion as per Basic Payment System application (Maximum 10 marks);
- Large operators i.e. 1 mark for owned land and 0.5 marks for leased land (Maximum 50 marks);
- Mixed Farms (Maximum 10 marks).

225 applications were received by the closing date. A total of 58 applications were either withdrawn or were deemed ineligible. Following the ranking and selection process, one applicant withdrew, 55 were successful and 111 applicants received letters informing them that they had been unsuccessful.

The Deputy should be aware that the predominant farming enterprises in 95% of the unsuccessful applications were not from the targeted sectors.
239. **Deputy Declan Breathnach** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will intervene to speed up the process of ANC and basic payment scheme applications in circumstances in which land is selected for remote sensing, that is, satellite inspection; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a large number of applicants are awaiting payment due to a delay in carrying out the inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48218/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** EU regulations governing the administration of the Basic Payment Scheme, the Areas of Natural Constraints Scheme and other area-based schemes require that full and comprehensive administrative checks, including Ground or Remote Sensing (Satellite) inspections where applicable, are fully completed to ensure eligibility with the various schemes requirements before any payments issue. There are certain minimum numbers of inspections that must take place annually under the various schemes.

It is important to note that in many cases, the existence of an inspection will not necessarily be delaying payment. In relation to the ANC Scheme, this scheme is subject to a range of eligibility and compliance criteria such as the requirement to meet a minimum stocking density, in addition to maintaining minimum livestock units calculated over the twelve months of the scheme year. At this stage, a number of farmers are not eligible to receive payment as they have not met scheme-specific criteria. When an applicant meets these criteria they will become eligible for payment, which will be processed promptly. Factors that may impact on payment issuing under BPS include, for example, applications to transfer entitlements, change in ownership request etc., and officials in my Department are actively processing such cases.

Some 6,800 applicants have been selected for a Remote Sensing inspection in respect of the various 2019 area-based schemes. As of 19th November, inspections results have been received for some 90% of these inspections, of which 97% have been advanced to payment stage processing. The balance of these cases fall into a number of categories, namely, applicants have been notified of the inspection outcome where an area over-declaration has been identified and a response is awaited; applicants have chosen to submit comments on notified inspection outcomes and these are currently being examined and cases are subject to final processing. The balance of the inspection results are currently being finalised and will be advanced through the final stages of processing promptly.

My Department continues to finalise the outcome of Remote Sensing inspections on a daily basis to ensure that BPS and ANC Schemes payments due are issued as quickly as possible.

**Agriculture Scheme Appeals**

240. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48222/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The Agriculture Appeals Office operates independently of my Department.

The Agriculture Appeals Act provides that an Appeals Officer’s decision may be revised by an Appeals Officer if it appears to him or her that the decision was erroneous in the light of new evidence or of new facts brought to his or her notice since the date on which it was given or if
it appears to him or her that there has been any relevant change of circumstances since the decision was given. The Act also provides that the Director may revise any decision of an appeals officer, if it appears to him or her that the decision was erroneous by reason of some mistake having been made in relation to the law or the facts.

I have been advised by the Agriculture Appeals Office that the request for a review of the Appeals Officer’s decision for the person named was received in March 2019 and that additional information was received on 1 November 2019.

I am advised that every effort is being made to finalise the review of the case as soon as possible. Requests for review are generally dealt with in order of receipt. A number of requests for reviews were received prior to the request concerned.

GLAS Appeals

241. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the status of an appeal (details supplied); if this process can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48234/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into the GLAS 1 scheme with a contract commencement date of 1 October 2015 and received payment for scheme years 2015 and 2016.

The GLAS application was terminated on 9 January 2018 for non-compliance with the scheme requirements in relation to the Wild Bird Cover action that gained the applicant priority access to the scheme as a Tier 2 applicant. As this issue relates to a 2017 BPS application, an inspection at this stage could not verify the position in 2017.

The case was examined under the Department’s internal review procedures and subsequently by the independent Agriculture Appeals Office (AAO), which did not find in favour of the applicant. The AAO notified the applicant of their decision on 23 July 2018 and made the applicant aware of the option of contacting the Office of the Ombudsman should they remain dissatisfied.

Departmental Expenditure

242. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48238/19]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The vast bulk of my Department’s Communications Budget is spent on advertising in respect of press notices in the specialised farming press, provincial and national newspapers. This expenditure set out below includes the publication of Statutory Notices that are required to comply with various national and EU legislative requirements. Decisions on the placement of notices are made on a case-by-case basis, depending on the nature of the advertisement and the target audience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Agri-Food and Forest Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural Development Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 2016

- Consultation: Draft Fisheries Natura Plan for Dundalk Bay 2016-2020
- Consultation: Draft Mitigation Response Plan for scallop fishery off Wexford Coast
- Consultation: Draft Fisheries Natura Plan for Castlemaine Harbour 2016 - 2026
- BPS Online applications information campaign
- Requirements for the suckler farmer of the Beef Data and Genomics Programme
- Fishing Opportunities for 2017
- Review of Replacement Capacity Requirements under Sea Fishing Boat Licensing Policy
- 2016 North West Herring Scientific Quota
- Scheme Funding available from Department
- Ongoing promotion of forestry
- Miscellaneous Public Notices
- Statutory Notices
- Total expenditure €312,021

### 2017

- Farm Safety Promotion
- Sheep Clean Livestock Policy
- Food Wise 2017 Conference
- Green Low-Carbon Agri-Environment (GLAS) Scheme radio advert encouraging participants to submit their Nutrient Management Plan
- Rural Development Programme
- Consultation: Management of Velvet Crab
- Independent Aquaculture Licensing Review
- BPS Online applications information campaign
- Fishing Opportunities for 2018
- Review of Mackerel Allocation Policy between the Fleet segments (2017)
- Dog Welfare radio campaign
- Avian Influenza information campaign
- Scheme Funding available from Department
- Quota Balancing for Pelagic Stocks (2017)
- Ongoing Promotion of forestry
- BPS online applications clinics advert (online)
- Invitation to become an organic demonstration farm (online)
- FAS training on CAP and GLAS (online)
- Advice note for Backyard flock owners (online)
- Engineer grade III (Civil) recruitment advert (online)
- Farm Hazardous Waste Advert (online)
- Miscellaneous Public Notices
- Statutory Notices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Total expenditure €552,406</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 2018 | Agri-Food and Forest Research  
Sheep Clean Livestock Policy  
Rural Development Programme  
Consultation: Proposal for conservation measures for Brown Crab  
Consultation: Proposal to Increase the MnCRS for Razor Clam in the North Irish Sea  
Consultation: Draft Fishery Natura Plan for Irish Sea Mussel Seed Fishery for the years 2018-2023  
BPS Online applications information campaign  
Trawling Activity inside the 6 nautical mile zone  
Ongoing Promotion of forestry  
Woodland Environment Fund  
Forest Fire Awareness  
Sector Expert Profile on careersportal.ie  
TB Cleansing & Disinfection information video  
Miscellaneous Public Notices  
Statutory Notices  
Total expenditure €288,186 |
| 2019 | Fisheries public information notices  
Nitrates deadline  
Forestry print and radio advertising  
Promotion of EU Agricultural Products-Proposals  
Notices of appointments  
BPS Clinics  
Getting Brexit Ready advertising campaign (print and online)  
Recruitment advertisements (print and online)  
Advertisements regarding DAFM’s online services  
A to Z of Climate Action booklet  
Public Consultation Draft Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation plan  
Future Growth Loan Scheme advertisement  
Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) information campaign  
African Swine Fever (ASF) awareness campaign creative design  
Promotional material for ploughing championships  
Filming costs for Woodland Environment Fund promotional video  
Irish Vet Journal Articles  
Press conference climate adaptation  
Press conference Agri-food strategy / steps to success  
Notices of Ministerial decisions  
Miscellaneous Public Notices  
Statutory Notices  
Total expenditure €260,283.92 |
243. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the aircraft carriers for which Ireland is the administrating member state under the ETS; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48013/19]

244. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if the carbon emissions of aircraft carriers registered here are included in the carbon emission total figures for the State; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48014/19]

245. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the annual carbon emissions of each of the aircraft carriers registered here in each of the years 2008 to 2017, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48015/19]

246. Deputy David Cullinane asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the air carriers registered here that fall and do not fall under ETS in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48050/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 243 to 246, inclusive, together.

The European Commission publishes an annual list of aircraft operators attributed to each EU Member State. The list for 2019 can be found here: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R0226&from=EN

The European Commission also publishes a “Verified Emissions” report each year which details the aircraft operators registered in each Member State that fall and do not fall under the ETS. These annual “Verified Emissions” reports are listed at https://ec.europa.eu/clima/policies/ets/registry_en#tab-0-1. All aircraft operators are listed under the activity code “10”. Operators that are marked as “excluded” are not included under the ETS. The latest report gives annual CO2 emissions for each aircraft operator for the years 2012-2018. Aviation data for individual operators is available for 2012-2018 only.

All fuel used and associated emissions by aircraft (non-military) departing from an Irish aerodrome and arriving at the same or another Irish aerodrome are reported in Ireland’s GHG inventories under Domestic Aviation. All other fuel sold, and the associated emissions for international aviation, are reported in Ireland’s GHG inventory under “Memo items” and are not included in national totals under the UNFCCC or the EU Effort Sharing Decision commitments.

Climate Action Plan

247. Deputy Carol Nolan asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the details on the appointment of the Just Transition Commissioner; the remuneration involved; the term of the commissioner’s contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48258/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Mr. Kieran Mulvey has been appointed as Ireland’s first Just Transition Commissioner. The Commissioner will help ensure a co-ordinated and effective approach to a Just Transition for communities and workers affected by the imminent ending of peat harvesting for power generation in the Midlands region. The Terms of Reference for the Just Transition
Commissioner set out that the secretariat support for the Commissioner will be provided by my Department or the Midlands Transition Team as appropriate. Further details such as the remuneration of the Commissioner and the term of the contract are currently being finalised.

Together with my ministerial colleagues the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform Paschal Donohoe T.D., the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Josepha Madigan T.D and the Minister of State for the Office of Public Works Kevin Moran T.D., I recently met with workers affected by the recent announcements from both Bord na Móna and ESB as well as Union representatives and Oireachtas members.

The Government has also prioritised a number of initiatives for the Midlands in the context of Budget 2020 including:-

- €6 million for a Just Transition Fund, targeted at the Midlands, to support the retraining and reskilling of workers and to assist local communities and businesses in the Region to adjust to the low carbon transition. In recognition of their longstanding relationship with communities in the Midlands, the ESB has agreed to contribute an additional €5 million to this fund bringing its total value to €11m. While details around the allocation of this fund are still being finalised, it is expected that it will support retraining and reskilling workers and assist local communities and businesses in the Midlands to adjust to the low carbon transition. There will be further consultation with the structures in place in the Midlands, including the Midlands Transition Team, on the application of the funding.

- €5 million for a National Parks and Wildlife Service bog restoration and rehabilitation programme to restore 1,800 hectares of bog to their natural habitat, ensuring the return of these bogs to carbons sinks once again and creating 70 to 100 jobs.

- €20 million targeted at the Midlands, to deliver a new model to group housing upgrades, as set out in the Climate Action Plan, which will support an estimated 400 direct and indirect jobs, as well as significantly upgrading the social housing stock in the region.

Electric Vehicles

248. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to introduce supports or grants for small businesses to install electric vehicle charging points on their premises; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47877/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Providing adequate charging infrastructure is critical to ensure the continued growth in the uptake of electric vehicles. Businesses can already avail of accelerated capital allowances for the purchase and installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure on their premises. This enables businesses to invest in energy efficient equipment, including electric charging infrastructure, and deduct the full cost of such equipment from their profits in the year of purchase rather than over 8 years.

This support is part of a range of supports available for the development of charging infrastructure which include a home charger grant of up to €600 to support the purchase and installation of a home charger for purchasers of electric vehicles and grants available to local authorities for the development of on-street public charge points. Funding of €6 million will be available in 2020 for these schemes.

In addition, under the first call for applications from the Climate Action Fund, I approved
funding of up to €10 million which will support the ESB to develop a nationwide, state-of-the-art electric vehicle fast charging network, with the ESB also investing €10 million.

Departmental Expenditure

249. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff within his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile phone company (details supplied) to supply mobile phones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile phones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related phones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47916/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible. Following a competitive procurement process my Department awarded a contract to Vodafone in 2011 to supply mobile voice and data services and associated products. The contract is currently operated on a rolling month by month basis. It is intended to run a mini competition under the current Office of Government Procurement framework for this service in 2020.

Public Service Obligation Levy

250. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend the REFIT PSO for biomass burning until 2023 alongside a new proposal for a PSO for bog rehabilitation; the way in which the proposed PSO will not duplicate bog rehabilitation that is required under the EPA licence at Edenderry; his views on whether such a PSO to be another form of carbon taxation levied on electricity customers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47933/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The support scheme for use of biomass in electricity generation, REFIT3, runs until 2030. Both of the ESB-owned Midlands electricity generation stations, West Offaly Power and Lough Ree Power, and the Bord na Móna-owned plant at Edenderry were allocated support for fuelling the plants with up to 30% biomass. Bord na Móna currently co-fires its plant with 30% biomass. Due to the failure to obtain planning permission for West Offaly to co-fire with biomass beyond the end of 2020, and the decision by ESB to withdraw its application for planning for Lough Ree, the allocations under the support scheme for these plants are unlikely to be taken up. It is now proposed to put in place a new PSO for the enhanced rehabilitation of the Bord na Móna bogs over and above what Bord na Móna is obliged to do under its EPA licences. The support will be ring-fenced and used specifically for bog rehabilitation. It is expected that the proposed enhanced restoration and rehabilitation scheme will have benefits accruing from biodiversity provision, water quality, and increased carbon storage and sequestration.

The proposed scheme is not a tax on carbon. It is a scheme to support biodiversity and to ensure the bogs revert to their natural state as the most efficient carbon stores.

Departmental Staff Data
251. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47942/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The following sets out the number of staff currently serving in my Department by grade and gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Males/Females</strong></td>
<td>204</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>395</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

252. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47959/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following tables:

**Minister Denis Naughten**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Commencement</th>
<th>Cessation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suzie Coogan</td>
<td>27/06/2016</td>
<td>12/10/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ross Elwood</td>
<td>13/06/2016</td>
<td>31/03/2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Andrews</td>
<td>23/05/2018</td>
<td>12/10/2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minister Richard Bruton**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Commencement (with DC-CAE)</th>
<th>Cessation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sarah O’Neill</td>
<td>16/10/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick Cluskey</td>
<td>16/10/2018</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Minister of State Sean Canney**
Robert Hughes  02/01/2019  N/A

All of the appointments were made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s Instruction to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil.

Departmental Data

253. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48032/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department received one complaint pursuant to the Dignity at Work Policy in 2019.

Better Energy Homes Scheme

254. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the grants and supports available to homeowners that need to carry out deep retrofit work on their homes to complete multiple energy upgrades to achieve a BER A rating on the property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48052/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers a number of schemes on behalf of my Department which are aimed at supporting householders to retrofit their homes. Approximately €100 million has been allocated to these schemes in 2019. An overview of what is available is set out below. The Better Energy Homes Scheme provides grants covering up to 30% of the cost of home energy upgrades. The measures covered by this scheme, such as cavity wall insulation, attic insulation, solar thermal, heating controls and a BER certificate, were expanded over the last year to include deeper measures such as external wall insulation and heat pumps. €22 million was allocated in 2019 with 14,361 homes receiving funding for upgrades to end of October.

The Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures free of charge to low income households who meet the defined eligibility criteria and who are vulnerable to energy poverty. The measures were expanded in 2018 to include internal and external insulation. In 2019, €39.8 million was allocated to the scheme with 2,891 homes upgraded by end of October.

The Better Energy Communities Scheme funds community based partnerships to improve the energy efficiency of the building stock in their area – homes, including those at risk of energy poverty, community facilities and businesses. It also encourages innovative measures and solutions. These partnerships can be between the public and private sectors, domestic and non-domestic sectors, commercial and not-for-profit organisations and energy suppliers. The scheme leverages considerable additional private investment. In 2019, €23 million was allocated to the scheme, with 57 projects granted approval including 685 homes.
The Climate Action Plan has committed to increasing the scale and depth of retrofit activity in order to meet our emissions reduction targets from the Built Environment. This will involve 500,000 homes being upgraded to a BER B2/cost optimal or carbon equivalent by 2030. A Retrofit Taskforce, chaired by my Department, is driving the achievement of this target. A key part of the Taskforce’s work will be designing a national retrofit delivery model that groups homes together to achieve economies of scale and provides smart financing options and easy pay back methods. Achievement of this target will be supported by the Project Ireland 2040 allocation of €3.7 billion as well as the range of measures identified in the Plan.

Budget 2020 has allocated €146 million for retrofitting homes and businesses which will support the upgrade of 24,000 properties in 2020.

**Departmental Staff Recruitment**

255. Deputy Thomas Pringle asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the estimated full-year cost of recruiting three extra whole-time equivalent petroleum exploration specialists in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48060/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Estimated Gross Annual Salary Cost (1st Point of PPC Scale)</th>
<th>No. of Grade</th>
<th>Total Gross Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petroleum Exploration Specialists</td>
<td>€78,790.00</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>€236,370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My Department does not currently have Petroleum Exploration Specialists vacancies and does not currently plan recruitment at this grade.

**Departmental Staff Data**

256. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of employees of his Department that were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48067/19]

Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): There have been no employees dismissed or suspended by my Department from 2016 to date.

