

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 31, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 32 to 37, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 38 to 48, inclusive, answered orally.

Hospital Staff

49. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if hospital consultants' remuneration will be reduced under a new consultant's contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32999/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): While the Programme for Government provides for a reduction in consultants' remuneration, my immediate priority is to achieve more effective implementation of the existing contract so that patients get faster access to services and achieve better outcomes within the budgets available to hospitals. I believe there is plenty of scope under the existing contract and the Croke Park agreement to achieve greater productivity from consultants. For example, increased consultant participation in patient discharges at weekends could more quickly free up beds for emergency admissions. I am satisfied that considerable efficiencies can be achieved under the terms of the 2008 contract, if consultants embrace this reform agenda.

The 2008 Consultant contract provides for an extended working day, an increase in the length of the working week and structured weekend work, with consultants working as part of a team delivering the Clinical Directorate Service Plan and focusing on greater equity in the provision of care. I believe that the efficiencies, productivity increases and reform, if achieved, will be worth more to the health system than simply reducing the pay of consultants. I would therefore strongly encourage consultants and their representative bodies to engage in a meaningful way with the HSE and hospital management to progress this important agenda. The option of reducing consultant pay if these changes are not forthcoming is still very much available.

Hospital Services

50. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Health if he will direct the Health Service

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Executive to expedite an audiology appointment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan who was referred by their general practitioner more than 18 months ago; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32973/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The HSE has confirmed that the person referred to by the Deputy has been referred to the audiology services in Cootehill, Co. Cavan for assessment and is currently on a waiting list. I understand that the person will receive an audiology assessment appointment by the end of November 2011.

The report of the HSE's National Audiology Review Group was published in April 2011. The HSE is currently pursuing a number of recommendations that will have a direct impact on waiting lists for adult audiology services:

- A group is carrying out an urgent workforce planning review for audiology. This group is due to complete its work this month.
- The HSE has sponsored ten candidates to complete an M.Sc. in Audiology. The graduates will be ready to commence work in September 2013.
- Each HSE Region is currently in the process of validating its waiting list and evaluating methods to reduce waiting times.
- Consultation has commenced within the HSE in order to establish a unified patient management system for audiology. This will manage all scheduling and waiting lists.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

51. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will reverse the change to the nursing homes support scheme whereby persons who have to enter nursing homes while their applications for payments under the scheme are being considered will have to pay the full cost of care. [32965/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I recently agreed to an amendment to the HSE's *National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme*. I agreed to this in order to assist the HSE in managing the scheme more effectively and to ensure its ongoing sustainability. The amendment was agreed subject to assurances from the HSE that:

- individuals with complex cases will not be disadvantaged,
- average processing times for complete applications should not exceed 4-6 weeks,
- geographical location will not disadvantage applicants, and
- acute hospitals will not be detrimentally affected, subject to the scheme being operated within the financial resources allocated.

The HSE's Guidelines now state that, subject to overall resources, people who enter nursing homes will have their financial support paid either from the date that the application is approved, or date of admission to the nursing home, whichever is the later.

It should be noted that the amendment will have no retrospective effect, will be reviewed in one year and will only apply to applications received after the 1st October 2011.

Hospital Services

52. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Health if he will report on progress in the development of the new cystic fibrosis unit at St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin and of other

services for persons with this condition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32967/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The construction contract for the new ward block at St Vincent's University Hospital is proceeding according to plan, within budget and on time. Completion of building works is scheduled for April 2012, after which the building can be brought into use for service delivery. This new building will play a vital role in the treatment of patients with Cystic Fibrosis and a range of other ailments.

Other services for cystic fibrosis sufferers are also provided at the following hospitals:

- Beaumont Hospital,
- Crumlin Children's Hospital,
- Cork University Hospital,
- Waterford Regional Hospital,
- University College Hospital, Galway,
- Mayo General Hospital,
- Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda.

I will forward up to date details regarding these services directly to the Deputy in the very near future. In the primary care setting Cystic Fibrosis sufferers access the normal primary care services. Public Health Nurses and primary care physiotherapists provide a range of support, services and advice to CF sufferers.

Since 1 July 2011 screening of newborn children for cystic fibrosis has been integrated into the National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme. This will allow for early diagnosis and intervention leading to better outcomes for children with cystic fibrosis. The National Centre for Medical Genetics, based at Crumlin Children's Hospital, is closely involved in the implementation of this service.

53. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he could, in view of the reductions in patient services at both acute and non-acute hospitals across the country, outline to Dáil Eireann which hospitals have been assigned to cover the gap in service provision at each of the affected hospitals; the additional measures that have been put in place to help cover the gap in service provision; if he will outline by means of a detailed map the service-reassignments and other related measures which have been put in place across the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33030/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government intends to publish a Framework for the Development of Smaller Hospitals, which will set out the way these hospitals provide services to patients and how they work within their regional hospital networks. The Framework and its implementation is a priority of the Government.

In developing the Framework, the Government is clear that:

- there is an important future role for smaller hospitals, in which they will provide services for more patients, not fewer,
- no acute hospital will close, and
- safety issues in all acute hospitals, big or small, must be fully addressed, by providing the right type of services in the right settings.

We also need to take into account the individual circumstances of each hospital, to recognise the need for regional solutions and, within the excellent context provided by the HSE's clinical

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programmes, to encourage local innovation in response to service issues that arise locally or regionally. The best solutions will vary between regions and within the overall context referred to there is no question of a “one size fits all” approach.

We will arrange extensive consultation to ensure we develop an effective framework that takes account of local and regional needs. This process of consultation will begin shortly. I have already said that the reorganisation of our acute system must involve a two way transfer of services between the larger and smaller hospitals, and that as much of the less complex acute treatment should be provided as close to a patient’s community as possible. I expect that the model for reassignment of services will be a dynamic one, capable of adapting to the changing needs of patients and the health service, nationally, regionally and locally, and the evolving nature of medical treatment and technology.

Vaccination Programme

54. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health his plans to instruct the Health Service Executive to ensure that all parents are aware of the side effects of the human papilloma virus vaccine; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32988/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE provides all parents/guardians with an information booklet on HPV vaccination. The booklet includes information on possible side effects.

The HSE also provides additional information sources at *www.hpv.ie* and *www.immunisation.ie*. This includes information translated into eight languages as well as more details on the safety and side effects of the vaccine. Individual queries can be sent to either website and these are replied to by doctors in the HSE National Immunisation Office within one working day. For those who do not have access to the internet and who require additional assurances and information, the letter to parents contains contact information for Local Immunisation Teams and details of the HSE Information line.

I am satisfied with the level of information being provided to parents by the HSE regarding possible side effects of the HPV vaccine.

Hospital Services

55. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to provide additional services at Roscommon County Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32714/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): An Urgent Care Centre was established in Roscommon County Hospital in July 2011. This Centre operates from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week and the service is provided by non-consultant hospital doctors, with clinical governance provided by an emergency medicine consultant at Galway University Hospital.

An enhanced ambulance service has been put in place. During the day, four ambulances staffed by paramedics are available, while three are available at night. In addition, there is a special Rapid Response Vehicle, staffed by advanced paramedics, available on a twenty four hour, seven day basis. An out of hours GP service is also in operation. A Medical Assessment Unit is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday. This is a medical admission pathway and accepts referrals from a range of sources, including general practitioners.

An outpatient and day surgery plastic surgery service commenced in the last few months. Furthermore, increased day surgery is due to commence shortly. This will involve taking suitable patients from Galway University Hospital waiting lists.

Roscommon Hospital has a clear future and will continue to provide key services to the people of the area. I believe that smaller hospitals can and should provide as wide as possible a range of services, close to the local community. The key concern is that they are safe.

Too often we have focused on what we are taking away from rather than what we can add to, services in smaller hospitals. A framework for the development of smaller hospitals is being prepared for the Government jointly by the HSE and my Department which will set out how smaller hospitals will develop to reach their full true potential. This will specify what services are transferring to them from the larger hospitals.

All of this will be done with full regard to the safety issues highlighted by HIQA, in its reports on Ennis and Mallow Hospitals. When it is implemented, smaller hospitals will have vibrant roles, doing more work — not less — and meeting as many as possible of the needs of their local communities.

Departmental Reports

56. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health the steps he has taken to address the delay in the completion of the report into the practise of symphysiotomy; when he expects to engage with patient groups on the matter and publish the report; and if he accepts the urgency in having this report concluded in view of the aging profile of the victims and their need to have this matter addressed. [32709/11]

57. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update regarding his address of the plight of victims of symphysiotomy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33026/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 56 and 57 together.

The independent academic researcher appointed to complete a report into the practice of symphysiotomy has advised my Department that she experienced unforeseen difficulties in accessing information sources and, as a result, she expects to complete the report this month rather than as originally planned. I am very conscious that the women who underwent this procedure are anxious for this report to be completed as soon as possible but I also mindful that quality and accuracy must take precedence over speed.

As soon as the draft report is received my Department will further engage with patient representative groups and the Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

It is my intention that the report be published, subject of course to the usual legal and related considerations which as of now are not expected to create any significant barriers to publication.

Hospital Services

58. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health his plans to make additional resources available to the Cork University Hospital once the South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital, Cork, closes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32981/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital, Cork is not closing.

In recent weeks, HSE South announced details of a reorganisation of acute hospital services in Cork City. This reorganisation is consistent with the plans that have been agreed for some time, which indicate that the South Infirmary would become an elective hospital. To achieve

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this and to protect elective surgical services in the hospital, the staged closure of the current emergency department in the South Infirmary is required.

Cork City currently has three acute hospitals with emergency departments open on a 24 hour basis — Cork University Hospital (CUH), Mercy University Hospital and South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital. All three hospitals are located within a one mile radius of the city centre. Only one of these hospitals, CUH, has access to a consultant in emergency medicine on a 24/7 basis.

The proposed reorganisation of services, including the phased closure of the emergency department in the South Infirmary follows a comprehensive consultation and communication process over the past three years. This consultation process culminated with the publication, in 2010, of a plan for the reorganisation of acute hospital services in Cork and Kerry.

The majority of patients attending the South Infirmary's ED are seen before 10.00pm. From December 2011, the ED will open from 10.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. to accommodate peak presentation times during the winter months. There are approximately seven patients seen between 10.00 p.m. and 10.00 a.m. per night in South Infirmary ED. When the 12 hour ED is introduced in December, these seven patients will be easily accommodated in the 24 hour EDs at the Mercy Hospital and CUH.

In April 2012, when the ED in the South Infirmary closes, patients will be streamed between the Acute Medical Unit (short stay and medical assessment) and the new Surgical Assessment Unit at CUH, the new Urgent Care Centre at St. Mary's, the EDs at CUH and the Mercy and the Cardiac Renal Centre at CUH. These emergency service developments will ensure that existing ED patients will be being treated in more appropriate settings, ensuring that there is more than adequate capacity for the patients seen at the South Infirmary ED in 2010.

The planned streamlining of emergency department services in Cork City will deliver the best care for patients, as they will receive the right care in the right place from the right person. When these planned changes are fully implemented, they will ensure that there is more capacity in ED services in 2012 than is currently available.

The exact resource requirements for each of these services are being reviewed to ensure that they are all adequately resourced.

Question No. 59 answered with Question No. 45.

Hospital Staff

60. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form the salaries of the chief executive officer, deputy chief executive officer and clinical directors of St. Francis Hospice, Raheny, Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross and Blackrock and Marymount Hospice, Cork; if he will also give details of their annual leave entitlements and if they were paid bonuses between 2000 and 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32715/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): It has not been possible in the time available to collate the information sought by the Deputy. The HSE has been asked to collate the data sought as soon as possible and it will be provided to the Deputy when available.

Health Service Reform

61. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Health when he will publish legislation to abolish the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32992/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Programme for Government commits to the Health Service Executive ceasing to exist over time. This will require detailed planning and legislation to abolish the Health Service Executive is likely to be brought forward on a sequential basis, as part of the overall reform programme, with the Executive's functions transferring elsewhere or being taken over by the Universal Health Insurance system. In the meantime, however, I intend to bring legislative proposals to Government to abolish the Board structure in the Health Service Executive under the Health Act 2004 and to provide for replacement governance structures and enhanced accountability arrangements.

62. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Health if will implement the recommendations of the National Audiology Review Group; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32961/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The report of the HSE National Audiology Review Group was published in April 2011.

The Group has developed a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the inconsistencies and inadequacies in audiology services. Recommendations currently being pursued include the following. A group is carrying out an urgent workforce planning review for audiology. This group is due to complete its work this month. The HSE has sponsored ten candidates to complete an M.Sc. in Audiology. The graduates will be ready to commence work in September 2013. Newborn hearing screening is currently being provided in Cork University Hospital with a view to identifying congenital hearing impairment at a very early stage and will be rolled out in the remainder of the HSE South by year end. The programme will be rolled out in all other regions in mid 2012. Each HSE Region is currently in the process of validating its waiting list and evaluating methods to reduce waiting times. Consultation has commenced within the HSE in order to establish a unified patient management system for audiology. This will manage all scheduling and waiting lists.

The implementation of other recommendations is in planning, including: appointment of National Clinical Leads and a National Project Manager to lead implementation of the recommendations; Development of a national and regional Bone Anchored Hearing Aid Service; Development of an Irish Clinical Competence Programme to support the MSc in Audiology Graduates; Revised Tender for Hearing Aids, Moulds and Accessories; Revised Tendering for Equipping.

The HSE is committed to the implementation of the report recommendations on a phased basis over the next number of years.

Mental Health Services

63. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the number of cross-departmental meetings that have taken place on mental health in 2011; the actions taken as a result of these meetings; the direct outcomes that have occurred as a result of these actions or meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32966/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Office for Disability and Mental Health participated in the development by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government of a Housing Strategy for People with Disabilities which has a particular emphasis on the housing needs of people with mental health difficulties. This Strategy was published on 6 October 2011. Five meetings were held during 2011.

Three meetings of the Cross Sectoral Team on Health and Justice were held in 2011. That team was established to bring about improvements in services for people with mental health

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difficulties who come into contact with the criminal justice system, and during the course of 2011, a protocol was put in place regarding the provision of Consultant psychiatric support by the HSE to the Gardai in emergency incidents.

Consultant Contracts

64. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive has received back 20% of moneys owed by hospital consultants who failed to keep to a commitment to limit numbers of private patients treated in order to prioritise public patients; the amount of this money that has been paid back by the 15 September deadline; when the balance is expected to be paid in full; the measures being taken to retrieve the full amounts; the penalties that will be incurred by those who do not repay the moneys owed; the steps that will be taken to avoid a similar situation in future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32711/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Consultant Contract 2008 provides that where a consultant is in excess of the agreed ratio of private to public patients and does not bring his or her practice back into line he/she will be required to remit private practice fees in excess of the ratio to the research and study fund under the control of the Clinical Director. To date the HSE has received no payments to the research and development fund from the limited number of consultants who have been asked to remit fees.

In January and February 2011 the HSE issued invoices to 12 consultants who were recorded as being significantly in excess of the agreed private practice ratios indicating that failure to comply with the request to remit funds arising from breach of the ratios would result in an instruction to cease charging private patients. This followed the completion of a 9-month period provided to each consultant as per Consultant Contract 2008 for them to resolve the issue and query any data issues. Subsequent engagement between the HSE, IHCA and IMO resulted in resolution of the matter in respect of a number of consultants. To date two consultants have been written to informing them that their private practice privileges have been removed due to non-compliance with the public/private provisions of the contract.

Following recent discussions with the medical organisations, the HSE are confident that, given the time provided to consultants to resolve the issues, the systems are in place to ensure that any outstanding issues are resolved and funds are remitted appropriately.

ICT Projects

65. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Health his plans to proceed with the national client index project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33025/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I take it the Deputy is referring to the concept of the national client index project as used primarily by HSE Primary Care Reimbursement Service to support the management of the scheme systems in regard to on-line validation and eligibility for client services. Work currently being done by the HSE on the development of a national client index will be an essential building block in the process of uniquely identifying clients to provide health services effectively and ensure patient safety. A key issue for the health services is the ability to identify patients across different ICT systems such as the GP referrals system, Integrated Patient Management System and the National Integrated Medical Imaging System, as well as many other systems. The potential of such an approach allows for the sharing of data and the integration of systems to underpin the delivery of services thus ensuring that providers can deliver systems in an operating environment which is safe and efficient.

My Department is examining the issue of unique patient identification in the context of wider public service initiatives in identity management and the deployment of the public services identity card to leverage the most cost effective way of delivering this. It is accepted that the core principles of good information governance, including patient privacy, confidentiality and safety, must be at the centre of all deliberations. The approach must also support the requirements of the Data Protection Acts and the Health Information and Quality Authority. Universal Health Insurance, linked to money following the patient, is a central element of the health reform agenda set out in the Programme for Government. A prerequisite for the implementation of such a system of health insurance is patient centric data clearly identifying clients. My Department is currently working on legislation, to be published next year which will underpin the use of information in the health sector.

Hospital Services

66. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health if he will restore the services and beds closed at James Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32960/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services

67. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if the changing geographical spread of the population made clear in Census 2011 is being taken into account in his calculations when seeking to ensure equal access to medical service provision across the country; if so, if he will detail such calculations; the practical decisions that have been made as a result; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33027/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department utilises population Census data for a wide variety of purposes in the assessment and planning of health services. The Corporate Plans and Annual Service Plan prepared by the HSE include a range of population-based performance indicators across all areas of service provision. Many of these are designed to monitor issues of access, coverage and quality. The availability of detailed Census data and population projections is essential in enabling evidence-based service evaluation and planning.

Evidence-based planning and evaluation is also critical for the Government's major health reform programme, the aim of which is to deliver a single-tier health service, supported by universal health insurance, which will ensure equal access to care based on need, not income.

A fundamental element of the reform process involves significant strengthening of primary care services to deliver universal primary care with the removal of cost as a barrier to access for patients. This will provide for equal access for all to GP services. The phased implementation programme will be overseen by both the Minister of State for Primary Care and myself, as Minister for Health.