**Departmental Expenditure**

257. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48119/19]
Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton): Expenditure by my Department on public relations, promotion and advertising on the National Development Plan as part of Project Ireland 2040, is detailed by category in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure from February 2018 to date</th>
<th>Amount (incl. VAT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Design and Production Fees</td>
<td>€13,583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Production and Design</td>
<td>€34,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Launches</td>
<td>€4,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>€52,226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Broadband Service Provision

258. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment his plans to extend high-speed fibre broadband to a household (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48153/19]

259. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if his Department has received an email from a person (details supplied) in County Donegal outlining the need for high-speed fibre broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48154/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 258 and 259 together.

The National Broadband Plan is the government’s plan to rollout high speed broadband to the 1.1 million people living and working in the nearly 540,000 premises including 100,000 businesses and farms, and over 600 schools, where commercial operators will not commit to deliver the service.

The Deputy’s Questions relate to one premises which is located in the AMBER area on the National Broadband Plan (NBP) High Speed Broadband Map, which is available on my Department’s website at www.broadband.gov.ie. The AMBER areas represent the areas to be served by the network to be deployed under the NBP State led Intervention, the contract for which was signed on 19 November with National Broadband Ireland (NBI). The NBP will rollout high speed broadband to people living and working in nearly 540,000 premises which include almost 100,000 businesses and farms and 695 schools where commercial operators will not deliver this service.

Approximately 300 Broadband Connection Points (BCPs) will be deployed across all counties during 2020. The BCPs will be located in community centres, schools, library hubs and local GAA halls and will enable communities to get free public access to high speed broadband. The BCP locations are available to view on the High Speed Broadband Map on the Department’s website www.dccae.gov.ie.

NBI will pass approximately 10,000 premises by the end of 2020. By the end of 2021, NBI plans to pass approximately 115,000 premises, with 70,000 - 100,000 passed each year thereafter until rollout is completed. NBI has indicated that the network rollout will take an estimated 7 years from the beginning of deployment. A deployment plan will be made available by NBI shortly. Over 90% of premises in the State will have access to high speed broadband within the next four years.

I can confirm that an email from the person referred to by the Deputy was received in my
Department on 6 September 2019 and a reply was issued on 24 September 2019.

With regard to the eir fibre rollout close to the premises referred to by the Deputy, eir’s rural deployment of high speed broadband is a commercial undertaking and not part of the planned State Intervention network. It is not funded by the State and is not planned, designed or directed by the Department in any capacity. The decision as to what areas and premises are served is a matter for eir.

Departmental Expenditure

260. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48185/19]

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**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department purchases bottled water in two ways - from the in-house caterers, when requested, for meetings and under an Office of Government Procurement contract for a single bottle fed water dispenser, which is in the lobby in my Department’s head quarters on Adelaide Road, Dublin. The total cost for the period 1st January to 30th October 2019 was €918.

My Department does not purchase disposable coffee cups.

Freedom of Information Data

261. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48202/19]

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**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Freedom of Information (FOI) publication scheme for my Department was first published in 2016 and was revised and updated in July of this year. This is in line with the requirement of the FOI Act 2014, which requires each body to review and update its publication scheme 3 years after publication and not later than every third year thereafter. Separately, as part of the move to the www.gov.ie central portal for government services and information, my Department is in the process of conducting a complete review of all its website content, including a further review of its FOI Publication Scheme.

National Broadband Plan

262. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will confirm that his Department has agreed to remove already connected premises from the intervention area of the national broadband plan. [48227/19]

263. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he will confirm that further commitment agreements entered into in the intervention area of the national broadband plan would be in line with those set down in managing the high speed broadband map and the previous commitment agreements entered into by commercial operators.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48228/19]
264. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he plans to add additional unbuilt premises to the intervention area of the national broadband plan; the reason these premises were not included in previous maps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48229/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 262 to 264, inclusive, together.

As a State intervention, the NBP must comply with the requirements of the European Commission’s Guidelines on the application of State aid rules for broadband networks. The Guidelines require, amongst other things, that Member States carry out a detailed mapping exercise to identify as far as reasonably possible those areas where intervention is required.

Having consulted with industry on an ongoing basis over the past four years, my Department recently conducted a final public consultation to close the mapping exercise in advance of the award of the NBP contract. Having evaluated the submissions received, approximately 38,000 premises were removed from the intervention area as commercial operators provided evidence that these premises can now access a high speed broadband service from an existing network.

The commitment agreement entered into in 2017 in respect of the eir 300k fibre network, related to premises that were removed from the intervention area on the basis of a future concrete plan by a commercial operator for a network that was yet to be built. The purpose of that commitment agreement was to provide an appropriate level of assurance that a planned network build would be given effect to.

Following the recent public consultation, approximately 37,000 premises originally identified as being served by commercial operators have now been included in the intervention area for the NBP, as commercial operators plans to serve these premises have not materialised. The map has also been updated for approximately an additional 2,000 premises identified in the latest Ordinance Survey Ireland data.

I can confirm that the final Intervention Area now covers 537,596 premises.

The NBP contract, which was signed yesterday, provides that the future proofed high speed broadband network to be deployed by National Broadband Ireland will also pass and connect new premises built in the intervention area over the next 25 years.

**Departmental Expenditure**

265. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multimedia, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48241/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Departmental remit includes complex policy areas, oversight of State regulation and service provision across key strategic services such as energy and public service broadcasting, as well as regulation of sectors such as mining and hydrocarbon exploration. Given the technical complexity, economic significance and community interest in these areas, there is a requirement to disseminate information and to address specific issues as they arise. My Department therefore necessarily incurs some expenditure on a number of advertising campaigns to promote its policies / programmes from time to time. In procuring these services, my Depart-
ment always seeks to ensure value for money and the keeping of expenditure to the minimum necessary.

The expenditure incurred includes the promotion of a number of significant programmes/campaigns associated with my Department such as the Trading Online Voucher Scheme, the Waste Campaign and the Tellus project run by the Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI).

The information requested is outlined in tabular format below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>To date 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total expenditure on</td>
<td>€171,407</td>
<td>€791,987</td>
<td>€340,442</td>
<td>€473,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public relations,</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>promotion and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advertising including</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multi-media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*VAT not payable on €450 of this amount

**Ministerial Meetings**

266. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment if he has recently met the director general and/or chairperson and board of RTÉ to discuss the financial situation of the company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48267/19]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I met the Chairperson and RTÉ board members on 7 October to discuss the financial issues facing RTÉ and had previously met the Chair and Director General on 29 July.

Changes in the advertising market alongside evasion rates and challenges around the TV licensing model are having a critical impact on RTÉ’s revenue and financial sustainability.

While RTÉ’s commercial income dropped significantly during the recession, RTÉ were in a position to record a small surplus in 2013 and 2014 in the midst of the economic recession. Since then their commercial income has been largely stable with €150m raised in 2014 and in 2018 it was also €150m. Licence fee revenue has increased from €179m in 2014 to €189m in 2018. In the same period their operating costs have grown by €28m, or 9%.

I welcome the work that the board and management of RTÉ have undertaken to develop a revised strategy which seeks to map out a sustainable future where RTÉ can meet the strategic and financial challenges it faces, deliver upon its public service remit and remain a relevant and valued part of Irish life.

RTÉ has sought assistance and additional support from the Government to deliver its revised strategy and, in that context, the robustness of the strategy put forward by RTÉ is being assessed and I will continue to engage with RTÉ on these issues.

**Fishing Vessel Safety**

267. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport under Marine Notice 42 of 2019, Council Directive 2017/159, on the implementation of
the social partners agreement on the ILO work in fishing convention 2007, the person or body that formulates the training programme for a fisherman of minimum age and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48275/19]

268. **Deputy Margaret Murphy O’Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the owner or skipper is now responsible for mental health awareness and training in which the Marine Notice 42 of 2019, Council Directive 2017/159, on the implementation of the social partners agreement on the ILO work in fishing convention 2007, states that mental and physical well-being is fully protected and if the owner or skipper has received adequate instruction; the person or body that decides what adequate training is; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48276/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 268 together.

Council Directive (EU) 2017/159 on the implementation of the social partners’ agreement on the Work in Fishing Convention aims to enhance the working and living conditions for fishers working in the fishing sector on vessels registered in an EU Member State. As the agreement is a social partnership agreement, the Directive merely implements the Agreement as agreed between the social partners in 2012, and the Agreement itself was not subject to any changes during the discussions on the Directive in the Social Questions Working Party. My Department is supportive of the objective of the Directive.

On 9th October, my Department issued Marine Notice 42 of 2019, to provide key stakeholders with a brief overview of some of the main changes that will come into effect once the draft legislation has been finalised. Summarising the provisions of Article 6 of the Annex to Council Directive (EU) 2017/159, Marine Notice 42 of 2019 states that, “fishers who are 16 or 17 years of age may perform duties provided that they are no longer subject to compulsory full-time schooling, they have completed a basic pre-sea training course, their mental and physical well-being is fully protected and they have received adequate instruction”.

The requirement to complete a basic pre-sea training course is a long established practice. Under the provisions of S.I. No. 587/2001 Fishing Vessel (Basic Safety Training) Regulations, 2001, a new entrant, defined as “a person who is for the first time gainfully employed or engaged as a crew member” must complete a safety training course before proceeding to sea. Bord Iascaigh Mhara provides Basic Safety Training for new entrants. In keeping with the requirements of S.I. No. 587/2001, the training consists of three elements: Personal Survival Techniques (STCW-95 Certificate), Elementary First Aid (STCW-95 Certificate) and Fire Prevention and Safety Awareness.

More generally in relation to the safety of workers, the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and its subsidiary regulations cover all workers, irrespective of age or work activity. There is a statutory responsibility for a risk assessment to be carried and maintained and that safety controls are set out in the employer’s legally required safety statement. Where the employer’s risk assessment finds that only light work on fishing vessels can be done safely by anyone over 15 and under 18, then it is the employer’s legal responsibility to ensure that such a limitation on the work and workers is imposed.

It should be noted that Part 6, Chapter 1 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (General Application) Regulations 2007 (S.I. No 299 of 2007), relating to the protection of children and young persons, includes provisions around the employer carrying out risk assessments to determine any specific risks to the safety, health and welfare of children (under 16) and young persons (under 18) arising from how work is carried out. Any such risk assessment should be sufficiently robust to determine if the work involved is beyond the physical or psychological ca-
pacity of the child or young person, and take account of the use of harmful substances, extremes of heat, cold, noise or vibration in the work which a child/young person may not recognize as risks. It should be noted that this legislation falls under the remit of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation.

Road Projects Status

269. Deputy Pat Buckley asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a feasibility study has been carried out into the prospect of a bypass road project for Castlemartyr, County Cork; if not, his plans to request such a study and to implement measures to address congestion in the town which has become a major problem with over half a million vehicles passing through Castlemartyr per month. [47883/19]

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 your question to TII for a direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Marine Safety

270. Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there has been contact between him and the Marine Survey Office regarding the situation faced by a company (details supplied) in respect of regulations which will have a negative effect on tourism and the viability of offshore islands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47889/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): While I have regular contact with the Marine Survey Office on safety issues generally, the application of safety regulations in specific cases such as the one mentioned is a matter for that office in its role as the maritime safety regulator. The specific issue referred to in the Deputy’s question has been the subject of previous parliamentary replies and as stated previously, I have asked for the situation to be reviewed in light of any new information received, recognising that the matter is one of safety in the first instance and the enforcement of relevant regulatory requirements here is a matter for the MSO.

Traffic Regulations Implementation

271. Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if progress will be made on resolving the licensing issues regarding horse-drawn carriages; and if he will take steps to resolve the issue for the benefit of tourist safety, public safety and respect for law abiding carriage operators. [47890/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In February 2011, Dublin City Council (DCC) took over responsibility for the licensing of horse-drawn carriage operators and drivers from the Garda Carriage Office. This was achieved through bye-laws enacted under Part 19 of the Local Government Act 2001; that legislation provides a general
power to a local authority to make bye-laws in relation to its own property or services or to regulate matters of local concern. It is under this Act that local authorities can choose, using bye-laws, to regulate horse-drawn carriages that operate for hire or reward within their functional area. These bye-laws allow relevant local authorities to set their own rules and stipulations to govern such operations.

In 2018 DCC became aware that - specifically in relation to Dublin - this legal basis for making such bye-laws could be uncertain. Local authorities may not make bye-laws for purposes provided for elsewhere in legislation. And the Dublin Carriage Acts 1853-55 had previously vested the power to regulate horse-drawn carriages in Dublin with the Dublin Metropolitan Police Commissioners, to whom An Garda Síochána is the successor.

My Department examined this issue and, following legal advice, is now of the view that the Dublin Carriage Acts 1853-55 remain in force and preclude DCC from enacting the relevant bye-laws.

I understand that DCC first became aware of the present legal issues during a routine review of the bye-laws that considered, inter alia, whether there was need to strengthen measures to safeguard the welfare of horses used to draw carriages. Furthermore, the Control of Horses Act 1996 allows local authorities to introduce bye-laws designating certain areas as control areas for horses. Dublin City Council has designated its administrative boundaries as such a control area under its Control of Horses Bye-Laws 2014. These bye-laws require horses to be licensed and set minimum standards for the keeping of horses within the control area.

Regulations for horse-drawn carriages for hire or reward should be aligned with any horse welfare obligations imposed by local authorities. Accordingly, I have formed the view that horse-drawn carriages for hire and reward should be regulated by local authorities.

This is a complex issue which spans the responsibilities of several Departments and levels of government. Accordingly, my Department is working with colleagues across Government, including the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, to identify how best to empower Dublin City Council to regulate this matter in Dublin, just as other local authorities regulate this matter elsewhere in the country. This work is progressing and I expect to be in a position to bring legislative proposals to Government for approval before the end of the year.

**Bus Services**

272. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the way in which the public consultation process conducted by BusConnects was advertised; if he is satisfied that enough consultation was conducted with communities within the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47891/19]

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

I am satisfied that the NTA has engaged in extensive and in-depth consultation processes with communities across Dublin as it has developed BusConnects. Equally I am satisfied that these consultation processes have been widely advertised both last year, earlier this year and in more recent weeks.
The scale of these consultation processes is evidenced by the level of engagement they have engendered, such as the 30,000 submissions received last year or the local area booklets delivered to every home and business as part of the recently announced Network Redesign consultation process.

The Deputy is also likely aware that these consultations are on-going and the NTA continues to engage with communities as the BusConnects proposals develop.

**Anti-Social Behaviour**

273. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the statistics on incidents of anti-social behaviour on DART services, particularly in the evening times post rush hour; his views on whether more robust measures need to be taken in conjunction with the recent text message report system such as dedicated patrols and increased security; and the way in which he will ensure persons are able to travel on public transport free of intimidation and unease. [47892/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The safety and security of public transport passengers and staff, including arrangements to deal with anti-social behaviour, are important matters that, first and foremost, must be managed by every public transport company, in conjunction with An Garda Síochána, where appropriate.

While the vast majority of public transport passenger journeys occur without incident, I am concerned to ensure that the necessary arrangements are in place to ensure the safety of all passengers and staff.

Following representations from the National Bus and Rail Union, my Department wrote to the three CIÉ companies, seeking their views both on the issue of anti-social behaviour and in relation to ensuring the safety of passengers and staff. All companies stressed their strong and close working relationships with An Garda Síochána.

I also wrote to the Minister for Justice and Equality in relation to the issue of anti-social behaviour on our public transport system. The allocation of all Garda resources, including the manner in which Garda personnel are deployed is solely a decision for the Garda Commissioner and his management team.

I understand that An Garda Síochána met with the Railway Safety Advisory Council (RSAC) in relation to the issue of anti-social behaviour on our public transport network and that further engagement and initiatives are planned. Following that engagement, I note and welcome the recent deployment of Gardaí to public transport locations and to DART, Luas and commuter rail services under ‘Operation Twintrack’.

Iarnród Éireann has advised that it has undertaken a range of measures and proposes further measures to address anti-social behaviour on the rail network, including increased security personnel, allowing for a doubling of security patrols, the introduction of Customer Service Officers on all Intercity routes and enhanced CCTV coverage.

As the Deputy is aware, a new text alert service has been introduced to enable customers to discretely report anti-social behaviour incidents and allow security personnel and/or Gardaí to be alerted and dispatched as required to an incident. The entire Intercity fleet is also equipped with CCTV and with communications buttons at doors.

Finally, the compilation of statistics on incidents of anti-social behaviour on DART services
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.

**Traffic Management**

274. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there has been consultation on addressing the chronic traffic issues on the M50 motorway; his views on whether the route is no longer fit for purpose as an original bypass for Dublin; his plans to consider an outer bypass such as the Leinster orbital route to tackle chronic congestion, remove cars from inner suburbs of Dublin adjacent to the M50 and improve the quality of life for both commuters and residents. [47893/19]

**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, construction and operation of individual national roads is a matter for Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

However, I can advise that Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) along with other stakeholders, is continuing to implement a number of measures on the M50 to optimise operational efficiency.

It should be noted that a single piece of infrastructure cannot be looked at in isolation in an urban context. The National Transport Authority’s (NTA) Transport Strategy for the GDA 2016-2035 sets out a number of projects and initiatives for the Greater Dublin Area that, when implemented, will greatly ease congestion for commuters. Project Ireland 2040 provides the funding for flagship projects such as BusConnects, DART Expansion and MetroLink.

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

**Departmental Expenditure**

275. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47929/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department currently has a contract with Eir to supply mobile phones, which expires in May 2020. In addition, my Department has a small number of staff utilising the Vodafone (currently 1 staff) and Three (currently 2 staff) networks in order to address signal coverage-related issues.