My Department has commissioned a study to develop a model of demand for and supply of GP and practice nurse care. This will facilitate workforce planning so that the supply of care by GPs and practice nurses should meet patients' needs for care as the implementation programme on universal primary care is rolled out. The study will address a number of elements including: an estimation of current utilisation rates of GP and practice nurse services, including a breakdown by geographical area to the degree that is supported by the available data; a projection of the effect on utilisation/demand for GP and practice nurse services of demographic change including population ageing and epidemiological trends; an assessment of any

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mismatch between demand and supply; and a sensitivity analysis assessing the effect on matching demand and supply of adopting alternative demographic and epidemiological assumptions.

In addition, the ongoing development of primary care teams takes account of population distribution and need by geographical area.

Significant reforms are also underway in the acute hospital sector which will positively impact on access to services. The Special Delivery Unit has been established and its priorities encompass reducing the waiting times for admission to Emergency Departments, reducing in-patient and out-patient waiting times and improved access to diagnostics. A joint HSE/Departmental group has also been established to develop a framework for the future development of smaller hospitals across the country. With regard to the funding of acute hospital care, the existing system of historical block grant allocations will be replaced by a more efficient and transparent prospective funding mechanism. This financial system will implicitly take account of population need as funding will follow individual patients (“Money Follows the Patient”).

Once these key reforms have been put in place, the health sector will be ready for universal health insurance. The universal health insurance system will give patients a choice of insurer and will guarantee that every citizen has equal access to a comprehensive range of curative services, including both primary and hospital care.

Mental Health Services

68. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the distress and concern caused by the termination of the free psychiatric drugs scheme which covered the former Eastern Health Board area; if he will restore the scheme pending a review of such services statewide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32959/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): Under the former Eastern Health Board, it was the practice to provide psychiatric medicines free to all patients who attended an outpatient clinic for services regardless of their eligibility status. Such arrangements were unique to the greater Dublin area. In all other former Health Board Areas, patients used either their medical card or Drug Payment Scheme card to access psychiatric medicines.

In 2009, the HSE decided to bring the arrangements for the supply of medicines to patients attending mental health outpatient clinics in the greater Dublin area into line with those operating in the rest of the country. These changes were introduced on a phased basis, starting on 1 October 2010 when medical card holders in the HSE Dublin North East area requiring psychiatric medicines were referred to their own GP for a GMS prescription. This arrangement is being extended to the Dublin Mid Leinster area from 1 November 2011. At the same time, Drug Payment Scheme cardholders will be required to pay for their prescription up to the co-payment threshold of €120 per month. Medical card holders will continue to receive their medication free of charge, subject to any applicable prescription charge. These arrangements will be kept under review.

People affected by these changes who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive will take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family, including the cost of medication.

69. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health the progress, if any, that has been made on the programme for Government commitment to develop a national Alzheimer’s and other dementias strategy by 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33024/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy is aware, a commitment was given in the Programme for Government to develop a national Alzheimer's and other dementia strategy by 2013.

As I have indicated previously, my Department has started the process of developing a policy on dementia that will support the delivery of long-term care services having regard to future demographic trends and the consequential increase in demand for long-term care. This policy will be developed on the basis of the best evidence available from national and international sources.

Officials in my Department have engaged with relevant stake-holder groups on the first stage of the process which is to assemble the research and evidence upon which the policy will be developed. I expect this will be received shortly, at which stage work on the policy will commence formally.

70. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money spent by the State in 2010 on child and adolescent mental health services; the amount of money spent to date in 2011 by the State on child and adolescent mental health services; and if he will provide a breakdown of this money for both years. [32968/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The HSE provides a range of services across primary care, specialist child and adolescent mental health services, health promotion and suicide prevention services which support young people's mental health. As the HSE's financial accountability structure is across HSE areas and hospitals and not by care group, it is not possible to identify a specific figure for services which support young people's mental health.

Question No. 71 answered with Question No. 45.

Hospital Accommodation

72. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Health when the Health Service Executive will complete its countrywide audit of acute bed closures; and when it will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33022/11]

77. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will put in place a programme to reopen closed hospital beds between now and April 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32716/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 72 and 77 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Question No. 73 answered with Question No. 44.

Childhood Obesity

74. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his plans to tackle the childhood obesity epidemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32492/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): 25% of children aged between 5 and 12 and 20% of teenagers are either overweight or obese. Childhood overweight and obesity is a significant public health challenge. My Department, in conjunction with other organisations and Government Departments, is involved in a number of programmes that encourage the adoption of

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healthy lifestyles. In parallel, the Health Service Executive is involved in many programmes to help prevent obesity. Earlier this year I set up a Special Action Group on Obesity, comprising representatives from my Department, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Health Service Executive, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and Safefood to examine and progress a number of issues to address the problem of obesity, including nutritional labelling, calorie posting on restaurant menus, the development of healthy eating guidelines, the promotion of physical activity, restrictions on the marketing to children and the treatment of obesity. The Group will liaise with other Departments and organisations as required.

Departmental Staff

75. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons and their rank and salary scale involved in the compilation of health policy in respect of primary and secondary health services with particular reference to those with responsibility for the determination of the size, scale and location of general and special hospitals and health centres; the extent to which future policy in this regard is likely to be controlled or affected by such a team; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32719/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department's role to provide strategic leadership for the health sector and to ensure that Government health policies are translated into actions and implemented effectively. There are 366.66 administrative and professional staff in my Department, and they are assigned across nine Divisions, as follows:- Finance, Performance Evaluation, and EU/International; National HR and Professional Regulation; Parliamentary and Corporate Affairs and Corporate Legislation Unit; Acute Hospitals and Private Health Insurance; Primary Care and Eligibility; Office for Disability and Mental Health; Office for Older People; Office of the Chief Medical Officer; Special Delivery Unit.

The standard Civil Service grades, which range from Secretary General to Clerical officer, account for the vast majority of our staff, and salary scales for these grades are as follows:

Grade	Salary Range (€)
Secretary General	200,000
Dep/Assistant Secretary and equivalent	117,407 — 176,800
Principal Officer/Equivalent	80,051 — 110,844
Asst. Principal/Equivalent	61,966 — 88,598
AO/HEO	31,619 — 60,224
EO	29,024 — 49,837
Staff Officer	33,070 — 46,171
Clerical Officer	22,015 — 38,135

There is a high level of interaction and co-operation with the HSE in formulating and implementing policy across the full range of issues, and in this context the size, scale and location of general and special hospitals and health centres is ultimately determined by a process of collaboration between my Department and the HSE, in the context of the capital programme.

Departmental Agencies

76. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if he will expand the investigative role of the Health Information and Quality Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32963/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was established by the Health Act 2007 and its investigative role is set out in Section 9 of that Act. e Programme for Government contains a commitment to expand HIQA's inspection role into the area of residential services for people with disabilities along with a commitment to establish a Patient Safety Authority which will incorporate HIQA. Discussions are ongoing between my Department and HIQA to progress these commitments.

Question No. 77 answered with Question No. 72.

Cancer Screening Programme

78. **Deputy Luke 'Ming' Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will direct the National Cancer Screening Service to contact all those women who had a cervical smear test taken and to ask them if they had to pay for the postage of their samples, using registered post €5.80; if he will enquire from the National Cancer Screening Service the steps that have been put in place to ensure that participating medical practises will not abuse the the National Cervical Screening Programme in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32710/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): CervicalCheck was introduced in September 2008. Almost 950,000 smear tests were processed in the first three years of the programme and more than 710,000 eligible women aged 25-60 years have had at least one free CervicalCheck smear test.

The HSE has contractual agreements in place with general practitioners and clinics for the provision of smearing services as part of CervicalCheck. Under this contract, the practice or clinic where a CervicalCheck smear test is taken is solely responsible for ensuring delivery of the smear test sample to the designated cytology laboratory for analysis. No woman who has a smear test as part of the CervicalCheck programme should pay for postage. I am advised by the HSE that, since the programme's introduction, a small number of instances have come to their attention of a woman being asked to post her own smear test sample for analysis. In all cases where a complaint has been brought to the attention of the programme that complaint has been immediately followed up and resolved with the practice in question. I am also assured that CervicalCheck works with representative and local community groups and produces information materials, which clearly state that every aspect of the programme is free of charge to women and that this is a free government-funded service.

Health Services

79. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Health if he will direct the Health Service Executive to reinstate the home help hours of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32974/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Professional Regulation

80. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health the way in which the podiatry profession is regulated here in comparison to podiatrists or similar professions in the UK and Europe, in particular regarding the sale, supply and administration of local anaesthetics and the carrying out of minor surgeries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33029/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health and Social Care Professionals Council (HSCPC) was established in March 2007 to implement the Health and Social Care

[Deputy James Reilly.]

Professionals Act 2005. The Act provides for the establishment of a system of statutory registration for twelve health and social care professionals including Podiatrists and will apply to the twelve professions regardless of whether they work in the public or private sector or are self-employed, and is the first time that fitness to practice procedures will be put in place for these professionals on a statutory basis.

The first registration board to be established under the Council, the Social Workers Registration Board, was established in August 2010 and the Radiographers Registration Board will be established before year-end. At least four additional registration boards are scheduled for establishment in 2012, with subsequent registration boards to be established as soon as possible after that. With regard to the regulation of Podiatrists and the establishment of their registration board, additional work will be required on the development of policy in relation to the supply and administration of prescription medicines by other health professional groups including podiatrists. This is governed by a separate piece of legislation, the Medicinal Products legislation. This work will be undertaken in parallel with working towards the establishment of the Podiatrists Registration Board.