In order to ensure that the costs incurred on work related phones are the best value for the taxpayer, my Department has taken advantage of preferential rates as a result of utilising the Office of Government Procurement’s mobile phone services framework. Mobile phones are only
issued on foot of a business case from the Head of Function and are relevant to the role that the
officer occupies. Mobile phone handsets are procured along with a monthly tariff bundle for
calls, texts and data. Different tariffs are chosen depending on the individual usage of the staff
member and are chosen to give the best value to the taxpayer. Handsets were refreshed during
2018 and a suitable device was chosen at an initial cost of €129 per device. 22 staff availed of
an option to upgrade the proposed supplied device, and paying the difference between the cost
price and €129. The figures listed in the table for handsets also include replacement and repairs
during those years. Officials in my Department monitor the cost of usage of mobile phones on
a monthly basis and staff are requested to indicate non-work related charges and to reimburse
those to the Department.

When roaming for business purposes outside of the EU, staff are placed on specific ‘add
on’ mobile tariff rates for the duration of their trip to help reduce costs. Staff are encouraged
to utilise secure WiFi in non-EU destinations when data is required. Staff also use Departmen-
tally supplied mobile data hotspots for data access during their trip - the cost of usage of these
devices is significantly lower than roaming data charges.

Details of the amount spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff within my Department
for work-related business in the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are provided in the table.
The figures by grade include some charges for handsets but also include charges for calls, data
usage and roaming. Direct handset costs are listed in the last line of the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2016 €</th>
<th>2017 €</th>
<th>2018 €</th>
<th>2019 (to end Oct) €</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister (and Advisors)</td>
<td>3,432.28</td>
<td>2,628.70</td>
<td>1,111.39</td>
<td>1,158.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1,929.99</td>
<td>1,055.90</td>
<td>2,792.37</td>
<td>148.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>5,598.44</td>
<td>2,206.38</td>
<td>1,582.28</td>
<td>1,472.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer (or equiv.)</td>
<td>9,813.91</td>
<td>9,705.68</td>
<td>8,695.10</td>
<td>6,148.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal (or equiv.)</td>
<td>24,092.93</td>
<td>22,611.08</td>
<td>22,138.79</td>
<td>16,112.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>4,387.05</td>
<td>5,559.99</td>
<td>4,531.26</td>
<td>2,964.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>213.41</td>
<td>273.63</td>
<td>189.83</td>
<td>253.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>2,037.61</td>
<td>1,847.84</td>
<td>1,790.46</td>
<td>1,040.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>708.16</td>
<td>519.98</td>
<td>564.77</td>
<td>394.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>849.90</td>
<td>631.44</td>
<td>974.23</td>
<td>800.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handset costs</td>
<td>1,660.50</td>
<td>2,025.81</td>
<td>18,525.67</td>
<td>3,392.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Staff Data**

276. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the
number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make
a statement on the matter. [47955/19]
Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): In response to the above question I have set out the requested information in tabular format as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay Grade</th>
<th>Female Employees</th>
<th>Male Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer &amp; equivalents</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal &amp; equivalents</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer &amp; equivalents</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Driver</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storekeeper</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Attendant</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The numbers given for the grades of Principal Officer, Assistant Principal Officer and Administrative Officer include staff in professional and technical grades which are considered 'equivalent' to these grades.

Ministerial Advisers Data

277. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47972/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the table. The numbers provided are as of 19 November 2019. No political advisors have been appointed by Ministers of State in this Department since the commencement of this Government.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Political Adviser</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shane Ross T.D.</td>
<td>Aisling Dunne</td>
<td>06/05/2016</td>
<td>to date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane Ross T.D.</td>
<td>Carol Hunt</td>
<td>6/09/2016</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane Ross T.D.</td>
<td>Richard Moore*</td>
<td>01/07/2019</td>
<td>to date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Mr. Richard Moore is a temporary replacement for Ms Carol Hunt.

Sports Capital Programme

278. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will liaise with the Minister for Education and Skills regarding the need to give schools the ability
to apply for sports capital grant funding for a type of development (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47984/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Sports Capital Programme (SCP) is the primary vehicle for Government support for the development of sports and physical recreation facilities and the purchase of non-personal sports equipment throughout the country.

Grants are available to sports clubs, voluntary and community groups, national governing bodies of sport, and local authorities. Third level colleges, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and schools may also apply for funding jointly with sports clubs or organisations. In this regard, the Programme frequently funds sports halls and other facilities for schools.

The full terms and conditions of the latest round (2018) of the Programme are available on the Department’s website at https://assets.gov.ie/19992/a4f41408c95c4e87b4b71dee1a43b6b6.pdf

The final set of local grants under the 2018 round of the Programme were published on Friday 15th November. In advance of this latest round closing for applications, officials from my Department liaised with Officials from the Department of Education and Skills to ensure that the Programme was advertised to schools.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

279. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position of an application under the large scale sport infrastructure fund by a club (details supplied); when he will announce the grant allocations under the fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47999/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin): The Large Scale Sport Infrastructure Fund opened for applications on 19th November 2018 and the closing date for receipt of applications was 17th April 2019.

72 applications were received in total. Details of all applications received have been published on the Department’s website. The detailed evaluation process has also been published on the Department’s website.

As set out in this evaluation process, applicants were given an opportunity to provide corrected and amended documentation, where necessary, in support of applications. This part of the process is now complete and detailed assessment work of the applications has commenced. In view of the detailed information contained in each application I expect that it will be towards the end of this year before assessments are completed.

Appointments to State Boards

280. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will report on his proposed appointments to the board of Transport Infrastructure Ireland; the skills and experience he is seeking; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48021/19]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross): The Public Appointments Service (PAS), provides an independent shared service in recruitment, assessment and selection to organisations across the Civil and Public Services, including for Transport Infra-
structure Ireland (TII).

Under the PAS process, an information booklet, to fill current vacancies on the TII Board, is being drafted by the PAS, in consultation with my Department, and is intended to be advertised shortly.

While the process is not yet finalised I can advise that the PAS information booklet will set out the general areas in which a candidate should have a demonstrated interest/competence, taking account of the role and functions of TII and the respective roles and capacities of the executive and the continuing members of the Board. In particular it is envisaged that 4 people will be appointed to the Board and that each will have a particular competence in one of the following: Legal, Accounting, Cycling and Disability Advocacy.

You may wish to note that PAS has a dedicated website, www.stateboards.ie, which is the channel through which the PAS advertises vacancies on State Boards.

**Departmental Data**

281. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48045/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I wish to confirm to the Deputy that no formal complaints of bullying and sexual harassment were received in my Department in the years from 2016 to date under the “Dignity at Work – An Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy for the Civil Service”.

In terms of addressing complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, my Department is strongly committed to implementing the Civil Service Anti-Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Harassment Policy - Dignity at Work. Each staff member is made aware that all forms of bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are unacceptable standards of behaviour.

On appointment, all staff receive a copy of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour, which sets the expected standards for their behaviour at work and towards colleagues. The Code also includes a commitment for staff to observe and support the Dignity at Work Policy.

**Airlines Regulations**

282. **Deputy David Cullinane** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the air carriers registered here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48049/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The Commission for Aviation Regulation is responsible for licensing Irish airlines in accordance with Regulation (EC) No. 1008/2008.

The Commission publishes the list of licensed airlines online at https://www.aviationreg.ie/_fileupload/ALLicensed_operators_24_09_19.pdf

**Departmental Staff Dismissals**
283. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of employees of his Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48080/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I can confirm to the Deputy that one Department employee was dismissed in 2019 when their contract was terminated after failing to successfully complete their probation period.

No other Department employees were dismissed between 2016 and 2018 or were suspended in this entire period.

**National Transport Authority**

284. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether it is acceptable for the National Transport Authority to repeatedly refuse to confirm a meeting with a cross-party delegation of public representatives from the Inishowen peninsula, County Donegal, to discuss their concerns regarding the changes to the public bus services from Inishowen to Letterkenny; and if he will encourage the NTA to do so at the earliest opportunity. [48107/19]

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

**Departmental Expenditure**

285. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48132/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The information requested by the Deputy is currently being assessed by my officials and will be forwarded to the Deputy within 10 working days.

**Public Transport Initiatives**

286. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the targeted improvements to accessibility of public transport nationwide that will be completed by the end of each quarter in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47911/19]

**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.

Under the Dublin Transport Authority Act 2008, the National Transport Authority (NTA) has statutory responsibility for promoting the development of an integrated, accessible public transport system in Dublin. The NTA is currently planning to introduce significant improvements to the public transport system in Dublin, including the expansion of the Luas network, the introduction of new bus services, and the improvement of cycling infrastructure. These improvements will enhance accessibility and convenience for public transport users across the city.

The Irish Government has committed to promoting active travel and non-motorised transport as a means of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. The Government is also committed to improving the accessibility of public transport services for people with disabilities.

In addition, the Government is committed to investing in the development of new and improved public transport infrastructure, including the expansion of the rail network and the introduction of new rail services. These investments will help to improve the accessibility and convenience of public transport services for people across the country.

The Government is also committed to promoting the use of public transport as a means of reducing traffic congestion and improving air quality. The Government is working to improve the accessibility and convenience of public transport services for people across the country, including by investing in the development of new and improved public transport infrastructure.
transport network. The NTA also manages the Accessibility Retrofit Programme which funds accessibility upgrades to existing older public transport infrastructure and facilities.

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

**Departmental Expenditure**

287. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48198/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** My Department has spent €1,310.47 to date this year in respect of bottled water.

There has been no expenditure on disposable coffee cups in 2019 by my Department.

**Freedom of Information Data**

288. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48215/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** In accordance with Section 8 (1) of the FOI Act 2014 the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport published its first publication scheme on 14th April 2016. The scheme was drawn up in line with the model scheme produced by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in late 2015.

The Department’s publication scheme has was reviewed in late 2018/early 2019 and a revised publication scheme was published on 24 July 2019.

**Bus Services**

289. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason for the repeated delays in finalising and commencing a small pilot urban bus project for Kilkenny city; the reason the NTA has not finalised fares and timetables after three years of planning; when the service will commence; and the lessons his Department and the NTA will learn from these delays to ensure that future projects are not held up in the same manner. [48236/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport.

The issue raised is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) and I have forwarded the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within ten working days.
Departmental Expenditure

290. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48254/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** Financial information in respect of my Department is published on the Gov.ie website at the following link:

https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/7fee14-financial-information/

The information requested by the Deputy for the years 2016 to 2018 is available at this link:


The information for 2019 is being compiled at present and will be available in the coming weeks.

**Coast Guard Services**

291. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of funding provided to the Irish Coast Guard in each of the years 2016 to 2019, in tabular form; the budget allocation for same in 2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48265/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The following funding figures are inclusive of both capital and current allocations.

The majority of Current spend is on the IRCG Helicopter contract.

The bulk of capital expenditure relates to programme spend by the Irish Coast Guard, including provision for a building programme, IT upgrades, vehicle and boat fleet renewal, pollution equipment and maintenance of telecommunications infrastructure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Irish Coast Guard Funding (€’000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>76,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>77,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>74,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>71,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>70,085</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Road Safety Authority Reports**

292. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the findings of the research of the Road Safety Authority on speeding, the free speed study survey report 2018; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48266/19]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** The report to which the Deputy refers is available on the Road Safety Authority’s website. It can be found at https://www.rsa.ie/Documents/Road%20Safety/Speed/RRD_Res_20190204_FreeSpeedSurvey-2018FINAL.pdf.
I would particularly draw the Deputy’s attention to the fact that there has been a slight decline in speeding on urban roads and a similar increase on rural roads. There have also been increases in the proportion of drivers speeding on roads with an 80km/h and 100km/h limit.

Speeding represents the single most dangerous factor on our roads. It makes collisions more likely, and it makes death or serious injury more likely when collisions happen. To take just one figure, the fact that 50% of people are speeding on 80km/h roads is utterly unacceptable. They are putting themselves, their passengers, and other road users at risk.

Dealing with speeding is a matter of education, appropriate penalties, and proper enforcement. In this context I am proposing to introduce a graduated speeding system as part of the Road Traffic (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. This will be aimed at targeting the most dangerous speeding offences, providing a deterrent against speeding, and emphasising the message that speeding cannot be tolerated on our roads.

### Departmental Expenditure

293. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in her Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if her Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to her Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47915/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in tabular form as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary Gen-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Sec-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Offi-</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Prin-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cipal Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executi-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ve Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Offi-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Cost</td>
<td>€4,050.00</td>
<td>€9,155.00</td>
<td>€4,445.00</td>
<td>€1,438.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My Department is currently in contract with Eir under the Office of Government Procurement framework agreement for Provision of Mobile Voice and Data Communications and Associated Products and Services. This contract is due to expire on 16 May 2020. This framework
contract provides for the provision of a standard Smart Data Business Bundle which includes unlimited national calls and texts and 5 GB of data.

My Department offers a standard smartphone to officials as part of the framework agreement. In exceptional circumstances, a higher specification phone and data may be appropriate and will be considered on a case by case basis.

**Departmental Staff Data**

294. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of staff in her Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47941/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The following table shows the number of staff employed in my Department by gender and pay grade at the end of October 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pay Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

Numbers shown are headcount. The Principal Officer figures above include two Special Advisors (2 Female/0 Male). The Clerical Officer figures include two Civilian Drivers (0 Female/2 Male).

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

295. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47958/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Following the formation of the 32nd Government, I was appointed as Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on the 6th May. There are no Ministers of State in my Department.

In accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform instructions on the staffing of Ministerial Offices, I appointed two Special Advisers who took up appointment on the 16th May 2016 and the 10th June 2016 respectively. Both of these Special Advisers were
re-appointed to their positions as my Special Advisers on the 14th June 2017 when Mr Leo Varadker T.D assumed the office of Taoiseach.

The Special Adviser who originally took up appointment on the 16th May 2016 is still in post while the Special Adviser who originally took up appointment on the 10th June 2016 resigned from the post with effect from the 10th June 2019. I appointed the replacement Special Adviser on the 10th July 2019 and they continue in the post to date.

Voluntary Sector Funding

296. Deputy Michael McGrath asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will consider the funding allocation to a project (details supplied) in view of the growing demand for the services and the vital nature of the services provided in the local community; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47996/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): Tusla, the Child and Family Agency funds a range of services in the community and voluntary sector to provide services to children and families including the project referred to by the Deputy.

I have requested Tusla to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the allocation of funding to the project referred to by the Deputy.

Departmental Data

297. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48031/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): In 2019 there has been one allegation of bullying reported to the HR Unit in my Department.

The HR Unit in my Department received no reports of bullying in each of the years 2016 to 2018.

There have been no allegations of sexual harassment in my Department from 2016 to date.

Departmental Staff Dismissals

298. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of employees of her Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48066/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): There have been no dismissals or suspensions of staff in my Department from 2016 to date in 2019.

Departmental Staff Data

299. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the num-
ber of dedicated child support workers appointed on a local authority by local authority basis to assist homeless families; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48091/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** My Department and Tusla are working to provide supports for families in emergency accommodation in order to mitigate the challenges faced by parents and children in this situation.

As the State agency established to promote the welfare of children, Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, is committed to supporting children, parents and communities in dealing with the impact of homelessness on their lives. The short and long term effects of homelessness on children are well documented. While Tusla does not have a direct role in the provision of housing or accommodation for homeless families a range of services, from prevention and early intervention through to child welfare and protection, are provided.

Tusla works in partnership with the Dublin Region Homeless Executive (DRHE) and is a key partner on several interagency groups. Bilateral meetings between the DRHE and Tusla take place monthly. Tusla supports ‘one-stop-shop’ assessment centres being led by the DRHE. Tusla staff participate as required on issues involving child protection and welfare, educational welfare and Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence (DGSBV) services. The Tusla Homelessness Liaison Officer plays a key role in coordinating this multi-agency response.

While homelessness is not a reason for a referral to child protection services, there may be child protection or welfare concerns for some children. Tusla undertakes visits to Family Hubs and emergency accommodation providers to ensure that they are aware of their requirements under Children First and to clarify referral queries. Tusla has progressed plans for the linkage of Child and Family Support Networks (CFSNs) with family hubs and other homeless accommodation.

Tusla also works in partnership with a number of Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to provide dedicated services for families experiencing homelessness. Tusla has also supported the evening service at the Focus Ireland Coffee Shop, a service which includes a range of supports to homeless families, high quality food, and rooms for children to do homework supported by an educational tutor. Tusla also funds the work of two child support workers in Focus Ireland.

However, it is important to note that the needs of homeless families require a response from across Government and beyond. I have asked that Tusla provide further detail in regard to family support workers directly to the Deputy.

**Departmental Expenditure**

300. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48118/19]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The information sought by the Deputy is currently being collated and the response will issue as soon as possible.

**Departmental Expenditure**

301. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by her Department to date in 2019; and if she
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): My Department has spent approximately €8,600 on bottled water and water coolers so far in 2019. This includes both individual bottled water and water coolers. Just over €1,000 was spent on individual bottles, i.e. 330 ml or 500 ml, and €7,600 on water coolers, i.e. 19 litre drums.

My Department has spent €71 on the purchase of disposable coffee cups so far in 2019 which are all fully compostable.

Freedom of Information Data

302. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of her Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48201/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The Publication Scheme for my Department was reviewed in January 2019 and no revision was required. It is reviewed on an annual basis.

Departmental Expenditure

303. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48240/19]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone): The information sought by the Deputy is currently being collated and the response will issue as soon as possible.

Town and Village Renewal Scheme

304. Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the status of the processing of applications from County Kildare under the 2019 town and village renewal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47896/19]

Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring): The 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme was launched in April of this year. There was a strong level of interest in the scheme and I recently announced details of 156 projects that have been approved for funding of approximately €15 million this year.

These include 4 projects for Co. Kildare to the value of €312,164.

My officials will be in contact with Kildare County Council shortly regarding the funding agreement for the approved projects.

Details of all projects which were approved for funding under the 2019 Town and Village Renewal Scheme are available on the Gov.ie website at:

https://assets.gov.ie/38269/44d780f59a3b4856bbc3abad6d918b3f.pdf
305. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47927/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department was established in July 2017.

In 2018, the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer, a division of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, assumed responsibility for the provision of my Department’s ICT managed services.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform currently has a contract in place with Three Ireland for the supply of Mobile Phone Services & Handsets, which was awarded on foot of a public procurement competition. This contract, which also covers such services to my Department, is due to expire in April 2020. In general, mobile phones are currently procured using the Three Ireland contract, with certain handsets provided free of charge as part of the contract.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is currently undertaking a market exercise in relation to a successor contract, run under the Office of Government Procurement’s Mobile Phone Framework. The public procurement process undertaken in this regard will ensure that best possible value for money is achieved.

The following Table details the total expenditure incurred by my Department in relation to mobile phones handsets over the period specified by the Deputy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Purchased</th>
<th>By Grade</th>
<th>Number supplied Free of Charge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€5,505.48</td>
<td>1 x Minister</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 x Special Advisor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 x Private Secretary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 x Assistant Secretary General</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 x Principal Officers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 x Assistant Principal Officers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 x Inspector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€1,223.85</td>
<td>1 x Press Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>€6,729.33</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

306. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47953/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** As of Friday,
the 15th November, the staff breakdown in the Department of Rural and Community Development by gender and pay grade is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Clerical Officer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Service Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Grade</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministerial Driver</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

307. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47970/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** I have appointed three advisers to date. Minister of State Seán Canney has appointed one adviser. Details are summarised in Table A.

Table A:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Commencement Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Padraig Hughes</td>
<td>Special Adviser</td>
<td>Minister Michael Ring</td>
<td>Department of Rural &amp; Community Development</td>
<td>11/06/2018</td>
<td>Still in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Daniel Rowan</td>
<td>Press Adviser</td>
<td>Minister Michael Ring</td>
<td>Department of Rural &amp; Community Development</td>
<td>14/08/2017</td>
<td>Still in employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Seamus Ó Ceallacháin</td>
<td>Special Adviser</td>
<td>Minister Michael Ring</td>
<td>Department of Rural and Community Development</td>
<td>11/09/2017</td>
<td>31/5/2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above I also avail of further advisory support from Mr Paul Mc Grath, who provides me with support and advice in an unpaid capacity from 2017 to date.

**Departmental Data**

308. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48043/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Department of Rural and Community Development was established on 19 July 2017 to provide a renewed and consolidated focus on rural and community development in Ireland.

The Department is committed to promoting a culture of dignity and mutual respect throughout the organisation. The key policy in place in this regard is the Dignity at Work Policy. This policy outlines the procedures in place and the steps which individuals may take if they believe that they have been bullied, harassed, or sexually harassed.

All staff are made aware of the contents of this policy and the procedures to be followed, as part of the induction process for new employees. This ensures that all members of staff are aware that all forms of bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment are unacceptable and that every staff member has a duty to behave in an acceptable and respectful manner.

There were no complaints under this policy in 2017 and 2018.

There was one complaint of physical harassment in 2019 within an agency of the Department which is currently being investigated under the parameters of the Dignity at Work Policy.

**Departmental Staff Dismissals**

309. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of employees of his Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48078/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The Department of Rural and Community Development was established in July 2017.

Since the Department’s establishment, there have been no employees dismissed or suspended.
310. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48130/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The details of the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category, as requested by the Deputy, are set out in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advertising</td>
<td>€10,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboard Advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Advertising</td>
<td>€6,407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus stop advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative design and production fees</td>
<td>€393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Production and design</td>
<td>€42,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Consultancy fees</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publisher Fees</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Launches</td>
<td>€21,457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>€81,223</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

311. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48196/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has spent €2,052.03 on bottled water to date in 2019. The water is made available to staff through standalone water cooler units and bottles for the units are re-used by our supplier.

My Department is implementing the Government Decision on 3 January 2019 to eliminate the purchase of Single Use Plastics and no disposable plastic cups or other plastic utensils have been purchased in 2019.

312. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48213/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act requires Departments to review and update its Publica-
tion Scheme within three years of publication. My Department’s first Publication Scheme was published in September 2018, in accordance with the guidance published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, and will be updated as required under the legislation.

The Act also makes provision for material published under the Scheme to be reviewed and revised on at least an annual basis. Currently my Department publishes:

- details of ministerial expenses
- the diaries of ministers and the secretary general of the Department
- logs of Freedom of Information requests received
- Prompt payments reports and details of payments made in excess of €20,000

In each case, the above are updated quarterly in arrears and published on my Department’s website on Gov.ie.

**Departmental Expenditure**

313. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48252/19]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** The details requested by the Deputy are set out in the table. As my Department was established on 19th July 2017, the information provided commences on that date and includes the remainder of 2017, 2018 and spending to date in 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 (July-Dec)</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019 (spending to date)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TV advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>€6,298</td>
<td>€5,922</td>
<td>€12,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboard Advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Print Advertising</td>
<td>€12,712</td>
<td>€7,492</td>
<td>€12,087</td>
<td>€32,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public transport advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus stop advertising</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative design and production fees</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>€4,053</td>
<td>€4,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Production and design</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>€23,032</td>
<td>€19,557</td>
<td>€42,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR Consultancy fees and publisher fees</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Press Launches</td>
<td>€3,249</td>
<td>€22,537</td>
<td>€9,959</td>
<td>€35,745</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Community Employment Schemes Eligibility**

314. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if the community employment scheme will be extended for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47888/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department provides financial support in the form of allowances and funding to assist with the Community Employment programme, for example participant wages, supervisor grants, materials grants and specific skills training grants.

Funding is not provided for CE participants who have reached the qualifying age for a State pension, that is:

- 66 for participants born before 1 January 1955
- 67 for participants born on or after 1 January 1955
- 68 for participants born on or after 1 January 1961

As the individual was born prior to 1 January 1955 and reached the age of 66 on 6 November 2019 my Department is no longer in a position to fund his position after that date.

He may qualify for the State Pension (Contributory) if he has accrued sufficient PRSI contributions. The State Pension (Contributory) is not means tested. This pension has a maximum personal rate payable of €12,956 per annum.

**Departmental Expenditure**

315. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in her Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if her Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to her Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47920/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** In order for the staff of my Department to fulfil their role it is necessary that they are provided with the appropriate equipment and services to support our customer’s needs. In doing so, at all times, my Department is aware of the need to achieve value for money in the delivery of such services.

My Department does not purchase mobile phones but purchases a fixed monthly price for a bundle of products and services which includes mobile phones. These costs are commercially sensitive. A breakdown of mobile devices per grade is presented as follows.
During 2018 my Department ran a competitive tendering process under the Office of Government Procurement’s (OGP) Framework Agreement for the provision of Mobile Voice and Data Communications and Associated Products and Services. A contract was awarded to Vodafone Ireland on 1 November 2018 for a period of two years and will expire on 31 October 2020.

My Department carefully monitors costs and usage incurred by its mobile phone users and has robust procedures in place to ensure that usage is maintained within the terms of the contract.

### Ininvalidity Pension Appeals

316. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if a decision has been made on an invalidity pension appeal by a person (details supplied) in County. Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47930/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred on 22 October 2019 to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions in relation to social welfare entitlements.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Departmental Staff Data

317. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of staff in her Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47946/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Government are implementing transformational reforms under the Civil Service Renewal agenda. A key commitment in the Civil Service Renewal Plan is to maximise the contribution of all staff, by nurturing and rewarding talent and by encouraging civil servants to develop their potential in a workplace committed to equality and diversity. Gender balance policy measures have been endorsed by the Government and are framed around practical HR and organisational considerations. Measures such as a target of 50/50 gender balance in appointments at senior levels are now in place.

Details of the number of staff in my Department by gender and pay grade as at the end of
October are detailed in the table. The figure for full time equivalents takes account of staff that avail of work-share options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male (FTE)</th>
<th>Female (FTE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Secretary</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>39.60</td>
<td>21.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Assessor</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>22.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td>160.55</td>
<td>122.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>507.59</td>
<td>957.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>12.00</td>
<td>10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>463.80</td>
<td>936.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>563.20</td>
<td>1855.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Officer</td>
<td>130.20</td>
<td>17.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1892.94</strong></td>
<td><strong>3949.19</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ministerial Advisers Data**

318. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47963/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Under Government guidelines I am permitted to appoint a maximum of two Special Advisors.

Since I took up my appointment as Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection, three special advisers have been employed by my Department. All my advisers have worked across a wide range of areas within the remit of the Department including Employment Law, Employment Supports and Activation, Pensions Policy and Social Protection.

The details of their employment and cessation dates are set out in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start - End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denise Duffy</td>
<td>Jun 17 to Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex Connolly</td>
<td>Oct 18 to Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerry Mullins</td>
<td>Oct 17 to Jul 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Departmental Staff**

319. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the work practice changes for clerical officers who were introduced in her Department in 2017; if clearly defined responsibilities and expected workloads were made available to the various staff grades; if workloads and responsibilities were assigned proportionally to the various grades; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47976/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Clerical Officers in my Department may be required to undertake any duties appropriate to
their grade. Subject to this, and given the ongoing changes in the delivery of services by the Department, staff members at all grades may be required to undertake different work, either in their original business unit or in another business unit on reassignment.

Illness Benefit Applications

320. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of an application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47992/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The application for Illness Benefit from the person concerned has been processed and he has been awarded Illness Benefit at the maximum rate of €203 per week. All arrears due to the Person Concerned have been issued to his nominated Post Office.

He is currently medically certified as unfit for work until the 4th November 2019.

If the person concerned remains ill and unfit for work, a further medical certificate should be submitted to the Department as soon as possible in order for further payments to issue.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Carer’s Allowance Eligibility

321. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will take steps to ensure that a carer’s allowance is restored to a person (details supplied); if same will now be addressed without delay; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48006/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Carer’s allowance (CA) is a means-tested social assistance payment made to a person who is habitually resident in the State and who is providing full-time care and attention to a child or an adult who has such a disability that as a result they require that level of care.

A person is deemed to require full-time care and attention (FTCA) where they require from another person continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions or continual supervision in order to avoid being a danger to themselves. They must also be likely to require this level of care for at least 12 consecutive months.

Once claims are in payment, my Department undertakes periodic reviews to ensure that there is continued entitlement to payment. This includes reviews to ensure that the person being cared for continues to satisfy the care requirement.

As part of a review of this person’s entitlement to Carer’s Allowance (CA), a medical report form (MR33) was requested on 15 November 2018. The person concerned was in receipt of carer’s allowance (CA) in respect of his son until 26 June 2019 when his claim was terminated as he had failed to supply the documentation requested. The person concerned was notified on 29 May 2019 of this decision, the reason for it and of his right of review and appeal.

The person concerned then forwarded the documentation requested on 19 July 2019, which is currently being reviewed by a Medical Assessor of my Department.
Following receipt of the information requested and pending completion of the review, the person concerned has been re-awarded full rate CA in respect of his second care recipient, his son, with effect from 27 June 2019.

Arrears of allowance from 27 June 2019 to 28 November 2019 will issue shortly.

The person concerned was notified on 19 November 2019 of this outcome. The review of this person’s entitlement is ongoing and the person concerned will be notified once the review is complete.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Illness Benefit Eligibility

322. Deputy Sean Sherlock asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the way in which a decision was arrived at not to grant illness benefit in respect of a claim submitted by a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [48023/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Finian McGrath): An application for Illness Benefit was received from the person concerned on the 6th September 2019.

One of the qualifying conditions for Illness Benefit is that a person must have 39 weeks of PRSI contributions paid or credited in the relevant tax year, of which 13 must be paid contributions at class A, E or H. Alternatively, a person may have 26 weeks of PRSI contributions paid in the relevant tax year, and 26 weeks of PRSI contributions paid in the tax year immediately before the relevant tax year with all such contributions at class A, E or H.

The person concerned has only 12 reckonable contributions in 2017, which means he does not qualify for an Illness Benefit payment. A letter has issued to the person concerned giving him the full details of this decision.

The person concerned may continue to submit medical certificates for the period in which he is unfit for work in order to receive PRSI credited contributions.

Should the person concerned be in need of financial assistance, it is open for him to contact the Community Welfare Service at his local Intreo Centre.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Data

323. Deputy Shane Cassells asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48036/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment received by my Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 are outlined as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Complaints of bullying</th>
<th>Complaints of sexual harassment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Departmental Staff Dismissals

324. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of employees of her Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48071/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The following table provides details of the numbers and reason staff of my Department were dismissed in the period from January 2016 to date. Details of officers suspended are also included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number Dismissed</th>
<th>Reason for Dismissal</th>
<th>Number Suspended</th>
<th>Reason for Suspension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 for unsatisfactory attendance, 1 for data breaches, 1 for unsatisfactory attendance and performance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pending completion of investigation of possible data breaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2 for data breaches, 2 for unsatisfactory attendance, 2 for inappropriate behaviour</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pending completion of investigation of inappropriate behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 for data breach, 2 for unsatisfactory attendance, 1 for inappropriate behaviour, 1 for unsatisfactory attendance and performance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pending completion of investigation of inappropriate behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 for fraud, 1 for performance issues</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pending completion of investigation of inappropriate behaviour and possible data breaches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Retention

325. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the length of time her Department retains data on the route, time and date of journeys taken by individual public service travel pass users in view of the fact that the Secretary General of her Department acknowledged to the Committee of Public Accounts that data is retained.
Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): Free Travel Pass usage data, received by my Department from the National Transport Authority, verifies that a Free Travel Pass was used at a particular time and date on an Integrated Ticketing System enabled vehicle. This usage data is non-identifying and does not provide journey duration or fare collected. This ITS usage data is retained by my Department for 13 months.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

326. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48123/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): My Department has not incurred any expenditure on public relations, promotion and advertising in respect of the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Departmental Expenditure

327. Deputy Jack Chambers asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by her Department to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48189/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department has two contracts through the Office of Government Procurement (OGP) for the provision of drinking water. One contract is for mains-fed water coolers; the other provides for 9 litre bottle-fed coolers where mains-fed coolers are not an option. The 9 litre water containers are reusable and are collected with each new delivery. Following the Government decision to end the purchasing of single-use plastic, the Department has issued staff with individual reusable water bottles for use with these water-coolers.

The Department does not purchase disposable coffee cups but rather provides china, glasses and cutlery for meetings and events.

The spend on water coolers to the end of October 2019 is as follows:

- 9 litre reusable container water contract - €25,918

- Mains-fed contract - €25,652.

Freedom of Information Data

328. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protec-
tion the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of her Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48206/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Department’s Freedom of Information (FOI) publication scheme is based on the model publication scheme set out under Section 8 (7) of the FOI Act. This contains six different sections and these sections are updated at different intervals, reflecting the nature of the information contained in them.

For example, the section giving details of FOI contacts was updated as recently as October of this year while the procurement section was updated in May 2019. Other elements of the publication scheme do not require such frequent updating - for example, the material on the role and functions of the Department does not require regular alteration. All elements of the scheme are kept under review and updated as is necessary.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

Community Employment Schemes Supervisors

329. Deputy Brendan Griffin asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection her views on a matter regarding community employment supervisors (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48225/19]

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty): The Community Employment Scheme (CE) is an active labour market programme designed to provide eligible long-term unemployed people and other disadvantaged persons with an opportunity to engage in useful work within their communities on a temporary, fixed term basis.

The programme is delivered through independent Community Employment Sponsoring Bodies. The contract agreement between the Department and the Community Employment Sponsoring Body establishes their role as an independent contractor, responsible for all purposes and all persons recruited by them.

CE Supervisors have always been employees of Community Employment Sponsoring Bodies which operate in the community and voluntary sector. The Community Employment Sponsoring Body receives public funding.

In July 2008 the Labour Court recommended that an agreed pension scheme should be introduced for CE supervisors and assistant supervisors, and that such a scheme should be adequately funded by FÁS, who were then responsible for CE. It should be noted that FÁS was not a party to the LRC case.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Department is currently engaging with representatives of CE supervisors to discuss issues arising following that 2008 Labour Court Recommendation (LCR 19293) and that all parties agreed that the detail of all discussions undertaken by the group should remain confidential until the process had completed. I would ask Deputies to respect these wishes and allow the talks to continue free from speculation.

Invalidity Pension Applications

330. Deputy Michael Healy-Rae asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social
Protection the status of an invalidity pension for a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48235/19]

**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 17 October 2019. Payment will issue to her nominated bank account on 05 December 2019. Any arrears due from 17 October 2019 to 04 December 2019 (less any overlapping social welfare payment) will issue as soon as possible. The lady in question was notified of this decision on 18 November 2019.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Departmental Expenditure**

331. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48245/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Department is fully committed to ensuring that members of the public are fully aware of the wide range of welfare supports and services that are available to them and informed of any changes which may affect them. This is especially important when new schemes and services are being launched by my Department. Recent examples include Parents Benefit, Jobseeker’s Benefit for the Self Employed and the increase in online services available at MyWelfare.ie.