In developing this policy, regard will be given as to how the supply and administration of prescription medicines in Europe, including the UK is undertaken. I am aware that the UK Department of Health is currently undertaking a consultation process regarding prescribing rights for podiatrists and the outcome of this consultation may assist my Department in its own policy objectives.

The Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations 2003 place strict controls on the prescribing, supply and administration of medicines, for the purpose of patient protection. Under the Medicinal Products legislation, in order to create an entitlement for a health profession to supply or administer prescription medicines to patients, it is first necessary for that profession to be subject to statutory registration in order that the law clearly identifies the individuals who have an entitlement to supply or administer prescription medicines. In addition, health professions subject to statutory registration are subject to a rigorous regulatory regime which includes fitness to practice and disciplinary sanctions.

While I am open to making medicines more accessible to patients, where safe and appropriate to do so, including permitting the use of medicines by health professionals, including podiatrists, it can only be done by taking all aspects, both legal and policy, into account.

Health Services

81. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health if he will reverse the planned cuts to homeless services announced last week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33031/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE works closely with voluntary organisations to ensure that marginalised and at risk communities have access to, and are able to utilise health and social services in an equitable manner. The HSE provides funding and services to the homeless catered for by the voluntary organisations. The funding reductions referred to are part of the HSE's efforts to address the projected deficit within this year's budget allocation.

Reflecting the current economic situation the HSE must manage service levels within existing resources. Similarly, voluntary organisations face challenges in delivering efficiencies to ensure that services are delivered within the allocated budget. The HSE is working closely with all service providers to ensure that the provision of services is effectively managed.

General Practitioner Services

82. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if the study currently being undertaken by him regarding the numbers of general practitioners required in the State will also cover the issue of location, recognising that GP and primary care services are unevenly spread; when this report will be published; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33023/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The purpose of the study referred to by the Deputy is to inform the Programme for the Implementation of Universal Primary Care, which will progressively extend access to general practitioner (GP) care without fees, in accordance with the Programme for Government 2011. The Programme for Government provides that under Universal Primary Care, GPs will work in primary care teams with other primary care professionals. The Implementation Programme requires the development of a model of demand for and supply of GP and practice nurse care to facilitate workforce planning so that the supply of care by GPs and practice nurses should meet patients' need for care.

The study will include a number of elements including:

- an estimation of current utilisation rates of GP and practice nurse services, including a breakdown by geographical area to the degree that is supported by the available data;
- a projection of the effect on utilisation/demand for GP and practice nurse services of demographic change including population ageing and epidemiological trends;
- an assessment of any mismatch between demand and supply; and
- a sensitivity analysis assessing the effect on matching demand and supply of adopting alternative demographic and epidemiological assumptions.

The study commenced on 17 October 2011 and will be of two months' duration.

Expenditure Reviews

83. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if, in the context of savings likely to be necessary in the course of the compilation of the Estimates and budget for his Department, all sectors within his Department are likely to be treated equally; if those currently engaged in examining those Estimates in this regard are conscious of the need to ensure that the scope, scale and integrity of the health services are not materially affected to such an extent as to create medium to long-term issues that might affect the viability of the services in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32718/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy will be aware, the Government has announced that a comprehensive review of expenditure is being undertaken wherein each Department will prepare a comprehensive report identifying expenditure programme savings, scope for savings arising from efficiency and other reforms and proposals for the further rationalisation of agencies and any associated reductions in staff. These reviews will inform the 2012 Estimates and the identification of further savings which can assist in meeting public expenditure targets. All areas of expenditure and income generation are being examined across the services to ensure that maximum value for money and efficiency is being achieved. Measures that do not have front line service implications are being implemented in the first instance, whilst measures that have a potential to impact on front line patient or client services will only be considered following a full evaluation and impact assessment and consideration at a national level.

[Deputy James Reilly.]

Under its reform programme the Government has committed to achieving greater efficiencies in patient care and service delivery. These efficiencies will not be easy to achieve but I am certain that achieving these efficiencies will enable the system to deliver a more efficient service, having regard to the resources that will be available to it over the coming years.

Hospital Staff

84. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if he will further extend nursing panels in order that those who have worked full-time hours as agency nurses will get the opportunity to apply for permanent positions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32958/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Employment Control Framework for the health sector exempts certain grades and posts from the moratorium on recruitment. These include some nursing posts. The Framework also allows the HSE discretion to fill non-exempted posts on exceptional grounds in order to maintain essential services. While the number of such exceptions must of necessity be kept to a minimum given the need to make reductions in employment numbers and associated pay savings, the HSE operates a number of staff nurse panels to meet requirements where exemptions are justified. Since the recruitment moratorium in March 2009 approximately 400 Staff Nurse positions have been filled.

In the first half of 2011 the HSE conducted two national recruitment campaigns for Staff Nurses and panels were formed from which future appointments would be made. In July, the HSE decided to introduce a general recruitment pause to assist with addressing the serious budgetary overrun. Notwithstanding this, the HSE will extend the current panels as appropriate to ensure that should service needs justify the use of exemptions specific posts can be filled.

Question No. 85 answered with Question No. 45.

Information and Communications Technology

86. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health his policy regarding a move from paper patient records to a more innovative information-technology-based records system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33028/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In the context of the Programme for Government and the wider health reform agenda I am committed to upgrading the ICT capabilities of the health system to underpin efficiency and effectiveness and, in particular, better patient safety by making greater use of health information to enhance patient care. The HSE will shortly publish a new information and communications technology strategy which will deliver sustainable improvements in health and social care for patients and clients via the deployment of cost effective standards based, secure technology and applications that provide access to meaningful, timely and relevant information, when and where it is required.

As part of this process, greater use will be made of electronic patient records for the obvious benefit of improved coordination of care and better outcomes, as well as reducing costs. Good electronic records will be essential in providing for an insurance based system where money follows the patient. It is internationally accepted that the wide spread adoption of an EHR (electronic health record) is a long term goal. However, significant progress to that end is being made by deploying the core building blocks such as patient administration, radiology and laboratory information systems and ensuring that such systems are deployed using an integrated services framework. Such an approach allows for the development of summary care records

leading eventually to electronic health records. My Department is currently developing legislation to provide a legal framework for the optimum use of health information. I expect that information to be published next year.

Pension Provisions

87. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Taoiseach the retirement salary and retirement package of, and whether bonuses or other payments are being made to, the retiring Director of Public Prosecutions (details supplied); the amount of their pension on retirement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32731/11]

The Taoiseach: The superannuation scheme for the retiring Director of Public Prosecutions is set out in the Statutory Instrument No. 96 of 2009. In accordance with it, the Director will receive a pension of €114,840 per annum and a net lump sum of €319,315. No bonuses or other payment are being made to the Director. While the Director's gross annual salary on the date of his retirement was €215,590, he had made a voluntary gift to the Minister for Finance to reduce the amount of salary paid to him to an annual sum of €200,000.

Departmental Expenditure

88. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Taoiseach the cost of issuing hard-copy payslips to all employees paid by his Department; the number of staff issued with such payslips; the steps being taken to issue payslips only by electronic means; the timetable involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32732/11]

89. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Taoiseach the cost of issuing hard-copy payslips to all employees of agencies accountable to his Department; the number of staff issued with such payslips; the steps being taken to issue payslips only by electronic means; the timetable involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32733/11]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 88 and 89 together.

The annual cost of issuing hard copy payslips to all employees paid by my Department is €1675. The annual cost of issuing hard copy payslips to employees of the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) is €41. The number of staff issued hard copy payslips annually is 184 and 17 respectively.

The Financial Shared Services Centre, Department of Justice and Equality, Killarney, which process the payroll on my Department's behalf, do provide an online payslip facility in addition to the hard copy payslip. We are currently in discussions regarding the issuing of electronic only payslips.

Departmental Properties

90. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Taoiseach if he has any property leased in the private sector in County Westmeath; and if so, the type of property and the annual rent payable. [32734/11]

The Taoiseach: My Department has no property leased in the private sector in County Westmeath.

Departmental Expenditure

91. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Taoiseach the total amount of money yet to be spent

[Deputy Timmy Dooley.]

under his Department's 2011 budget allocation before the end of 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32735/11]

The Taoiseach: My Department's 2011 budget allocation is €21.039 million. The total unspent at the end of October 2011 was €6.908 million.

Appropriate expenditure management procedures are in place in my Department, including procurement practices, budgets and monitoring processes with a view to ensuring that expenditure is managed in a manner consistent with best use of the resources available to the Department and achieving best value for money.

Departmental Appointments

92. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Taoiseach the terms — including salary, bonuses, expenses, travel and subsistence, and the length of appointment — that make up the contract of appointment for the new Director of Public Prosecutions (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32736/11]

The Taoiseach: The term of office for the new Director of Public Prosecutions will be ten years and is not renewable. The post will attract a salary of €190,000 which may be adjusted from time to time in line with Government pay policy. No bonuses or expenses are payable. Travel and subsistence will, where necessary, be paid under the rules and at the rates which apply in the civil service.