For the purpose of this response, I have interpreted “the amount spent on promotion and advertising” as including the costs incurred from the media buying aspect of public information campaigns, including media buying expenditure relating to announcements or the advertisement of senior management vacancy notices.

The Department works with a media buying agency to ensure that our advertising is targeted appropriately through the best mix of available media to ensure that the Department’s messages effectively reach the public and the target audience. The Department’s public information/advertising campaigns can include a mix of channels including national and regional print media, national and regional radio advertising, outdoor advertising, and digital and social media advertising.

All advertising expenditure undertaken by the Department is tendered for in accordance with Government and EU procurement guidelines, including use of framework agreements from the Office of Government Procurement.

Total promotion/advertising expenditure in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 to date are set out in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Advertising Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€87,642.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€839,102.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€415,662.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€661,493.58*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Invoiced to 18 November 2019*
All other communications related expenditure is detailed in the following table.

This expenditure includes the creative design and production costs related to advertising campaign design, the development of content in accessible formats including sign language, subtitled video and braille, production of explainer videos for use online, the development of a suite of plain English customer publications, participation at key national events to provide customer information including the National Ploughing Championships and Pregnancy and Baby Events, costs relating to internal communications and video production.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Other Communication Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€92,987.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€312,038.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€327,726.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>€288,427.63*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Invoiced to 18 November 2019

No public relations expenditure was incurred by my Department in 2016, 2017, 2018 or 2019 to date.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Widow’s Pension Applications**

332. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection when a widow’s pension will be approved for a person (details supplied). [48259/19]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned was awarded a maximum rate widow’s, widower’s & surviving civil partner’s contributory pension with effect from 30th August 2018. Payment will commence into her nominated account in a financial institution from the 22nd November 2019.

Any arrears of pension due from the 30th August 2018 will be lodged into her nominated account shortly.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

**Departmental Expenditure**

333. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in his Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if his Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to his Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47924/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department awarded a Mobile Voice and Data contract to Vodafone in September 2016 procured through an Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Framework, using a Supplementary Response Framework Tender. My Department is currently preparing to undertake a competitive tendering process in conjunction with the OGP again for our voice and data ser-
services, the contract for which is now due for renewal.

Met Éireann has a two-year drawn down contract in place with Three Ireland, under the OGP mobile phone services framework. The contract is due to expire on 31/10/2020 with an option to extend for a further two years.

The amounts spent on purchasing mobile phones for staff for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to date is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenditure on Mobile Phones</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government</td>
<td>€107,715</td>
<td>€20,050</td>
<td>€32,560</td>
<td>€28,050</td>
<td>€188,375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Éireann</td>
<td>€125</td>
<td>€0</td>
<td>€17,773</td>
<td>€9,486</td>
<td>€27,384</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Historical information regarding the grade levels of mobile phone recipients is not available, however, the numbers of staff with mobile phones broken down by grades in 2019 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DHPLG</th>
<th>Met Éireann</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>Senior Meteorologist</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>Principal Meteorological Officer</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>Meteorologist</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>Hydrometeorologist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>Senior Meteorological Officer</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Officer</td>
<td>Meteorological Officer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountant</td>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architectural/Engineering</td>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Standard Advisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Inspector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantity Surveyor</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Advisor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Advisor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal Advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire Advisor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific Policy Advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20 November 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DHPLG</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Met Éireann</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geographical Information Officer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statistician</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Secretary</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers Advisor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>266</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Legal Cases

334. Deputy Eoin Ó Broin asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the ongoing EU Commission and European Court of Justice legal action against the State for breaches of the urban wastewater treatment directive. [47936/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Following a judgment in March 2019 by the Court of Justice of the European Union on Ireland’s non-compliance with the urban wastewater treatment directive, my Department, accompanied by Irish Water, met Commission officials and proposed a programme of measures to ensure this case is resolved. My Department will maintain close contact with the Commission while the case remains open.

Works have already been completed at 13 agglomerations to bring them into compliance with the Directive.

Ireland’s future economic and social progress is critically dependent on upscaling our capacity to deliver reliable, high quality water and wastewater services. In line with our Programme for Government commitments, we have committed substantial funding to strategically address the deficiencies in the public waste water system. Investment in waste water infrastructure is prioritised in the Irish Water Strategic Funding Plan and it is estimated that €1.9bn will be invested in waste water projects from 2019 to 2024.

Building water and wastewater treatment plants and upgrading or building water and wastewater networks as necessary require significant and sustained investment for which the Government is providing through the National Development Plan 2018-2027. This provides for an unprecedented investment in public water and wastewater infrastructure over the next ten years. This significant multi-billion euro investment programme will ensure the continued operation, repair and upgrading of Ireland’s water and wastewater infrastructure to support social and economic development across the State and continued care of the water environment.

Departmental Staff Data

335. Deputy Jim O’Callaghan asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff in his Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47950/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): There were 775.21 staff serving in my Department at the end of October 2019, as calculated on a fulltime equivalent basis. The information requested is set out in the following table.

185
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER</td>
<td>9.50</td>
<td>13.00</td>
<td>22.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVISORY COUNSEL GRADE 3</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECTURAL ADVISOR</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECTURAL/ENG INSPECTOR</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT AUDITOR ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>7.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT DIRECTOR MET SERVICE</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT FIRE ADVISOR</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL</td>
<td>51.30</td>
<td>58.63</td>
<td>109.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT SECRETARY</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSISTANT STAFF ENGINEER</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDITOR</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUDITOR ENVIRONMENT</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>17.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIVILIAN DRIVER</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLEANER</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLERICAL OFF TEMPORARY</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLERICAL OFFICER</td>
<td>19.60</td>
<td>55.53</td>
<td>75.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR METEORLOGICAL SERVICE</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIRECTOR OF AUDIT</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER GRADE 1 CIVIL</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>5.19</td>
<td>10.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER GRADE 2 CIVIL</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER GRADE 2 MECH/HEATING</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENGINEER GRADE 3 CIVIL</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE OFFICER</td>
<td>61.56</td>
<td>73.91</td>
<td>135.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEAD SERVICES OFFICER</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER</td>
<td>46.28</td>
<td>47.59</td>
<td>93.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOUSING INSPECTOR</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT APPRENTICE</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSPECTOR PLANNING</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INSPECTOR GRADE 1</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER</td>
<td>26.90</td>
<td>13.60</td>
<td>40.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METEOROLOGIST</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>25.93</td>
<td>51.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCHER</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL ADVISOR HIGHER LEVEL</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL AUDITOR</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL METEOROLOGICAL OFFICER</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRINCIPAL OFFICER</td>
<td>25.20</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>35.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANT GRADE 1</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUANTITY SURVEYOR GRADE 1</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RURAL GENERAL OPERATIVE</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ministerial Advisers Data

336. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in his Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47967/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
Two special advisers are currently used by my Department. There has been one change of adviser during my time as Minister and details are set out in the following table. These advisers work across a wide range of areas within the remit of my Department including Housing, Planning, Local Government, Water Services and Electoral Reform as well as liaising with the media and other Government Departments and advisers.

No advisers have been appointed by the Ministers of State in my Department.

The name and start date of each adviser are set out in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jack O’Donnell</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Carroll Mac Neill</td>
<td>6 November 2017</td>
<td>2 February 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Melia</td>
<td>7 February 2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My immediate predecessor as Minister in this Government appointed two advisers, as reflected in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>Cessation Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catriona Fitzpatrick</td>
<td>7 May 2016</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Jordan</td>
<td>5 July 2016</td>
<td>14 June 2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Departmental Data
337. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48040/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is implementing Dignity at Work, the Civil Service anti-bullying, harassment and sexual harassment policy, in the manner required.

There have been no complaints of bullying and sexual harassment in my Department in the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

### Departmental Staff Dismissals

338. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of employees of his Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48075/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There have been no dismissals or suspensions in my Department in any of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019.

### Departmental Staff Data

339. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff currently engaged by the housing delivery office in his Department; the number per annum since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48081/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In line with the commitment under Action 2.9 of Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a dedicated Housing Delivery Office (HDO) was established within my Department, in August 2016, to support the accelerated delivery of housing across the social and private sectors, and tenure spectrum, in an integrated and timely manner. Working with the broader Housing and Planning Divisions in my Department, other key agencies, local authorities and the construction sector, the HDO supports the roll-out of complex projects, including identifying and resolving barriers to delivery, and monitors development across key sites as they progress.

At the time of its establishment, the HDO comprised a team of 4 people with extensive expertise in project management, finance, planning and local government, including staff seconded from the local government sector and the National Development Finance Agency.

Having carried out a range of initial initiatives, and taking account of the fact that some assignments to the office were time-limited, the HDO was refocused in September 2017 to work more closely on supporting local housing delivery and land management. In that context, the current team is comprised of 2 civil servants with experience of housing delivery and the local government sector. In addition to this complement of staff, the HDO draws on supports from other relevant Business Units in my Department, the local authorities and other relevant public bodies.
More recently, my Department has been engaging with the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) in respect of the sector’s further delivery needs and, against this background, I met with Chief Executives in September 2019 to discuss plans for a newly reconfigured HDO. I expect to receive final proposals from the LGMA in this regard shortly.

**Departmental Staff Data**

340. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of staff currently employed by the housing procurement office in his Department; the number employed per annum since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48082/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department is not directly involved in housing procurement and as such there are no staff employed in such procurement within the Department. The procurement of housing as social homes is a matter for the Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies.

The Housing Delivery Division in my Department supports a significant number of actions under the Government’s Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness - Rebuilding Ireland. This includes Homelessness and Social Inclusion Supports, Traveller Accommodation, Affordability and Cost Rental, the oversight and management of the Social Housing Capital and Current Programmes. The Division is also responsible for implementation and management of the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) and the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS).

In addition to leading social housing programme delivery, the Division also has responsibility for planning, management and oversight of social housing finance and expenditure as well as an advisory role on Built Environment issues. In this regard, the Division operates an approval process in accordance with the Capital Works Management Framework and the Public Spending Code to ensure quality social housing, value for money and the creation of sustainable communities. Both the Capital Works Management Framework and the Public Spending Code require compliance with EU and national public procurement requirements.

The Division currently has a full-time equivalent staffing complement of 136.99.

**Tenant Purchase Scheme Review**

341. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the review of the tenant purchase scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48083/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In line with the commitment given in the Government’s Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, a review of the operation of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase (Incremental) Scheme has been completed and a full report has been prepared setting out findings and recommendations.

I intend to bring a comprehensive package of social housing reform measures to Government in the near future and the review of the Tenant Purchase Scheme will be published as part of that process.
342. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of applications made since the introduction of the mortgage to rent scheme per annum in tabular form; the number of applications successfully granted since the introduction of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48086/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

From the introduction of the Mortgage to Rent (MTR) scheme in 2012 to end October 2019, a total of 4,984 cases had been submitted. Of these 4,984 cases, 3,253 were ineligible or terminated during the process. Of the remaining cases submitted, 606 have been completed and the remaining 1,125 are actively being progressed. The number of completed MTR cases is increasing every month, with a 76% increase in the number of cases completing in the period January to October 2019 (161) compared to the same period in 2018 (91). The MTR process from application stage to completion stage is also operating more speedily as a result of the streamlining initiatives that have been undertaken.

The following table details the number of MTR transactions completed in the years 2012 to 2018 and up to the end of October 2019:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018 (To End October)</th>
<th>2019 TO-TAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of MTR transactions competed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information in relation to the number of MTR applications submitted annually from 2012 to 2018 and to end October 2019 is outlined in the following table. In the earlier stages of the operation of the scheme, when lenders were not familiar with its operation, 500 cases were incorrectly submitted by lenders. In addition, 233 cases were submitted in duplicate. By its nature, the scheme also lends itself to a large withdrawal rate and to the end of October 2019, 1,256 applications had been withdrawn. If other options rather than losing home ownership are put forward by the lender, a borrower is more likely to avail of these other options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of MTR applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 to end October</td>
<td>509</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Housing Agency, who administer the MTR scheme on my Department’s behalf, publishes, on a quarterly basis, detailed statistical information on the operation of the MTR scheme. This information is available on the Agency’s website at the following link:


A Review of the MTR scheme, published on 8 February 2017, introduced a range of amend-
ments to the eligibility criteria and administration of the scheme in order to improve its operation.

The Review, which is available at http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/changes-in-mortgage-to-rent-scheme/, explored the avenues and impediments to participation in the scheme and recommended a number of actions to make the scheme work better for borrowers. My Department and the Housing Agency has worked with all stakeholders to ensure that the actions set out in the Review are effectively implemented to benefit a greater number of households. In that context, the eligibility requirements of the scheme were widened to include a greater number of borrowers and a larger number of property types. Increasing awareness and understanding of the scheme has been a priority and a new website, www.mortgagetorent.ie, dedicated to guiding and advising borrowers has been developed. In addition, new structures and arrangements have been put in place to encourage a greater number of entities to take part in the scheme.

While it will continue to be the case that not all MTR applications will progress into completed transactions for varied reasons, the implementation of the resulting actions from the Review means that MTR is available to provide a long-term solution for more households in mortgage distress, where appropriate.

My focus, and that of the Government, is to ensure that as many households as possible remain in their homes and I would encourage borrowers to engage with the Abhaile Service, the national mortgage arrears resolution service, which is available free of charge to the borrower. The unique element of Abhaile is that it brings together, for the first time, the full range of supports and services required by borrowers in home mortgage arrears. A dedicated adviser will work with the borrower and their lender to find the best solution for their particular situation. MABS act as the gateway for the service and can be contacted by telephoning (076)1072000 or by accessing their website at: www.mabs.ie/abhaile.

For those borrowers in danger of losing their home who are ineligible for the MTR scheme but qualify for social housing support, it is recommended that they engage as early as possible with their local authority regarding their long-term housing needs.

Local Authority Housing Data

343. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the average turn around time for a vacant property to be re-occupied on a local authority by local authority basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48087/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**

Statistics in relation to social housing stock are published by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These reports provide a range of information in relation to social housing stock, including the average time taken to re-tenant a dwelling. The most recent report, relating to 2018, is available on the NOAC website at the following link: http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NOAC-Performance-Indicator-Report-2018-1.pdf.

My Department is continuing to engage with local authorities, to support them in returning both short and longer-term vacant properties to use as swiftly as possible. Elected Councils also have a role to play in supporting this work by making adequate budgetary provision for housing repairs and maintenance, utilising the housing rental income available to them.
344. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of money issued to each local authority for vacant social housing property refurbishment on a local authority by local authority basis per annum since 2016; the number refurbished per annum since 2016 on a local authority by local authority basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48088/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**
Under Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock, including the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs to vacant properties, is a matter for each individual local authority.

Local authority housing stock becomes vacant and is refurbished and re-let on a continuous basis by the local authorities and my Department does not have information on all such re-lets and their cost. My Department does provide some exchequer funding to support local authorities in tackling vacant social housing through the voids programme, particularly homes that would likely remain vacant for a significant period of time because of the scale of the works required. The programme assists local authorities in actively targeting such vacant properties, to minimise their turnaround and re-let times and return them to use in an energy efficient condition.

The following table shows the number of units supported and funding provided by my Department under the voids programme for each local authority for the years 2016 to 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Units Returned in 2016</th>
<th>Funding 2016</th>
<th>Units Returned in 2017</th>
<th>Funding 2017</th>
<th>Units Returned in 2018</th>
<th>Funding 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>€69,450</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>€91,750</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>€555,874</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>€307,530</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>€303,112</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>€270,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>€1,329,700</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>€966,203</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>€906,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>€6,812,333</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>€1,485,357</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>€820,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork County</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>€1,270,488</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>€1,130,977</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>€4,351,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>€986,690</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>€1,866,898</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>€969,585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>€8,757,848</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>€8,520,549</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>€8,299,452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>€1,725,774</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>€1,329,300</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>€589,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dublin</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>€703,736</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>€718,446</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>€574,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dún Laoghaire- Rathdown</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>€183,092</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>€283,531</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>€436,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>€346,650</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>€124,150</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway County</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>€472,552</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>€401,159</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>€763,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>€917,549</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>€1,101,143</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>€1,132,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>€485,130</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>€205,960</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>€639,867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>€351,278</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>€307,749</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>€212,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>€97,053</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>€33,170</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>€97,688</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Rental Sector Strategy

345. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status the cost rental pilot project schemes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48089/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Acknowledging that renters in Dublin and other major urban centres are currently facing significant housing access and affordability challenges, the Government is committed to the introduction of a Cost Rental sector in Ireland. My Department is currently developing a national policy approach for this new form of rental tenure. This work includes the development of two pathfinder projects on local authority-owned sites, from which lessons will be drawn to inform an optimum model for Cost Rental delivery at the national level.

The first of these projects in Enniskerry Road, is currently under construction. Work on this development of 155 units began in July 2019. It comprises 105 homes for social housing and 50 two bedroomed Cost Rental homes. The Cost Rental units, which are scheduled for completion in 2021, will be offered for rental at €1,200 per month. Land for the development is being provided by Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council to help achieve these competitive rents, which represent a very significant reduction when compared with market rents in the Stepaside area. My Department is also providing €4.5 million in Serviced Sites Funding to support infrastructure costs associated with the development.