The pension entitlements of the new Director will be set out in a scheme to be made shortly by the Taoiseach, in consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, in accordance with the Prosecutions of Offences Act 1974, and the scheme will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Departmental Bodies

93. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Taoiseach the number of State bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32858/11]

The Taoiseach: The National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) is the only State Agency under the aegis of my Department. The NESDO was established under the NESDO Act 2006 and is the body corporate for the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). There have been no such changes since March this year.

As I said in the House on 25 October last, the changes to the NESDO such as the dissolution of two of its constituent bodies, the different composition of the NESC and the altered role of the Council mean that we must look again at the legislation to make sure that it properly reflects these developments.

Official Engagements

94. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Taoiseach if a date regarding his trip to China has been agreed yet; if he will provide the programme content; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33047/11]

The Taoiseach: The Government attaches great importance to developing our trade and bilateral links with our Asian partners and in particular with China. We look forward to build-

ing on the excellent bilateral relations that exist between our two countries and further enhancing our trade, investment, education and tourism links with China.

I hope to visit China in 2012.

Abolition of Seanad

95. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach when he intends holding the referendum on the abolition of the Seanad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33326/11]

The Taoiseach: Work is proceeding in my Department on the preparation of proposals for a referendum on the abolition of the Seanad. When these proposals are ready, they will be considered by the Government.

The proposal to abolish the Seanad was of course signalled by the Government parties prior to the general election, and the Government intends to put this question to the people in a referendum next year. The Dáil and Seanad will have an opportunity to fully debate the necessary legislation, when it is published.

Ministerial Appointments

96. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments; the details of such appointments, including position, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33968/11]

97. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Taoiseach the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointments, to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33969/11]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 and 97 together.

The only agency under the aegis of my Department is the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO) which was established under the NESDO Act 2006 and is the body corporate for the National Economic and Social Council (NESC). Tom Parlon, the former Minister of State, is the only former office holder appointed to the NESC. He was appointed by the previous Taoiseach on 20 January 2011 following his nomination by the Construction Industry Federation. No remuneration is paid to persons for membership of the Council. No expenses have been paid nor any additional benefits have been provided to Mr. Parlon in relation to Council membership.

I have not appointed any former Government office holder to any position since I became Taoiseach.

Ministerial Responsibilities

98. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he intends, following the recommendation of the Irish Economic Forum 2011, to appoint a Minister with specific responsibility for relationships with Asia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33481/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As the Deputy will be aware, Ministers are appointed by the President following nomination by the Taoiseach. As the Deputy will also be aware, there is already a Minister of State for Trade and

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

Development in my Department, Jan O’Sullivan, T.D., who since her appointment has been actively engaging with the Asian region. Later this month, she will visit Vietnam and Korea where she will meet with senior Government Ministers, Chambers of Commerce and the Irish Diaspora as well as participate in the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness.

I myself recently made official visits to Japan and Korea. The visits gave me an opportunity to conduct bilateral meetings with senior Ministers in both the Japanese and Korean Governments with a view to strengthening and developing our bilateral ties. In Japan, I also met with Keidanren, the representative organisation for major Japanese corporations, while, in Korea, I addressed leading figures in Korea’s Finance Sector at the Seoul Finance Forum. Both events gave me an opportunity to provide detailed briefings on business related opportunities in Ireland. I was able, during my visits, to liaise with members of the Asian-based Irish diaspora, particularly at the Asia Pacific Irish Business Forum which was held this year in Seoul and also at the 2011 Asian Gaelic Games which I officially opened.

The recent Global Irish Economic Forum was marked by a high level of enthusiasm among the participants, with candour and frankness characterising the many discussions over the two days. The feedback to date from all who attended has been extremely positive with participants expressing significant satisfaction with the quality of the discussions and the management of the event. Enhancing our engagement with, and presence in, Asia arose on a number of occasions during the Forum. The formal report of the Forum which includes the overall outcomes is being finalised by my Department and will be published shortly.

In order to ensure a whole of Government approach to the delivery of appropriate initiatives, an Interdepartmental Committee, headed by the Secretary General to the Government, which will include Secretaries General from relevant Departments and the heads of State Agencies, will meet this week to consider the Report, the outcomes, and the appropriate follow up mechanisms.

Human Rights Issues

99. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his approach in relation to the current repressive policies against Tibet; if he will call for the introduction of international independent observers in Tibet; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32820/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): The Irish Government conveys its concerns about the situation in Tibet and related human rights issues directly to the Chinese authorities, through regular diplomatic contacts in both Dublin and Beijing. The European Union, on behalf of its Member States, also raises human rights issues on a regular basis with China. This includes human rights problems in Tibet and the disturbing events in Kirti Tibetan monastery in Sichuan Province in China. The High Representative, Catherine Ashton, speaking on behalf of the European Union, has also expressed her concern at the situation at Kirti monastery and has urged the Chinese authorities to allow Tibetans to exercise their religious, cultural and educational rights. These issues are also discussed as part of the formal comprehensive human rights dialogue between the European Union and China. The most recent of these formal dialogues took place in June of this year.

Human rights issues in China, are also the subject of attention and debate at the United Nations in New York and at the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

A group of United Nations experts, led by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, an independent human rights expert appointed by the Human Rights Council, voiced concern on 1 November over reports of human rights restrictions on

the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in China's Sichuan province, including allegations of intimidation, security raids and surveillance of the sites and religious activities. Such restrictive measures, the UN experts noted, not only curtail the right to freedom of religion or belief, but also serve to further exacerbate existing tensions.

The Deputy will be aware that the Irish Government is committed to the One-China policy, which acknowledges Tibet as part of China. We believe that constructive dialogue between the Chinese Government and representatives of the Dalai Lama is the best way forward to address differences and tensions in Tibet over issues of culture, language, religion and identity. It is essential, for long-term peace and stability in the region, that these two sides reach an agreement on the future of Tibet. To this end, we encourage an early resumption of dialogue by the parties.

Departmental Bodies

100. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32852/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): There are no state bodies or companies operating under the aegis of my Department.

Election Monitoring

101. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the individual cost of each trip taken by persons as part of Ireland's international election monitoring in 2010 and to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33044/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Government believes that international election monitoring missions have an important role to play in the promotion of human rights and democracy. Irish Aid in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade maintains a roster of observers for election monitoring missions.

We aim to ensure that, when requested, Ireland is represented at an appropriate level in international observation missions for elections and constitutional referendums. Irish observers participate primarily in missions organised by the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), but have also been involved in missions organised by the Council of Europe, the United Nations and the Carter Centre.

Observers who participate in missions supported by Irish Aid are entitled to one pre-departure grant of €600 in every 12-month period to cover any costs incurred in preparing for the trip, including vaccinations and doctor's certificates. Additional costs for observers participating in EU-led missions are covered by the European Commission. Costs incurred by observers on OSCE missions are covered by the participating countries, in Ireland's case from the Irish Aid budget.

The election observation programme is subject to continuous monitoring to ensure that it operates efficiently and effectively and provides the best possible value for money. A list in tabular form of the cost associated with each Irish election observer in 2010 and 2011 to date is set out below. For obvious reasons, the costs associated with sending long-term observers (LTO) are higher than those for short-term observers (STO).

[Deputy Jan O’Sullivan.]

Election Observation Missions 2010 (93 Observers on 17 Missions)

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	NAME	SURNAME	COST
January					
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Kevin	Cronin	€3,285
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	David	Denny	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Raymond	Dunne	€3,059
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Peter	Emerson	€3,077
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Brian	Fagan	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Patricia	Farren	€3,057
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Deirdre	Grogan	€3,353
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Kevin	Grogan	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	LTO	Edward	Horgan	€4,360
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Maria	Kiernan	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Seamus	Martin	€2,622
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Sean	O’Callaghan	€2,763
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Eoin	O’Leary	€3,478
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	John Paul	Phelan	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Geraldine	Power	€3,207
Ukraine	OSCE	STO	Theresa	Reidy	€2,753
Ukraine	OSCE	LTO	Michael	Verling	€4,130
February					
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Anne	Brady	€3,761
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Mary	Buchalter	€3,761
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Tony	Egar	€3,977
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Michael	Forbes	€3,252
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Donal	MacDonald	€3,761
Tajikistan	OSCE	STO	Paul	O’Shea	€3,559
Togo	EU	STO	Mary	Boland	€600
Togo	EU	STO	Michael	Humphreys	€600
Togo	EU	LTO	Aidan	O’Shea	€600
Togo	EU	LTO	Mary	O’Shea	€600
Togo	EU	LTO	Marion	Roche	€600
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Eric	Byrne	€3,245
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Geraldine	Power	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Kevin	Grogan	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Maria	Kiernan	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Patricia	Farren	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Peter	Emerson	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Seamus	Martin	€2,640
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Sean	O’ Callaghan	€2,514
Ukraine II	OSCE	STO	Theresa	Reidy	€2,640