The other pathfinder project is at Emmet Road in Inchicore, including the site of the former St Michael’s Estate. Dublin City Council, the site owner, is continuing to make progress on the design and planning work for this project. DCC has appointed a dedicated project manager and a project team to move the project forward, and a development framework plan has recently been completed. It is projected that the site can accommodate 484 homes in a high-quality mixed tenure development, including 375 Cost Rental apartments. The remaining units will
be provided for social housing. DCC is engaging with my Department according to the best practice guidelines set out in the Capital Works Management Framework, and is procuring an architect-led integrated design team which will be responsible for designing the scheme and taking it as far as the planning stage. I am determined that work will continue to progress at pace on this project and that lessons learned from the financial modelling for this location are applied more broadly.

In terms of the Cost Rental agenda more generally, the development of a national policy approach is being progressed by working group led by my Department and also involving the Land Development Agency, the Housing Agency, and other bodies. This will provide for a sustainable financing structure and allow us to commence the delivery of Cost Rental homes at scale. Detailed operational and eligibility criteria for Cost Rental will be informed by this evidence building and policy work. The work of the group will also be assisted by consultancy and research support which will be undertaken by the European Investment Bank on our behalf. The EIB has extensive international experience in affordable housing, and is providing technical assistance in assessing the potential market for Cost Rental in Ireland. The development of a national model for Cost Rental will be concluded well in advance of the completion of construction work on the homes at the first pathfinder site on Enniskerry Road.

Housing Policy

346. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Rebuilding Ireland commitment to holding a competition to champion best practice, efficient and cost effective design to enable the delivery of high quality homes in sustainable communities at an affordable level. [48090/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Action 3.11 of Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan commits to a competition to champion best practice, efficient and cost effective design to enable the delivery of high quality homes in sustainable communities at an affordable level.

In late 2016, a call for proposals from local authorities for a suitable site for the design competition was issued. Following an evaluation process the successful site was identified as Old Whitechurch Road in Cork City.

In parallel, Cork City Council applied, qualified and secured funding under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) for the removal of overhead electricity lines and installation of a spine access route. Cork City Council is advancing this enabling infrastructure works on the site as a separate contract, this is due to commence on site shortly.

Cork City Council in conjunction with my Department are in the process of finalising the competition document, which will be tendered shortly.

An Bord Pleanála Data

347. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the budget and number of staff allocated to An Bord Pleanála per annum from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48092/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department engages with An Bord Pleanála on an ongoing basis to ensure that it has the appro-
appropriate resources to perform its broad range of functions. The Board currently has a complement of 10 members and has over 160 other staff employed.

Section 116 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended (the Act), provides for the payment to the Board in each financial year of a grant of such amount as the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government may fix, with the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The grant goes towards financing the administration and general expenses of the Board.

While the grant-aid funding provides for the majority of the Board’s annual income, the Board also generates income from fees charged. Section 144 of the Act provides for the determination of fees payable to the Board, subject to my approval. In the main, these fees are payable to the Board by parties in respect of applications for strategic infrastructure and strategic housing developments, planning appeals, referrals, oral hearing requests and certain other matters which are submitted for determination under Planning and Development, Water Pollution, and Building Control legislation.

The following table sets out the number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) staff employed by An Bord Pleanála on 31 December for the years 2016 to 2018 and at 31 October 2019, in addition to the operating budget for the Board over the same period. The 2019 grant aid figure represents the amount provided in the 2019 Revised Estimates for Public Services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Staffing* (WTE)</th>
<th>Grant Aid</th>
<th>Miscellaneous Income (including income from fees)</th>
<th>Total Operating Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>142.10</td>
<td>14.405</td>
<td>2.987</td>
<td>17.392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>156.10</td>
<td>17.100</td>
<td>3.026</td>
<td>20.126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>165.9</td>
<td>17.488</td>
<td>4.059</td>
<td>21.546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>170.4**</td>
<td>18.624</td>
<td>6.491</td>
<td>25,115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Staffing figures are inclusive of Board members and Chairperson

**WTE staffing as at 31 October 2019

This information, and other related statistics, are available in An Bord Pleanála’s Annual Reports, which can be accessed at the following link: http://www.pleanala.ie/publications/index.htm.

I am satisfied that the Board has the necessary resources to deliver effectively and efficiently on its important statutory mandate and functions. I and my Department will continue to engage with the Board in this regard in the years ahead.

Rental Accommodation Standards

348. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the progress made to move towards enforcement of quality standards in rental accommodation on a regional basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48093/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Strategy for the Rental Sector, published in December 2016, set out a series of measures to be introduced to ensure the quality of private rental accommodation by strengthening the appli-
cable standards and improving the inspection and enforcement systems. The Strategy acknowledged the overall low rates of inspection of the private rental stock and low rates of compliance, as well as the need for greater consistency in approach to implementation of the regulations across local authorities.

The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2019 specify requirements in relation to a range of matters, such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, natural light and safety of gas, oil and electrical supply. My Department also published a guidance document to assist and support local authorities in implementing these Regulations.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations and responsibility for the enforcement of the Regulations rests with the relevant local authority.

The Rental Strategy recognises the need for additional resources to be provided to local authorities to aid increased inspections of properties and ensure greater compliance with the Regulations. Provision was made for €2.5 million of Exchequer funding to be made available to local authorities in 2018 for this purpose, increasing to €4.5 million in 2019 and increasing further again, under Budget 2020, to €6m next year, with the intention of ultimately achieving a targeted inspection coverage of 25% of rental properties annually by 2021.

In 2018, 28,806 inspections were carried out, including repeat or follow up inspections in some cases. This was a 47% increase on the 19,645 inspections carried out in 2017, and I expect final data for this year to show a further significant increase. My Department will continue to work with local authorities to ensure that momentum is maintained towards the 25% target by 2021.

**Local Authority Housing**

349. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the roll-out of choice-based letting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48094/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Choice Based Letting (CBL) is a method whereby available social housing stock is let by being openly advertised by local authorities to persons on the social housing waiting list. This allows qualified applicants to ‘register an interest’ in available homes.

Applicants can act on their own initiative to respond to adverts and express an interest in dwellings that they would like to live in, rather than waiting for an authority to offer them a dwelling. This approach offers more choice and involvement for applicant households in selecting a new home, thereby reducing the likelihood of a refusal, and helping to build sustainable tenancies and stable communities.

The Social Housing Allocation (Amendment) Regulations 2016 required all local authorities, if they had not already done so, to provide for CBL as a method of allocation for social housing in their allocation schemes by the end of 2016. The way in which CBL is implemented, including decisions on which properties are to be offered through it, is a matter for the individual authority concerned. However, it must be done in accordance with the relevant regulations and their own scheme of priority.

Given the clear benefits offered by CBL, my Department continues to liaise with the local authorities to ensure that it is implemented as widely as possible across the country and has un-
dertaken a number of surveys in both 2017 and 2018 to determine its uptake and impact. Data garnered through these surveys has shown that over half of all local authorities are operating a CBL system while others are in the process of running pilot schemes with a view to wider roll out in their respective areas. Of those authorities that are operating CBL the expressed view is that it is having a positive effect on how they allocate houses. The data also shows that where CBL is in operation the rate of refusals has dropped. The survey for 2019 is currently underway.

My Department hosted a workshop on CBL with representatives from the local authority sector on 15 November 2019. The aim of the workshop was to bring relevant officials from local authorities together and to provide a forum to discuss the potential for increasing the use of CBL across the State. The workshop also provided an opportunity to those authorities who, for various reasons, are not operating CBL to discuss the issues arising for their authorities.

Local Authority Assets

350. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of sites under the land aggregation scheme; the number of strategic management plans put in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48095/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
The Land Aggregation Scheme (LAGS) was introduced in 2010, to assist in the gradual unwinding of loans taken out by housing authorities to purchase land for the social and affordable housing investment programme. This was in cases where loans were due to mature and where it was considered unlikely that land would be developed in the short to medium term.

A total of 73 sites with a total area of circa 243 hectares were accepted into the Scheme before it was discontinued in 2013. Under the Scheme, ownership of LAGS sites is transferred to the Housing Agency which is tasked under Rebuilding Ireland with bringing forward these sites for development.

To set out a path to achieve housing development on LAGS lands, the Housing Agency published its LAGS Strategic Development and Management Plan in February 2018. This set out development proposals for all 73 sites, along with a further 13 sites also in their ownership. The plan identified 36 LAGS Sites as being Suitable for Immediate Development. The remaining 37 sites were categorised as Secondary Sites. The plan can be found on the Housing Agency website at https://www.housingagency.ie/publications/land-aggregation-scheme-strategic-development-and-management-plan.

In terms of the development of the sites, the Housing Agency is prioritising those which are already serviced and which have with the most potential to deliver housing at scale in the short to medium term. Currently 19 projects are being progressed across 17 LAGS sites which will deliver 788 social homes. Details of progress on these and other developments can be tracked through the Social Housing Construction Status Report. The latest report (Q2 2019) is available on the Rebuilding Ireland website at https://rebuildingireland.ie/news/minister-murphy-publishes-social-housing-construction-status-report-for-q2-2019-2/.

Moreover, following on from the publication of the Land Aggregation Scheme Strategic Development and Management Plan, Expressions of Interest were sought from Approved Housing Bodies to work with the Agency to develop a number of sites not yet under development. Consequently, 18 further LAGS sites are now the subject of discussions between the Agency and a number of Approved Housing Bodies regarding development proposals for these sites. These 18 sites include 8 sites deemed Suitable for Immediate Development and 10 sites categorised
as Secondary sites. See the tables for details of sites and AHBs.

**Housing Agency’s chosen Development Partner for sites ‘suitable for immediate development’ following Call For Expression Of Interest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Development Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Carrigtwohill</td>
<td>Clúid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Collins Lane, Tullamore</td>
<td>Clúid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hewittsland, New Ross</td>
<td>Clúid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tubbercurry, Co.Sligo</td>
<td>Co-Op Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Paupish, Carlow</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tinryland, Co.Carlow</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Cappamore, Co.Limerick</td>
<td>Clúid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Taghmon, Co.Wexford</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Housing Agency’s chosen Development Partner for ‘secondary sites’ following Call For Expression Of Interest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Development Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Parish field, Buncloidy</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Campile, Co.Wexford</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cloughmacsimon, Bandon</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hacketstown, Co.Carlow</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Castlemoyle, New Ross</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nurney, Co.Kildare</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ballyard, Tralee</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Derry Rd, Durrow</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Hillview, Wicklow</td>
<td>Tuath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Tullow Rd, Carlow</td>
<td>Respond</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Land Development Agency is also in discussions with the Housing Agency regarding the transfer of 3 LAGS sites ‘suitable for immediate development’ at Devoy Barracks, Naas Co Kildare, Hampton Balbriggan and Hacketstown Skerries in Fingal in order to provide for the development of these sites in a selective, targeted way that will further boost housing supply.

In addition, 6 LAGS sites ‘suitable for immediate development’ are benefitting from Departmental funding which will help relieve critical infrastructural blockages to enable the accelerated delivery of housing. This includes 3 sites at Mount Avenue, Dundalk, Gibbet Hill Gracedieu Waterford, and Lissywollen in Westmeath which have been approved for funding of €6.48m under the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) which will stimulate the delivery of over 650 mixed tenure type homes.

The other 3 sites ‘suitable for immediate development’ at Enniskery Road, Dun Laoghaire, St Joseph’s Road Mallow, Cork and Hacketstown in Fingal have received funding approval of €9.5m under the Serviced Sites Fund (SSF) to provide the necessary infrastructure so that more affordable homes discounted on open market prices can be delivered. As a result I envisage that 219 affordable homes will be provided on these sites.

My Department will continue to work with the Housing Agency, the relevant local authorities, the Land Development Agency and Approved Housing Bodies with a view to delivering the optimum housing mix from Land Aggregation Scheme sites.
351. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Rebuilding Ireland commitment to introduce an AHB innovation fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48096/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Rebuilding Ireland: Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness included the commitment to explore a range of structural, funding and policy supports that could help to increase delivery by AHBs.

In 2016, my Department established an Innovation Fund to support Tier 3 AHBs (i.e. those larger organisations with 300+ homes in their stock) in their development of innovative financial models that would assist in improving the capacity of the sector.

Six AHBs applied to this Fund and four proposals were deemed eligible. The total amount of funding approved for these four proposals was €104,043.50, and details of these approvals were announced in May 2017.

Details of the approved proposals are as follows:

- The Irish Council for Social Housing’s proposal for the establishment of a sector-led financial vehicle to allow AHBs to expand and to facilitate the delivery of additional housing units.

- Clúid’s proposal to develop a set of procedures, guidelines and templates for mergers and acquisitions.

- Oaklee’s proposal to engage with financial advisors to secure off-balance sheet funding, with a view to the establishment of a Special Purpose Vehicle.

- Túath’s proposal related to engaging with external experts to undertake research on two schemes relating to affordable rental.

Approved Housing Bodies

352. Deputy Darragh O’Brien asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Rebuilding Ireland commitment to establish a dedicated one-stop-shop within the Housing Agency to support AHBs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48097/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): The Approved Housing Body (AHB) Services Unit was established in 2017 in accordance with Action 2.14 of Rebuilding Ireland.

This unit currently has four staff and provides assistance to my Department, AHBs and Local Authorities to support AHB led delivery.

One of the main areas of operation that has been incorporated into the AHB Services Unit is the assessment of AHB Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF) funding applications and reporting recommendations to my Department. As part of this service, staff in the Unit liaise closely with AHBs and my Department in relation to particular features or issues that arise with individual applications and also engage in pre-application discussions with AHBs on matters such as advice on the assessment process or where certain innovations are being considered and
how these might be viewed.

The Unit also prepares Payment & Availability/CALF contract documentation on behalf of local authorities where requested to do so. This helps to streamline the process of project funding drawdown, mainly for the acquisition by AHBs of properties acquired by the Agency using the €70m acquisition fund and for properties leased by AHBs from NAMA’s special purpose vehicle. This service has been expanding to other projects to further enhance the coordination between local authorities and AHBs in this area.

An AHB forum with representatives from the AHBs, local authorities and my Department has been established and currently meets on a quarterly basis to review strategic issues of concern to the stakeholders for the delivery of housing and improving coordination between AHBs and local authorities.

Housing Policy

353. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Rebuilding Ireland commitment to bring forward pilot projects, beginning with Dublin City Council, based on best practice and cost effectiveness taking a cross-departmental inter-agency approach to housing initiatives for older persons. [48098/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** Action 2.16 of Rebuilding Ireland states that my Department will bring forward pilot projects, beginning with Dublin City Council, based on best practice and cost effectiveness taking a cross departmental/inter-agency approach to housing initiatives for older people.

The aim of this Action is to examine the potential for mainstreaming best practice projects, which bring together the HSE and local authorities with designers and academic groups. Such models would cater for those who, while not requiring full nursing home care, have been assessed as having healthcare needs that can be met in the community.

Work on this Action has been underway for some time now and a pathfinder project at St.Michael’s Estate, Inchicore, Dublin 8 will include 52 ‘living with support’ homes for older people. The ‘housing with support’ model brings together a range of services and supports, principally relating to housing, community, social and care needs. It seeks to provide an appropriate physical and supportive environment that enables older persons to live in their own homes within their own community, thereby both promoting independence and reducing or deferring the need to move into long term residential care.

The project is underpinned by a cross-Departmental inter-agency approach and involves cooperation between my Department, the Housing Agency, Dublin City Council, HSE, the Irish Council for Social Housing (ICSH), Circle VHA and Alone.

This pilot project has been approved for funding through my Department’s Capital Assistance Scheme and is currently at planning permission stage, with construction likely to commence in or around Summer 2020.

In tandem with the work on the St. Michael’s project, housing initiatives for older people are also a focus of the policy statement ‘Housing Options for our Ageing Population’ which was jointly published by my Department and the Department of Health. An Implementation group, which includes a range of stakeholders, has been put in place to work on the Actions under the Statement and will be reporting to myself and to my colleague, Minister Daly, Minister of State
Housing Policy

354. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the Rebuilding Ireland commitment to create pilot competitions, focusing on three distinct areas of smart technologies in housing for older persons, adaptation of existing houses to meet the needs of older persons and life-time communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48099/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** In January 2017, I launched the Rebuilding Ireland Homes for Smart Ageing Universal Design Challenge. The Homes for Smart Ageing Universal Design Challenge was an initiative under the Rebuilding Ireland programme (Action 2.19) and the Programme of Actions for Smart Ageing, which aims to stimulate and encourage the design and construction industries to be innovative in designing and delivering housing solutions for older people. The total Design Challenge prize fund of €100,000 was funded by my Department and project managed by the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design.

Over 60 high-quality entries were received from around the country, with five commended entries reaching the final round where they received funding of €10,000 and support to develop their idea further. In June 2017, I announced the winner of the Homes for Smart Ageing Universal Design Challenge during an award ceremony at Dublin Castle. The winner, who received €50,000, was The Abhaile Project.

The Abhaile Project developed an innovative new model to support older homeowners to reconfigure their family-sized homes by creating an independent living area suitable for the older homeowner, eliminating the need to use the stairs; and creating an affordable one-bed-roomed rental accommodation upstairs. Using a Universal Design approach, this promotes an efficient way to use our existing housing stock by carving much needed new one-bed-roomed rental capacity from existing housing stock in mature urban areas, allowing the homeowner to live securely and independently downstairs, whilst promoting interaction with the person living upstairs, thereby reducing isolation.

Housing Adaptation Grant Data

355. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the total drawdown of housing adaptation grants per annum from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48100/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department provides funding to local authorities for the suite of Housing Adaptation Grants for Older People and People with a Disability in respect of private houses, with funding of €71.25 million allocated for 2019.