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	NAME	SURNAME	COST
April					
Sudan	EU	STO	Michael	Kavanagh	€600
Sudan	EU	LTO	Carmen	Monclus	€600
Sudan	EU	LTO	Maeve	Murphy	€600
Sudan	EU	STO	Mary	O'Shea	€0
May					
Ethiopia	EU	LTO	Donal	Blake	€0
Ethiopia	EU	STO	Terry	Duffy	€0
Ethiopia	EU	LTO	Edward	Horgan	€0
Ethiopia	EU	STO	Michael	McNamara	€600
Ethiopia	EU	STO	Mary	O'Shea	€0
Ethiopia	EU	LTO	Marion	Roche	€0
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Colm	Burke	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Marian	Cadogan	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Geraldine	Cusack	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Seamus	Duffy	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Brian	Flynn	€2,742
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Eimear	Friel	€2,680
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Fergus	Gleeson	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	STO	Michael	Lanigan	€3,342
Georgia	OSCE	LTO	Sean	O'Callaghan	€7,691
June					
Guinea	EU	STO	Michael	Humphreys	€0
Guinea	EU	STO	Aidan	O'Shea	€0
Guinea	EU	STO	Mary	Boland	€0
July					
Burundi	EU	STO	Peter	Ballagh	€600
October					
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Killian	Forde	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Niall	Gormley	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Patrick	Houlihan	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Paul	McGrath	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Caoimhe	Ni Chonchuir	€1,985
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Chiara	Popplewell	€1,801
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Audrey	Ryan	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Eamonn	Walsh	€2,585
Bosnia	OSCE	STO	Carole	Ward	€2,585
Cote D'Ivoire	EU	STO	Peter	Ballagh	€0
Cote D'Ivoire	EU	STO	Patricia	Kearns	€0
Cote D'Ivoire	EU	LTO	Traolach	Sweeney	€0
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Gerard	Buckley	€4,182
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Karen	McCormack	€4,182
Tanzania	EU	STO	Wendy	Dorman-Smith	€167
Tanzania	EU	STO	Terry	Duffy	€600

[Deputy Jan O’Sullivan.]

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	NAME	SURNAME	COST
November					
Azerbaijan	OSCE	STO	John	Jefferies	€3,274
Azerbaijan	OSCE	STO	Padraig	MacCoscair	€2,312
Azerbaijan	OSCE	STO	Fidelda	MacHale	€3,053
Azerbaijan	OSCE	STO	Mary	O’Connor	€2,508
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Gabrielle	Brocklesby	€2,746
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Terence	O’Brien	€2,746
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Eric	Byrne	€2,746
Moldova	OSCE	STO	Robin	Henry	€2,746
December					
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Larry	O’Loughlin	€3,557
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Geraldine	Cusack	€2,972
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Michael	Lanigan	€2,957
Belarus	OSCE	STO	James	O’Shea	€2,949
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Caoimhe	Ni Chonchuir	€2,725
Belarus	OSCE	STO	Noel	Brennan	€3,557
Belarus	OSCE	LTO	Eithne	MacDermott	€7,951
Kosovo	OSCE	STO	Dermot	McGauran	€374
Kosovo	OSCE	STO	Brian	Flynn	€999

Election Observation Missions 1 January — 7 November 2011 (56 Observers on 14 Missions)

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	FORENAME	SURNAME	COST
January					
Niger	EU	LTO	Dorcha	Lee	€600
Niger	EU	STO	Grattan	Lynch	€0
Sudan	EU	LTO	Maeve	Murphy	€0
Sudan	EU	STO	Michael	Kavanagh	€0
February					
Uganda	EU	LTO	Frank	Scott	€0
Uganda	EU	STO	Helen	Keogh	€0
Uganda	EU	STO	Michael	Kennedy	€0
Chad	EU	LTO	Marion	Roche	€0
Chad	EU	LTO	Traoloch	Sweeney	€0
Chad	EU	STO	Michael	Humphreys	€0
April					
Nigeria	EU	LTO	Diarmuid	Peavoy	€600
Nigeria	EU	LTO	Sandra	Conway	€600
Nigeria	EU	STO	Adrienne	Boyle	€600
Nigeria	EU	STO	Jimmy	Somers	€600
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Robin	Henry	€3,732
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Joy	Kanter	€4,332
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Philippe	Carr	€4,584

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	FORENAME	SURNAME	COST
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Raymond	Murphy	€4,517
Kazakhstan	OSCE	STO	Paul	O'Shea	€4,603
May					
Albania	OSCE	STO	Eric	Byrne	€3,443
Albania	OSCE	STO	Abdi Hassan	Ibrahim	€2,927
Albania	OSCE	STO	Maurice	O'Donnell	€2,770
Albania	OSCE	STO	Simon	Deignan	€952
June					
FYROM	OSCE	STO	Maurice	Canavan	€2,956
FYROM	OSCE	STO	Michael	Smith	€2,956
FYROM	OSCE	STO	Paul	Lindsay	€2,956
FYROM	OSCE	STO	Siobhan	Coyne	€2,251
Peru	EU	LTO	Marion	Roche	€0
Peru	EU	STO	Patrick	Maher	€0
September					
Zambia	EU	STO	James	Doody	€600
October					
Tunisia	EU	LTO	Sandra	Conway	€0
Tunisia	EU	LTO	Traoloch	Sweeney	€600
Tunisia	EU	LTO	Diarmuid	Peavoy	€0
Tunisia	EU	STO	Mary	O'Shea	€600
Tunisia	EU	STO	Philippe	Carr	€0
Tunisia	EU	STO	Mary	Boland	€600
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	LTO	Eithne	MacDermott	€7,792
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Caroline	Brennan	€3,751
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Peter	McMahon	€3,751
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	John	Lynch	€3,751
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Mary	Dowling	€3,751
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Tom	Kitt	€3,678
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Michael	Coyne	€3,678
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Patricia	Donnelly	€3,751
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Eric	Byrne	€2,952
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Mathew	Quinn	€3,115
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Robin	Henry	€3,151
Kyrgyzstan	OSCE	STO	Fiona	Devlin	€3,151
November					
Nicaragua	EU	LTO	Donal	Blake	€600
Nicaragua	EU	STO	Patrick	Maher	€600
DRC	EU	LTO	Dorcha	Lee	€0
DRC	EU	LTO	Marion	Roche	€600
DRC	EU	STO	Aidan	O'Shea	€600

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COUNTRY	ORGANISATION	ROLE	FORENAME	SURNAME	COST
DRC	EU	STO	Colm	Fahy	€600
DRC	EU	STO	Patricia	Kearns	€600
DRC	EU	STO	Peter	Ballagh	€600

Overseas Development Aid

102. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his views regarding a submission (details supplied) on Irish Aid; the actions he will take to ensure that the targets are met; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33118/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government is strongly committed to Ireland’s overseas development programme, which is central to our foreign policy. It is internationally recognised as one of the best development aid programmes in the world, clearly focused on the fight against extreme poverty and hunger, and concentrated in some of the poorest countries of sub-Saharan Africa.

Ireland’s aid programme has a rigorous focus on achieving real and sustainable results and provides strong international leadership in making aid more effective. A recent OECD review of the aid programme stated that Ireland is one of the best performing members in relation to aid effectiveness. This is a very important independent validation of our aid programme.

We were elected to restore growth to the Irish economy and rebuild our international reputation on the world stage. Despite steady progress, we continue to face considerable challenges in ensuring that our public finances are put back on a sound and sustainable footing. However, as I previously stated, despite our current difficulties, we are not willing to turn our back on the world’s poor and marginalised.

The Programme for Government underlines our commitment to Ireland’s development programme and the UN target of spending 0.7% of GNP on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). We remain focussed on this 0.7% target and we will continue to work towards its attainment.

Human Rights Issues

103. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will be meeting with representatives from civil society and human rights groups during his upcoming visit to Moscow to chair a meeting of the joint economic commission between Ireland and Russia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33331/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): During my visit to Russia earlier this week, I did indeed meet with a range of representatives of civil society, human rights defenders and NGOs, some of which have Irish links. I also met with several academics, religious figures, lawyers and journalists and attended a round-table session with leading Irish citizens in Moscow, as part of the Global Irish Network. These contacts provided a comprehensive picture of the current political and economic situation in Russia. While my visit was very short (one day), it did allow for contact and discussion on all aspects of our bilateral relations, including our engagement with civil society. The Government has consistently engaged in the promotion and protection of human rights with Russia, both bilaterally and via the Council of Europe, and we will continue to proactively do so.

Foreign Conflicts

104. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will report on the current status of Camp Ashraf in Iraq; if any EU, UN or any other international protection is being considered for inhabitants of the camp; if he will also report on the current deadline for the closure of Camp Ashraf; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33371/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I have been closely following the situation in relation to Camp Ashraf, or Camp New Iraq as it is also known, in light of the serious violence which took place in the camp last April and the Iraqi Government's clear insistence that it wishes the camp to be closed by the end of 2011. I would like to reiterate that Ireland and the EU are determined to seek a long-term and peaceful solution to the predicament of the residents of Camp Ashraf. I welcome the fact that EU High Representative Ashton has now appointed a Special Envoy, Ambassador Jean de Ruyt of Belgium, to work with the Iraqi authorities, the camp residents and other concerned international actors, including the UN and US, to achieve a peaceful resolution of this situation fully in line with international humanitarian and human rights principles.

A process to manage the closure of the camp, led by the UN, is now getting underway. The UNHCR is undertaking this process to register and determine the status of those in the camp, including whether residents hold nationality of third countries. I urge the Iraqi authorities to extend the deadline for the closure of Camp Ashraf to provide sufficient time to enable the UNHCR to explore resettlement options for camp residents that do not wish to return to Iran and do not have another nationality. It is also imperative that there should be no attempt at forced repatriation of any of those camp residents who do not wish to return to Iran.

Ireland fully recognises Iraqi sovereignty over the whole of its territory, including Camp Ashraf, but this sovereignty also carries with it responsibilities. The Iraqi Government has primary responsibility for the protection of all persons resident on its territory, including Camp Ashraf residents. Ireland, along with our EU partners, strongly condemned the violence which took place in Camp Ashraf last April and I call on the Iraqi Government to refrain from the use of violence and to show full respect for the human rights of Camp Ashraf's residents in the period ahead while the UNHCR explores resettlement options.

Diplomatic Representation

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he would meet the family of a person (details supplied) who is an Irish citizen and has been arbitrarily detained in Sri Lanka since September 2009. [33445/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department's consular officials remain in close and direct contact with the wife and family here in Ireland of the person mentioned by him, a dual national of Sri Lanka and Ireland, who was arrested on 5 September 2007 on arrival at Colombo Airport in Sri Lanka. My Department liaises directly with his wife on any request for assistance and on any developments in his case. Our Ambassador and officers in our Embassy in New Delhi, which is accredited to Sri Lanka, have also been very active in pursuit of progress in this difficult case.

At a meeting between his wife and senior officials from my Department in July it was agreed that if there was no progress in a Fundamental Rights Hearing before the Sri Lankan Courts scheduled to take place on 30 August 2011 then I would write to the Sri Lankan Minister for External Affairs. As the case was postponed to 31 October 2011, I have as agreed written to

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the Sri Lankan Minister for External Affairs asking that the person concerned either be charged or be released from custody as soon as possible.

I can let the Deputy know that the most recent development is that his case is further postponed to 28 November 2011, in order, I understand, to allow the State Counsel time to file indictments against him. Our Ambassador is scheduled to travel to Sri Lanka and intends paying a prison visit to the person concerned on 25 November. I can assure you that my Department will be in contact with his wife following the visit.

I would also be ready to meet the wife of the person mentioned following the Ambassador's visit. I can assure you that in the meantime all possible consular assistance will continue to be provided to the person concerned and to his wife and family.

Ministerial Appointments

106. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments, including position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33947/11]

107. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment, including position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33961/11]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 106 and 107 together.

I appointed former Minister Ms. Nora Owen to the position of Chairperson of the Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group in July 2011. Appointments to the Group are for a period of three years, with the possibility of extension to a maximum of five years membership. The Chairperson of the group receives an annual fee of €3,000. She is also remunerated by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for any expenses incurred as part of her membership of the group on a vouched basis. The Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group was established in 2010. Its role is to offer independent expert advice to me and my colleague, the Minister of State with responsibility for Trade and Development, Jan O'Sullivan T.D., on the strategic direction of Ireland's aid programme.

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

108. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Finance if he will act to enhance measures to tackle tobacco smuggling following the publication of new research for the Irish Heart Foundation titled Tobacco Taxation, Smuggling and Smoking in Ireland, which estimates that the investment of an additional €8 million in measures to reduce the illicit trade in tobacco has the potential to bring the State an extra €130 million in tobacco tax receipts per year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32923/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for the collection of tobacco products tax and for tackling the

illicit trade in cigarettes and tobacco products, that the tackling of this illicit trade is a high priority area. The strategy employed by Revenue to tackle this illicit trade is multifaceted. It includes ongoing analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, developing and sharing intelligence on a national, EU and international basis, ongoing review of operational policies, development of analytics and detection technologies, optimum deployment of resources at point of importation and internally to intercept the contraband product and to prosecute those involved.

Interception at the point of importation is achieved through a combination of risk analysis, profiling, intelligence, and the screening of cargo, vehicles, baggage and postal packages. Revenue enforcement officers also target this illicit trade at the post-importation level by carrying out intelligence-based operations and random checks at retail outlets, markets and private and commercial premises. Revenue also carries out regular multi-agency operations, particularly in relation to large maritime importations and in checks at inland markets.

While enforcement staffing levels have generally remained static over the recent past, Revenue informs me that this aspect is continuously reviewed and staff numbers deployed at these locations are often augmented by additional personnel from other areas when specific operations are organised. Although Revenue's overall staff numbers have been reduced over the past two years in the context of Government policy on civil service numbers, Revenue has ensured that the resources deployed in this work have been maintained.

In terms of detection equipment investment, a second mobile X-ray container scanner, to augment the one first deployed in 2006, was commissioned by Revenue in January 2010 and is now fully operational. Container scanning is one of a number of detection technology applications used to detect contraband. Revenue also uses a tobacco detection dog in addition to the smaller baggage/ parcel scanners, which are deployed at all major ports, airports and postal depots. Two new X-ray scanners were also purchased within the last 12 months for use in postal depots.

I am also informed by the Revenue Commissioners that they continually review and update their strategy for tackling the illicit tobacco trade. Since July 2010, Revenue has initiated an ongoing series of nationwide tobacco "blitz"-type operations, which concentrated additional Revenue resources at ports, airports and at various inland retail points, including markets, for the purpose of identifying illicit tobacco products. To date, Revenue has conducted eight tobacco blitz operations (three in 2010 and five in 2011) that have resulted in the seizure of in excess of 34m cigarettes. A further large-scale nationwide operation is scheduled to take place during the last quarter of 2011. In addition to this, there is a programme of Regional level blitz-type operations that target markets and other distribution points.

Revenue has established a high level internal group, chaired at Commissioner level, to examine the risks related to tobacco products tax and to oversee and optimise the detection of counterfeit and contraband tobacco products. This group has promoted a number of initiatives aimed at counteracting the illicit trade in tobacco. These include adoption of a comprehensive tobacco strategy and action plan.

In 2010 Revenue's strategy resulted in the seizure of a total of 178m cigarettes with a retail value of approximately €75m and 3,342kgs of tobacco with a retail value of approximately €1.2m. For the period January to October 2011, a total of 94.8m cigarettes with a retail value of approximately €40m and 10,003 kg of tobacco with a retail value of approximately €3.6m have been seized.

In the context of the above the Irish Heart Foundation Report has been noted.

Insurance Industry

109. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Finance the regulation that applies to the designation of districts for the purposes of insurance in view of the adverse effect on householders when an area is given blanket classification as at flood risk without consideration of individual circumstances; the recourse open to a householder who is refused insurance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33050/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Irish Insurance Federation that flood insurance cover is currently available to approximately 98% of householders in Ireland. Neither the Central Bank nor I, as Minister for Finance can compel insurance companies to quote for business. The decision to provide any specific form of insurance cover and the price at which it is offered is a commercial matter based on the assessment an insurance company will make of the risks involved. There are no provisions in the Central Bank's Consumer Protection Code to compel an insurance company to accept a particular insurance risk.

The Minister of State, with responsibility for the Office of Public Works (OPW), has informed me that the OPW has engaged with the Irish Insurance Federation, detailing areas of the country which have benefitted from flood protection measures put in place over several decades. In addition, the OPW's "Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment", as part of the Catchment Flood Risk Assessment Management Programme, has been forwarded to the Federation for its information. This interchange of data contributes to providing opportunities for the insurance industry to make informed decisions in relation to flood risk cover. The Federation has advised that, when assessing a risk, insurance companies consider any flood defence measures implemented by the OPW or the local authority in the area.

Homeowners in areas where flood insurance cover cannot be obtained or renewed can contact the Irish Insurance Federation which operates a free information service. Their service can be contacted at (01) 6761914 or by email at iis@iif.ie.

Tax Code

110. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax foregone in 2010 and 2011 arising from liabilities arising from capital allowances under the various construction incentive schemes; the average amount claimed per taxpayer involved and the maximum and minimum amounts claimed by individual investors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32749/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): It is assumed that the Deputy is referring to all of the claims for tax relief allowed in respect of the different types of property related tax schemes. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant information available on the cost to the Exchequer of all these schemes is based on personal income tax returns filed by non-PAYE taxpayers and corporation tax returns filed by companies for the year 2009, the latest year for which this information is available. These are set out in the following table:

2009

Scheme	Tax Cost	Average Claim	Maximum Claim	Minimum Claim
	€m	€	€m	€
Urban Renewal	93.1	78,112	See Note	1
Town Renewal	18.3	45,369	0.7	1
Seaside Resorts	5.3	15,179	0.3	1