Information for the years 2016-2018, showing the numbers of grants funded and the amounts provided to each local authority, is available on my Department’s website at the following link: http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/statistics/social-and-affordable/other-local-authority-housing-scheme-statistics.

The following table contains details of the 2019 exchequer funding drawn down by local...
authorities for the grants up to 8 November 2019. These amounts do not necessarily represent what each local authority has spent, as funding may have been spent but not yet claimed from my Department. Also, the amounts shown for exchequer draw down, are topped up by each local authority’s own 20% contribution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Authority</th>
<th>Exchequer Drawdown to 8 November 2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlow</td>
<td>€1,132,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavan</td>
<td>€495,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>€1,469,367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>€2,964,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork City</td>
<td>€647,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donegal</td>
<td>€905,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dublin City</td>
<td>€5,632,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown</td>
<td>€974,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fingal</td>
<td>€1,596,246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>€1,148,720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway City</td>
<td>€722,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry</td>
<td>€1,911,674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kildare</td>
<td>€2,226,929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
<td>€1,378,959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laois</td>
<td>€299,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leitrim</td>
<td>€131,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>€2,082,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longford</td>
<td>€286,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louth</td>
<td>€670,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayo</td>
<td>€1,515,274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meath</td>
<td>€1,643,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monaghan</td>
<td>€1,437,883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offaly</td>
<td>€554,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roscommon</td>
<td>€924,427</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sligo</td>
<td>€1,015,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Dublin</td>
<td>€1,487,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipperary</td>
<td>€2,340,638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>€849,126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westmeath</td>
<td>€864,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wexford</td>
<td>€1,609,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wicklow</td>
<td>€613,392</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over the course of each year, my Department works closely with all local authorities, to monitor spend and to achieve a full drawdown of the available funding. As the year progresses, any underspend is redistributed to those local authorities with high levels of grant activity who sought additional funding.

**Traveller Accommodation**

356. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government that status of the commission of an expert, independent review of capital and current
funding for Traveller specific accommodation to date with regard to targets contained in the local authority Traveller accommodation programmes and actual units delivered; and the status of accommodation funded and funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports. [48101/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Accommodation for Travellers is provided across a wide range of options, including standard local authority housing, private housing assisted by local authority or voluntary bodies and private rented accommodation, as well as Traveller-specific accommodation. Travellers may express a preference across the range of accommodation types at any stage when applying for social housing support through the Social Housing Needs Assessment process.

In line with the commitment in Rebuilding Ireland, and reflecting the disappointing level of overall funding drawdown in recent years, the Housing Agency, in 2017, commissioned a review of funding for Traveller-specific accommodation. This review had regard to targets contained in local authority Traveller Accommodation Plans (TAPs) and actual delivery, the current status of accommodation funded and funding provided for accommodation maintenance and other supports.

Following its consideration of the review, the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee recommended the establishment of an independent expert group to review the effectiveness, implementation and operation of relevant legislation and to put forward proposals to improve delivery of Traveller accommodation nationally. The Expert Group submitted its report in July 2019.

The 32 recommendations made by the Expert Group to accelerate the delivery of Traveller accommodation are comprehensive and wide ranging, and include proposals aimed at:

- addressing research deficiencies, including how information is gathered and used;
- removing any potential delays and obstacles in the planning system in terms of delivery;
- increasing resources and delivery capacity; and
- strengthening governance arrangements.

I am currently considering the report and recommendations of the Expert Group, with a view to implementing appropriate actions and policies that will improve the delivery of Traveller accommodation nationally. The priority is to ensure that full use is made of the increasing level of funding available for investment in Traveller accommodation. The report has been published and is available on my Department’s website at the following link:


In the context of the 32 recommendations, my Department is also liaising with key stakeholders on issues arising. The Expert Group’s report has also been shared with the National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee and members of the Committee are considering the report and will provide submissions to my Department, as appropriate.

I am working to complete this process as soon as possible and set out a road map for implementation of agreed recommendations, with a view to accelerating and increasing the delivery of much needed Traveller accommodation, drawing on the increasing funding available.
357. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government that status of the 15 to 20 key pathfinder sites with a proven capability to deliver a significant scaling-up of new homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48102/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** As part of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan, the Major Urban Housing Delivery Sites (MUHDS) programme was launched in November 2016. This initiative provides an administrative framework to support local authorities involved in the delivery of housing in major urban centres in Dublin, Cork, Galway and Limerick. These key strategic housing sites, details of which are set out in the Table at the link, were identified as having a capacity to deliver a significant scale of new homes, in conjunction with local authorities and other key stakeholders such as Irish Water, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, etc. Development on many of these sites has been progressed with the support of funding streams such as the Local Infrastructure Housing Activation Fund (LIHAF) and the Serviced Sites Fund and through the MUHDS regional and national fora which were established to improve co-ordination between facilitating interests.

LIHAF currently provides funding support to projects on 13 MUHDS sites. This funding covers the cost of facilitating infrastructure and services to enable the delivery of private, social and more affordable dwellings. Details of the MUHDS sites which are benefitting from LIHAF funding can be found on the Rebuilding Ireland website at https://rebuildingireland.ie/lihaf/. A ‘Story Map’ facility is also available to highlight the infrastructure delivery and the associated housing delivery for MUHDS sites and LIHAF projects. This can be found at https://rebuildingireland.ie/news/muhds-lihaf-story-map/.

Accelerating delivery of housing for the private, social and rented sectors is a key priority for the Government. The solutions to this challenge are wide-ranging and require a number of immediate-, medium- and long-term actions to increase delivery and address underlying structural issues that, up to now, have been obstacles to creating a more stable and sustainable housing market.

Progress on (MUHD) sites continues to be monitored through the MUHDS structures at a national and local level.


**Student Accommodation**

358. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the student housing officer funded by his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48103/19]

359. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of steps to launch an assessment of scope for provision of additional student accommodation on local authority or other publicly owned lands. [48105/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 359 together.

Pillar 4 of the Government’s Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, published in July 2016, focuses on the supply of rented accommodation and includes
specified actions to increase the supply of student accommodation in Ireland. The National Student Accommodation Strategy was subsequently launched in July 2017 by the Minister for Education and Skills in conjunction with Action 4.07 of Rebuilding Ireland.

Identified measures in assisting the development of new student accommodation projects included reforms related to planning matters and to development finance which were then provided for in the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016. Firstly, under Action 4.13, the fast tracking of planning applications for construction projects with more than 200 student bedspaces was created under the Strategic Housing Development (SHD) route directly to An Bord Pleanala.

As of the end October 2019, this has resulted in the granting of planning permissions for 7,573 student bedspaces nationally under the SHD procedure. In addition, legislative provisions (Action 4.11) were also created to facilitate financing from the Housing Finance Agency to the Higher Education Institutes, specifically for new student accommodation projects.

There has been a sustained increase in the planning and construction of purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) nationally since the adoption of Rebuilding Ireland in 2016. As of the end of Q3, 2019, a total of 8,229 bed spaces have been completed since the adoption of Rebuilding Ireland. This delivery exceeds the objective under Action 4.08 of Rebuilding Ireland to bring on stream 7,000 student accommodation places by end 2019.

In addition, there are a further 5,254 bed spaces on site and plans approved for an additional 7,771 bed spaces, representing a total of 21,254 bed spaces either complete, under construction or with plans granted at the end of Q3 2019 which indicates a strong pipeline of new student housing construction projects to continue growth to 2021 and beyond.

Action 4.07 of Rebuilding Ireland referred to the scope for the provision of student accommodation on local authority or other publicly-owned lands. Circular letter PL8/2016 to local authorities encouraged their collaboration with the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in developing student accommodation projects. To this end the ‘State Lands Map’ was also published on the Rebuilding Ireland website in 2017 and this resource provides details and mapping of state owned lands including those controlled by the local authorities and the Housing Agency. The HEIs have been made aware of this resource through the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Student Accommodation established by the Department of Education and Skills and many are progressing plans to develop student accommodation.

Efforts to expand short-term capacity enhancing measures in the student accommodation sector are identified in Action 4.10. My Department has provided funding of €130,000 in the 2016-19 period to the Union of Students in Ireland in this regard to assist in funding a Student Housing Officer, training and other activities such as the #homesforstudy campaign. This initiative involves a website and other initiatives to encourage homeowners in targeted locations across the country to earn up to €14,000 tax free under the rent-a-room scheme by accommodating a student.

An additional provision has also been made for the UCD Students Union, who are outside the USI. A submission for further funding for the 2019/20 academic year has been made by the USI jointly to the Department of Education and Skills and my Department including proposals for continuing the #homesforstudy.ie campaign and other activities in the student accommodation area. This submission is being considered currently with a decision anticipated shortly.

Housing Estates
360. **Deputy Darragh O’Brien** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the status of the national taking-in-charge initiative funding per annum from 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019. [48106/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government** (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): My Department launched the National Taking-in-Charge Initiative (NTICI) in April 2016, to trial new approaches and working methods in supporting and accelerating overall national and local action on the taking-in-charge process of housing estates. Under the terms of the NTICI, which was underpinned by a once-off fund of €10 million, developments subject to valid taking-in-charge applications were eligible for inclusion in the associated call for funding proposals. Ultimately, €7.5 million of the allocated funding was paid to local authorities in respect of 330 developments, containing some 14,930 homes.


In July this year my Department launched the Multi-annual Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure Resolution Programme. The development of such a multi-annual funding programme was a key recommendation of the report on the National Taking-in-Charge Initiative. The National Development Plan published in February 2018, includes provision of €31 million for the period 2018-2021 to support the Programme. The Programme will enable the progressive resolution, on a priority basis, of substandard Developer Provided Water Services Infrastructure - commonly called ‘DPI’, much of which was installed in housing estates during the building boom of the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. These privately owned and temporary facilities provide mostly wastewater treatment, with a small number providing drinking water.

The collaborative experience gained by the key stakeholders in implementing the Taking-in-Charge Initiative has informed the new Resolution Programme. Bids were sought from local authorities around the country for funding under the Programme and the closing date was 18 September 2019. A total number of 19 local authorities with Developer Provided Infrastructure in estates in their areas, made applications under the programme for support.

My Department is currently completing a preliminary evaluation and clarification process on the bids received with the local authorities. The intention is to shortly set up an Expert Panel to independently evaluate the bids and recommend suitable projects for funding. This evaluation will take place over the coming months. Membership of the Panel will include Departmental, stakeholder and independent representation in the Chair.

The Expert Panel will make recommendations to me on the suitability of projects for funding under the Programme, based on the criteria set out in the Framework document issued to local authorities when requesting proposals. The Panel will report to my Department when their examination of the bids is concluded. I expect to be in a position to make an announcement in early 2020 on approvals and allocations once that process is concluded and has been considered.

### Departmental Expenditure

361. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy): Project Ireland 2040 (PI2040) is the Government’s long-term, overarching strategy to make Ireland a better country for all its people, integrating for the first time, the national spatial and investment strategies. The projects under these plans which include roads, schools, primary care centres, housing, sporting and cultural amenities and business activation facilities impact villages, towns, cities and regions across the length and breadth of Ireland.

Responsibility for Project Ireland 2040 communications lay with the Department of the Taoiseach and was managed by the Government Information Service from the launch of PI2040 in February 2018 until it was assigned to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 21 November 2019, so the costs arising fell to these Departments.

As part of the implementation of the National Planning Framework (NPF), my Department incurred miscellaneous expenditure over the course of 2018 totalling just under €70,000, the bulk of which relates to the roll-out of two key initiatives, the new Urban and Rural Development Fund (URDF) and the Land Development Agency (LDA). URDF expenditure of €38,673 includes launch events and videos as well as newspaper notices advertising the URDF call for proposals. LDA related expenditure of €22,232 includes a launch event, video, branding and business tools. Remaining expenditure includes document design and minor miscellaneous costs associated with the NPF itself.

Defective Building Materials

362. Deputy Pearse Doherty asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the supports made available to the owners of properties in which defective blockwork has been identified and in which the property in question is a non-principal private residence; if consideration has been given to providing relief from VAT and-or other supports to owners of such properties with respect to the cost of carrying out remedial works; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48180/19]

Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Damien English): Last year, the Government agreed in principle to introduce a scheme to support affected homeowners in the counties of Donegal and Mayo to carry out the necessary remediation works to dwellings that have been significantly damaged due to defective concrete blocks.

Budget 2020 provides funding of €40 million to fund the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme and this new scheme to address the issues identified in Donegal and Mayo.

Funding for future years will be agreed on an annual basis as part of the normal Estimates process and additional funding can be provided should it be required.

The full terms and conditions of the scheme are currently being finalised in consultation with the Attorney General’s Office and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, including the development of the necessary regulations.

This process takes account of the engagement that my Department is currently having with both Donegal and Mayo County Councils, who will operate and administer the scheme.

In this regard, my Department continues to meet with both local authority teams to conclude implementation arrangements for the scheme. Further engagement will take place over the
coming weeks.

The aim will be to complete the outstanding work without delay in order to ensure that the scheme can get underway as early as possible.

Departmental Expenditure

363. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by his Department to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48193/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department has spent €413 (excluding VAT) on bottled water to date in 2019.

My Department has not spent anything on disposable coffee cups to date in 2019. Staff were provided with reusable coffee cups this year and an annual drop in demand of over 12,000 disposable cups is now anticipated at the Custom House alone.

My Department operates an Environmental Management System accredited to ISO 14001/2014 in the Custom House and, in support of this, in 2018, my Department ceased the purchase of single-use plastic beverage cups, cutlery and drinking straws in advance of the 2019 Government decision on this issue. Following the success of our proactive cups initiative we have also ceased the use of the expanded polystyrene food containers in the Custom House canteen.

Freedom of Information Data

364. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of his Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48210/19]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department published its publication scheme in line with the Freedom of Information Act 2014 and the Model Publication Scheme guidance published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The structure of the scheme is set out in the 2016 guidance. The scheme is available at: https://www.housing.gov.ie/corporate/compliance/freedom-information-foi/requests-information-and-foi-publication-scheme.

While my Department does not collate the specific detail in the format requested by the Deputy, my Department reviews and revises the content of the scheme on a more regular basis than that required under Section 8(4) of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Departmental Expenditure

365. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in his Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48249/19]
Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
Press and public relations functions are generally undertaken by my Department’s Press Office. The engagement of external expertise is only considered where the issues involved require expert skills or capabilities that are not readily available within my Department.

The details requested for the years 2016 onward have previously been provided in reply to Question No 586 of 18 December 2018. Details of expenditure since 18 December 2018 are currently being compiled in my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy in accordance with Standing Orders.

Planning Issues

366. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if he will report on the decision regarding so-called strategic housing developments being submitted directly to An Bord Pleanála; if he will not terminate this practice at the end of 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48274/19]

Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):
As part of the actions under the Government’s Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness – Rebuilding Ireland, the Planning and Development (Housing) and Residential Tenancies Act 2016 (the Act) introduced new streamlined arrangements to enable planning applications for strategic housing developments (SHDs) of 100 housing units or more, or student accommodation or shared accommodation developments of 200 bed spaces or more, to be made directly to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

The Act provides that the SHD arrangements apply until the end of 2019, but that I may, by order, extend that period by a further limited period of 2 years, up to the end of 2021, coinciding with the timeframe of Rebuilding Ireland. However, prior to the making of such an order, the Act requires that I review the operation and effectiveness of the SHD arrangements and lay before both Houses of the Oireachtas a report of my conclusions of the review.

In this regard, a Strategic Housing Development Review Group was established in June 2019. The Report of the Review Group was received on 24 September 2019. The Report acknowledges that the SHD arrangements have generally been a success in meeting their objectives to contribute to addressing housing undersupply issues by providing a fast-track development consent process aimed at incentivising developers to bring forward applications for large-scale housing developments.

Notwithstanding the positive contribution that the SHD arrangements have made, the Review Group notes that there continues to exist a deficit in housing supply and affirms that the original rationale for the introduction of the SHD arrangements remains. In light of these findings, the Review Group considers that there are sufficient grounds for extending the SHD arrangements until the end of 2021.

I concur with the finding of the Review Group in this regard and propose to shortly sign an order to this effect. A report on my conclusions of the review, as well as the Review Group’s Report, have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas, as required by the Act and copies of both reports are available on my Department’s website.

In addition, I have reflected on the views of the Review Group on the rate of activation of SHD sites, and I consider it appropriate that developers should be sufficiently motivated to commence development on foot of an SHD permission in a timely manner given the benefits the SHD arrangements provide. Therefore, I consider that it would be appropriate to introduce
a “use it or lose it” measure requiring developers to have commenced a certain level of development within a certain period of time on foot of a grant of an SHD planning permission and I intend bringing forward the necessary legislation in this regard in due course.

Ministerial Meetings

367. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of occasions on which she or her officials met with a club (details supplied) between 9 August and 16 October 2019, and the details of the said meetings. [47879/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Officials of my Department met with the organisation in question on six occasions during the said period. The meetings were held to discuss the emerging situation regarding the RHD2 virus in hares and rabbits, the potential implications of this for the wild hare population and the implications of this for hare coursing.

Ministerial Meetings

368. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of occasions on which she or her representatives met with stakeholders in animal welfare and conservation between 9 August and 16 October 2019, (details supplied); and if the details of the said meetings will be provided. [47880/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department is responsible for the implementation of a range of national and European legislation on nature and biodiversity, principally the Wildlife Acts and the Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations, which transpose in the Irish context the EU Birds Directive and EU Habitats Directive. The legislative framework around protecting and conserving our natural heritage is further strengthened by legislation for the implementation of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species); the Licensing and Inspection of Zoos Regulations 2013; as well as more specific legislation introduced in 2018 to tackle the threat posed by invasive alien species of crayfish; and regulations introduced earlier this year to implement the EU ABS Regulation, which puts in place a more equitable system for the sharing of benefits arising from use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge.

While animal health and welfare generally comes under the remit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, in the context of my Department’s wide-ranging remit, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has a function in relation to policy on wildlife crime, with respect of species listed in the appendices to CITES, particularly the provenance of specimens, and with respect to the welfare and conditions of animals in zoos in Ireland and communicates on a regular basis with stakeholders and actors in these areas, including those named.

The role of non-governmental organisations and stakeholders is important and valued. My Department maintains productive relationships with a wide range of NGOs, stakeholders and conservation groups. Furthermore, environmental NGOS are represented on the Biodiversity Forum, an independent advisory group set up to advise the Minister on the implementation of the National Biodiversity Plan which usually convenes 2 or 3 times each year.

Representatives of the National Parks and Wildlife Service meet with stakeholders and conservation groups on a regular basis in the course of carrying out their duties. These meetings are
often conducted by personnel from the NPWS Regional Management structure. While there may have been additional routine or ad-hoc meetings / communications between NPWS and representatives of stakeholders or NGOs during the period referred to in the question, the following meetings took place during that time:

- NPWS Eastern Division met with senior personnel from one of the named organisations on 17 September 2019. The purpose of the meeting was an annual review of an MOU that exists between that organisation and NPWS.

- The Irish Red Grouse Conservation Trust met with NPWS in NPWS Kildare Regional Office on 5 September 2019.

- NPWS is represented on a multi-agency group dealing with animal welfare in Wicklow. This group last met on 24 September 2019. It includes representatives from the following bodies - Wicklow SPCA, ISPCA and Irish Horse Welfare Trust. Wicklow County Council is also represented.


Ministerial diaries are available on the Department’s website: www.chg.gov.ie/about/ministers/ministers-diary/.

In the period under review, a senior official of my Department discussed the subject matter of this question with an Official of one of the named organisations and met too with the Irish Council Against Blood Sports.

On Friday last, 15 November a senior official met the CEO of the second named organisation on a range of welfare issues.

Animal Diseases

369. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the definition of the term “areas unaffected” in respect of designation of areas impacted by the RHD2 virus; if this is exclusively on a county basis; and if not, if there are other divisions of classification. [47881/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Since the initial reports of the RHD2 virus in August this year, RHD2 has been confirmed in five hares found in Dublin and Wexford and in 21 rabbits found in counties Carlow, Clare, Cork, Kildare, Leitrim, Meath, Offaly, Tipperary, Wexford and Wicklow.

In relation to hare coursing, I recently issued revised licences to allow the netting and tagging of hares but there are specific restrictions and conditions explicitly attached to the issue of those licences. The capturing of hares and coursing activity is prohibited in areas within a 25 kilometer radius of where wild rabbits or hares had tested positive for the virus. New zones will be added on an ongoing basis if further positive tests arise and, in these new zones, the capturing of hares will have to cease immediately and coursing will only be possible with already captured hares, where the hares are certified in writing by a veterinary surgeon as being healthy, and such hares will only be released on foot of further such certification.
370. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on purchasing mobile telephones for staff in her Department for work-related business in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, by grade; if her Department has a contract with a mobile telephone company (details supplied) to supply mobile telephones if needed; if so, the name of the company; the date on which the contract for the supply of mobile telephones to her Department is next due to expire; and the robust steps taken to ensure that the costs incurred on work related telephones are the best value for the taxpayer. [47917/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** In accordance with Department policy mobile phones are issued to staff on the basis of a business case approved by the head of the relevant division - Assistant Secretary or Director.

In general, mobile phones are issued to Assistant Principal or equivalent and above. However, mobile phones are also issued to other grades from time to time on the basis of business need or in the case of lone workers to take account of health and safety issues. There are currently 252 mobile phones on issue to staff in the Department.

The following table sets out expenditure by my Department for purchases of mobile phones for the periods specified by the Deputy. These figures include new purchases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>€0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>€46,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>€28,844</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019 (to date)</td>
<td>€5,429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In June 2019, following a tender competition conducted under the Office of Government Procurement Framework, the Department entered into a new 2 year contract with eir for the supply of mobile telephony services with the option to extend for a further period of up to two years if required.

Expenditure is monitored carefully to ensure that costs are work related and value for money is achieved at all times.

**Departmental Staff Data**

371. **Deputy Jim O’Callaghan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff in her Department by gender and pay grade in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47943/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The information requested by the Deputy is set out in tabular form as follows. The numbers reflect the position as at end September 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secretary General</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Officer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20 November 2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal Officer</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Officer</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Executive Officer</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Officer</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical Officer</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services Officer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Industrial *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Chargehand</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural General Operative Band 2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural general Operative Band 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftworker Basic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft Foreman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman Grade 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreman grade 3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Guide</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor Guide</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storekeeper grade 1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storekeeper Clerk in Charge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stores and Office Supervisor</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Guide</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticultural Assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>738</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The numbers for state industrial grades (final ten rows) include 46 fixed term seasonal staff employed at 30 September 2019. Of the seasonal staff, 22 are female and 24 are male.

Ministerial Advisers Data

372. **Deputy Fiona O’Loughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the political advisers used by Ministers and Ministers of State in her Department since the commencement of this Government; the commencement and cessation dates in each case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47960/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** Following my appointment as Minister on 30 November 2017, I appointed two Special Advisers as provided for by the Public Services Management Act 1997. Mr. John Keogh was appointed from the 8 January 2018 and Mr. Cian Connaughton from the 15 March 2018, both of whom continue to serve in my Department.
Questions - Written Answers


For completeness, I would point out that Seán Kyne T.D., Minister of State at my Department also holds responsibilities at the Department of An Taoiseach. Joe McHugh T.D. was Minister of State in my Department from the commencement of this Government to October 2018 and also had responsibilities at the Department of An Taoiseach. In these cases, the Department of An Taoiseach is the lead Department for the purposes of recording and accounting for the matters that are the subject of the Deputy’s Question.

All of the above appointments are made in accordance with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s Instructions to Personnel Officers – Ministerial Appointments for the 32nd Dáil, which is available on the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform’s website.

Departmental Funding

373. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding status from the rural regeneration and development fund to refurbish a school (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47974/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** My Department has no role in relation to the administration of the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, which is administered by the Department of Rural and Community Development.

However, my Department has been in discussions on a number of occasions in recent times with the authority of the college referred to by the Deputy in relation to its plans to upgrade its building.

I understand that on foot of these discussions the college authority is considering submitting a business plan and formal application for capital funding under the Department’s Community and Language Supports Programme. I also understand that the college authority is in communication with a number of other potential funding sources.

The Deputy may be assured that any application for capital funding being made by the college authority, encompassing a business plan in respect of the property, will be carefully considered by my Department in the context of competing priorities and available resources.

The Deputy may also be assured that my officials remain available to the college authority in order to offer guidance and advice in preparing any forthcoming application for departmental funding.

Departmental Funding

374. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding will be provided for the refurbishment of a school (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47975/19]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Seán Kyne):** My Department has been in discussions on a number of occasions in recent times
with the authority of the college referred to by the Deputy in relation to its plans to upgrade its building.

I understand that on foot of these discussions the college authority is considering submitting a business plan and formal application for capital funding under the Department’s Community and Language Supports Programme. I also understand that the college authority is in communication with a number of other potential funding sources.

The Deputy may be assured that any application for capital funding being made by the college authority, encompassing a business plan in respect of the property, will be carefully considered by my Department in the context of competing priorities and available resources.

The Deputy may also be assured that my officials remain available to the college authority in order to offer guidance and advice in preparing any forthcoming application for departmental funding.

Heritage Sites

375. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the purchase of a property; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47980/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department is aware of this property and has in the past made enquiries about this property. While it would have been considered desirable, any pursuit of the property had been constrained by resources available as the Department focused upon managing its existing National Park holdings, including the completion of the restoration and refurbishment of Killarney House and Gardens.

My Department’s most recent enquiry in relation to the property in October was to ask if the property was still on the market. I am advised that the Department was unaware that an offer had been made on the property and that the timing of this enquiry by the Department’s representative was coincidental. Ultimately, the sale or otherwise of this property is a private commercial transaction for the owner(s) and my Department will not comment further on same. We are unaware of an approach by the Office of Public Works.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

376. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of an application by a person (details supplied). [47983/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme was received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy’s Question. With respect to 36 raised bog natural heritage area sites, the qualifying criteria for the scheme are that:

- The applicant must have had a legal interest (ownership or a turbary right (right to cut turf)) in one of these sites on 25 May 2010 and must have had the right to cut and remove turf from the property on that date;

- The applicant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the five year period up to 14 January 2014;
- The turf resource on the site has not been exhausted; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

I have been informed that a decision was taken by my Department that the applicant does not fulfil all of the qualifying criteria of the scheme. He did not have a legal interest in the plot in question on 25 May 2010 and turf cutting by the applicant had not taken place on the plot during the five year period up to 14 January 2014.

The applicant was informed of this decision on 27 May 2019 and advised that he could request a Departmental review of this decision.

The applicant has requested this review. As part of the review process, my Department has requested further information from the applicant.

If the original decision is upheld by the Departmental review, the applicant will have the opportunity to appeal against the decision to the Peatlands Council.

### Departmental Data

377. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of complaints of bullying and sexual harassment, respectively, received by her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019, in tabular form. [48033/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The information requested by the Deputy, as advised by my Department, is set out in tabular form as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Complaints</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the above complaints were in respect of sexual harassment.

### Departmental Staff Dismissals

378. **Deputy Shane Cassells** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of employees of her Department who were dismissed in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date 2019; the reason for the dismissal of each employee; the number of employees suspended in the same period; and the reason for the suspension of each in tabular form. [48068/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The information requested by the Deputy, as advised by my Department, is set out in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No of Dismissals</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>1 Dismissal</td>
<td>Failed probation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>No of Suspensions</td>
<td>Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20 November 2019

| 2019 | 1 Suspension | Suspended pending outcome of investigation |

**Departmental Expenditure**

379. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 since its publication in February 2018 by category (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48120/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department has not engaged in any public relations, promotion and advertising for the National Development Plan 2018-2027 and Project Ireland 2040 as described by the Deputy. I am advised, however, that costs in respect of the launch in April 2018 of Investing in Our Culture, Language and Heritage 2018 – 2027, a ten year plan setting out the Government’s commitment for capital investment of almost €1.2 billion in Ireland’s culture, language and heritage as part of Project Ireland 2040, was approximately €71,000, which included the cost of the event, technical assistance, translation, design and print and video production.

Under this programme some €1.2 billion will be invested in our culture, heritage and language infrastructure as part of Project Ireland 2040:

- €460 million for our National Cultural Institutions.
- €265 million for cultural and creativity investment programme.
- €285 million for natural and built heritage.
- €178 million for the Gaeltacht, the Irish language and the Islands.

Further details on the breakdown of the investment programme are provided in our sectoral plan – Investing in our Culture, Language and Heritage. 2018-2027.

**Ministerial Meetings**

380. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the date, subject and attendees of each meeting to date in 2019 she has attended with NGOs on the subject of biodiversity. [48181/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** The information the Deputy has requested is outlined in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22/01/2019</td>
<td>Meeting with Minister Madigan - Invasive Alien Species &amp; Biosecurity in Ireland</td>
<td>Professor Joe Caffrey, INVAS; Professor Frances Lucy, EPA; Alan Moore, DCHG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
20/02/2019
National Biodiversity Conference, Dublin Castle
Catherine Farrell, Bord na Móna; Denis O’Sullivan, Gas Networks Ireland; Eamonn O’Reilly, Dublin Port Company; Gerard Britchfield, Coillte; Professor Jane Stout, Irish Forum on Natural Capital; John McMahon, OPW; Michael Ewing, Environmental Pillar; Paddy Mahon, County and City Management Association; Tina Roche, Community Foundation for Ireland; Professor Yvonne Buckley, Chair Biodiversity Forum

11/07/2019
Meeting with Minister Madigan, MOS Cannon, Turf cutters and officials
Gus McCarthy, Consultant Engineer; John Hynes, MK Consulting; 4 members of the Looscaun Shannonside Development Group; Brian Lucas, DCHG

19/07/2019
Meeting with Minister Madigan
Professor Yvonne Buckley; Ciaran O’Keeffe, DCHG

29/08/2019
Blueway development - public meeting, Monasterevin Community Centre
Martin Heydon TD

03/10/2019
Meeting with IFA delegation
Richard Kennedy, Deputy President; Flor McCarthy, National Hill Committee Chairman; Padraic Joyce, Chairman SAC Project Team; Charlie Killeen, Chairman Shannon Callows; Gerry Gunning, IFA Officer Environment Issues; Andy Bleasdale, DCHG

Departmental Expenditure

381. **Deputy Jack Chambers** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on bottled water and disposable coffee cups by her Department to date in 2019; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48186/19]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan):** My Department continues to participate in the Government’s programme to reduce waste, including the non-use of single use plastics other than where public safety/hygiene issues arise, announced by the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment in January of this year.

I am advised that total expenditure to date in 2019 in respect of bottled water for water dispensers in Department offices and disposable paper cups from my Department’s Administrative Budget, is €1,546 and €312, respectively.

Freedom of Information Data

382. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the date of each review and revision of the material published under the publication scheme of her Department as outlined in section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48203/19]
Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department’s publication scheme as outlined in Section 8 of the Freedom of Information Act 2014 is available on our website, www.chg.gov.ie. The Scheme, initially published in April 2016, was reviewed in 2017 following the reorganisation of my Department, covers a broad remit of information and materials. These are published under six pillars, as follows:

- Information about the Department;
- Services Provided by the Department;
- The Department’s Decision-Making Process for Major Policy Proposals;
- Financial Information;
- Procurement;
- FOI Disclosure Logs and other Information.

Information and materials across all pillars are updated regularly by individual areas of my Department.

I am informed that a comprehensive review of the publication scheme is currently underway and it is expected that this will completed shortly.

Departmental Funding

383. Deputy James Browne asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding will be provided to local authorities to assist with the maintenance of roadside hedges in view of health and safety concerns; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48224/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): My Department has no function in relation to the funding of roadside hedge maintenance for health and safety purposes.

Departmental Expenditure

384. Deputy Barry Cowen asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising, including multi-media, in her Department in each of the years 2016 to 2018 and to date in 2019 (details supplied) in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [48242/19]

Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Josepha Madigan): The amount spent on public relations, promotion and advertising including multi-media in my Department to date in 2019 is set out in the following table. Value for money is a critical consideration at all times in assessing whether external firms should be engaged to provide services of this nature.

2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture Ireland: social media content</td>
<td>€ 2,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Ireland: social media content</td>
<td>€76,506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In respect of the information requested by the Deputy in respect of expenditure by my Department in 2017 and 2018 I would refer the Deputy to the reply given to Dáil Questions No 596 and 597 of 19th December 2018. For the Deputy’s convenience the relevant material is set out as follows.

In 2017 expenditure of €64,167 was incurred in respect of social media relating to the Creative Ireland programme. This arose from a comprehensive citizen engagement programme to showcase the range and depth of Ireland’s cultural and creative offering and to encourage participation in arts and creative activities as a means of individual, collective and societal well-being. The vision of the Creative Ireland Programme is that every person in Ireland should have the opportunity to realise their full creative potential. This represents a new approach to creativity and cultural policy and therefore required a sustained communications programme in 2017. A combination of approaches and platforms were used to maximise impact, taking account of the diversity of the target audiences. Further information is available on my Department’s Creative Ireland website.

During 2018 Creative Ireland undertook a four week campaign from mid-May to mid-June 2018 on regional radio and social media to promote the 500 events taking place across the country as part of the inaugural Cruinniú na nÓg day of creativity for children and young people. Three bespoke videos were produced to support and raise awareness of Cruinniú na nÓg - Ireland’s new national day of Creativity for children and young people - at a cost of €24,815.

In addition to promoting interest in specific initiatives such as Cruinniú na nÓg, social media is also actively used to support and promote the Creative Ireland Programme generally as well as specific creative endeavours and partner activities. During 2018, specific short videos were also commissioned to promote various aspects or pillars of the Creative Ireland Programme. These included a specially commissioned spoken word piece by Stephen James Smith to mark the publication of 31 Local Authority Culture and Creativity Strategies in September accompanied by five short videos to illustrate the breadth and range of activities supported by the local authority Creative Ireland Programmes; and a video to mark the roll out of the Creative Schools initiative in 150 schools nationwide, in partnership with the Arts Council and the Department of Education and Skills. All these videos are available at www.creativeireland.gov.ie/en. A full breakdown of all costs in 2018 in relation to these activities is published on the Creative Ireland Website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Ireland Expenditure Summary</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cruinniú na nÓg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional radio &amp; social media campaign</td>
<td>€48,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Cruinniú na nÓg videos</td>
<td>€24,815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Ireland Programme</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media content - uploading of articles daily throughout 2018</td>
<td>€66,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 videos</td>
<td>€93,110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am also advised that the Culture Ireland Unit of my Department engaged Mr. Nik Quaife on a 1 year contract for the provision of services including a communications strategy for its GB18 programme, to celebrate and renew Ireland’s cultural relationship with Britain. Total expenditure on this contract was €51,400.

The Department also engaged D’Arcy Marketing and BigO at a cost of €17,466 and €6,125 respectively to promote awareness of the 2018 European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO)
campaign for the recruitment of Irish language translators to the institutions of the European Union.