Scheme	Tax Cost	Average Claim	Maximum Claim	Minimum Claim
	€m	€	€m	€
Rural Renewal	28.0	26,385	See Note	1
Multi-storey car parks	5.2	101,538	See Note	69
Living over the Shop	1.7	62,621	0.5	1,792
Enterprise Areas	2.1	45,627	0.3	1,100
Park & Ride	0.8	101,100	0.5	69
Holiday Cottages	13.9	44,132	See Note	210
Hotels	102.1	138,112	See Note	127
Nursing Homes	21.6	72,567	See Note	1
Housing for the Elderly/Infirmary	2.8	46,896	0.4	783
Hostels	0.30	52,142	0.2	7,240
Guest Houses	0.10	30,437	0.1	815
Convalescent Homes	0.5	47,857	0.2	381
Qualifying (Private) Hospitals	12.5	88,630	See Note	6,418
Qualifying Sports Injury Clinics	1.5	53,731	0.2	14,823
Buildings Used for Child-care Purposes	12.5	58,444	See Note	529
Mental Health Centres	Negligible	90,000	See Note	See Note
Student Accommodation	19.1	64,314	See Note	57
Registered Caravan Parks	0.2	300,000	See Note	See Note
Mid Shannon Corridor	0.2	300,000	0.5	15,720

Note: Because of the Revenue Commissioners' obligation to observe confidentiality in relation to the taxation affairs of individual taxpayers, a figure for the highest and in some cases the lowest amount of relief claimed under some of the schemes is not provided. This is due to the small numbers of returns with amounts exceeding that level. The estimated relief claimed has assumed tax forgone at the 41% rate for 2009 in the case of individuals and 12.5% in the case of companies. The figures shown correspond to the maximum Exchequer cost in terms of income tax and corporation tax. It should be noted that any corresponding data returned by PAYE taxpayers in the income tax return (Form 12) is not captured in the Revenue computer system. However, any PAYE taxpayer with non-PAYE income greater than €3,174 is required to complete an income tax return (Form 11). Corresponding data cannot yet be provided for 2010 and 2011 as the tax returns for those years are either still being processed or are not yet due.

Job Losses

111. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance the steps he will take to help save 36 jobs in the Grainger Group (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32772/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware, the pillar banks operate in an arms' length capacity in relation to operational issues. It is a matter for the respective individual boards and management to determine and implement operational policy in their organisations.

Tax Code

112. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied). [32782/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The supply of gas is subject to carbon tax and VAT but is not subject to the Public Service Obligation levy. With regard to the application of VAT on gas bills, in accordance with section 37(1) of the Value-Added Tax Consolidation Act 2010, the amount on which VAT is chargeable is the total consideration receivable by the supplier, including all taxes, commissions, costs and charges whatsoever, but not including the

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VAT itself. This reflects EU VAT law, with which Irish tax law must comply. In this regard, Article 78 of the EU VAT Directive provides that the taxable amount shall include taxes, duties, levies and charges, excluding the VAT itself.

In this respect, where a supply of service, such as a gas bill, includes carbon tax, VAT law dictates that VAT should be calculated on the carbon tax element of the charge as well as the charge for the service. The same situation applies in the case of other excises, including for example excises on petrol, auto-diesel, tobacco and alcohol products.

In relation to estimate bills, I understand that an amount paid on foot of an estimated bill that is in excess of the consumer's liability is offset against subsequent bills. In this respect any under/overpayment of tax is automatically adjusted.

Departmental Bodies

113. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Finance the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32851/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The question of rationalisation and the reduction in the number of State bodies is being considered in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and the overall budgetary and estimates process for 2012, and decisions on such matters will be made by the Government over the coming weeks.

In relation to State bodies the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) comes under the aegis of my Department. The National Treasury Management Agency is also the State Claims Agency, the manager of the National Pension Reserve Fund and the body through which the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) performs its functions. The NTMA is also required to provide business services to the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). NewERA has also been established in the NTMA, initially on a non-statutory basis.

Other bodies which come under the aegis of my Department include the Central Bank of Ireland, the Credit Union Advisory Committee, Disabled Drivers Medical Board of Appeal, Financial Services Ombudsman Council and the Irish Financial Services Appeals Tribunal.

The Fiscal Advisory Council has recently been established under the aegis of my Department but is independent of it.

In the period in question none of these bodies has been reformed, merged or abolished. The Deputy will be aware that major restructuring is under way in the banking sector, especially in those credit institutions where the State has a controlling interest.

Exchequer Deficits

114. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide the Exchequer deficit and the general Government deficit each year from 2007 to 2011, excluding the costs of the bank bailout; the amount of fiscal consolidation implemented in each of these years; the amount of this fiscal consolidation that comprised of increases in taxation and the amount that was comprised of cuts in expenditure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32930/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Exchequer and General Government balances for each of the years 2007-2010 as well as the latest estimates for 2011, on both a

headline and underlying that is excluding banking related expenditure basis are shown in the following table:

Balances	Amount
2007	
• Exchequer Balance	-€1.6bn
• General Government Balance	+€0.1bn
2008	
• Exchequer Balance	-€12.7bn
• General Government Balance	-€13.2bn
2009	
Headline	
• Exchequer Balance	-€24.6bn
• General Government Balance	-€22.8bn
Underlying	
• Exchequer Balance	€20.6bn
• General Government Balance	€18.8bn
2010	
Headline	
• Exchequer Balance	-€18.7bn
• General Government Balance	-€48.8bn
Underlying	
• Exchequer Balance	-€18.0bn
• General Government Balance	-€16.7bn
2011	
Headline	
• Exchequer Balance	-€25.4bn
• General Government Balance	-€16.0bn
Underlying	
• Exchequer Balance	-€17.9bn
• General Government Balance	-€16.0bn

The headline and underlying Exchequer and General Government balances for the years 2007 and 2008 were the same. For the purposes of compiling the figures in the table, the 2009 underlying Exchequer and General Government balances exclude the €4 billion capital injection into Anglo Irish Bank. The 2010 underlying Exchequer balance figure excludes the €625 million payment to EBS and the €100 million payment to INBS. As well as excluding these payments, the 2010 underlying General Government balance also excludes the €30.85 billion in Promissory Note payments to Anglo Irish Bank, EBS and INBS and the €561 million in accrued interest on those Notes which worsened the General Government balance in that year. The 2011 underlying Exchequer balance figure excludes the €7.6 billion in banking payments related to July's recapitalisation of the banking sector. The estimate of the 2011 General Government balance is based on this year's banking recapitalisation payments being classified as financial transactions which means they are not counted as part of the General Government balance measure. This provisional classification will continue to be assessed in the coming months in light of ongoing discussions between the Department of Finance, the CSO and Eurostat.

The budgetary consolidation process began in July 2008. Measures designed to save/yield €1 billion in a full year were implemented in July 2008 with all of those measures being implemented on the expenditure side of the account. Budget 2009 in October 2008 implemented a budgetary adjustment package of revenue raising measures designed to yield €2 billion in a full year. In February 2009, further budgetary consolidation measures were

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implemented. The package comprising reductions in expenditure was designed to save €2.1 billion in a full year.

The April 2009 Supplementary Budget implemented an adjustment package of measures designed to yield/save €5.4 billion. Revenue measures with a full year yield estimated at €3.6 billion and expenditure measures with estimated full-year savings of some €1.8 billion were introduced. Budget 2010 in December 2009 implemented a set of measures designed to yield some €4.3 billion in a full year, with virtually all of that adjustment being expenditure related. Revenue measures designed to yield €0.1 billion in a full year formed a minor part of the overall adjustment. Budget 2011 in December 2010 implemented a set of measures designed to yield €6 billion this year, comprising €3.9 billion in expenditure adjustments, €1.4 billion in revenue adjustments and a further €0.7 billion in other/once-off measures. Revenues from some of these other/once-off measures are now unlikely to be realised in 2011.

Commemorative Events

115. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider the introduction of a commemorative coin to the Irish currency for the 90th anniversary of the death of former Minister for Finance, Michael Collins, to honour the service he gave to Irish politics in the lead-up to his death; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32955/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The question of issuing a special coin in 2012 to mark the 90th anniversary of the death of Michael Collins was raised with my Department by the Central Bank earlier this year following a request it received from the Beal-na-mBlath Commemoration Committee. I have also received a number of representations on the issue. While I wish the Beal-na-mBlath commemoration committee every success in its celebration of this anniversary, I have been informed that it is not practise to issue a special coin to mark a 90th anniversary. I will, however, give the request from the Beal-na-mBlath commemoration Committee further consideration.

Bank Assets

116. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance, further to Parliamentary Question No. 138 of 25 October 2011, his views on a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33140/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I take it the Deputy is referring to the ECB opinion on the Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Bill 2010 of December 2010 which raised a concern about the position of the ECB as a creditor of the credit institutions that would be the targets of that legislation. The ECB also sought clarification that the effect of the various orders that can be made by the Minister for Finance under the Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Act [“CIS Act”] would not impair the ability of the Central Bank or the ECB system to maintain the Eurosystem’s operations.

My predecessor responded to the ECB pointing out *inter alia* that in order to ensure that any security held by the Eurosystem is safeguarded, section 5 of the CIS Act explicitly provides that nothing in the Act prevents the performance by the Governor or the Central Bank of their functions in relation to any credit institution authorised or regulated in the State or affects any obligation arising under the treaties governing the EU or the ESCB statute. I understand that as a matter of Irish law the reference to “obligation” extends to all of the State’s obligations under those laws.

Social and Affordable Housing

117. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance the progress made on the use of the National Assets Management Agency properties for social housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33210/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA recognises that there is a possible synergy between housing stock controlled by its debtors or receivers and the potential demand for social housing. In that context, NAMA concluded the sale of 58 social and affordable units to the Cluid Housing Association in July. The agency has provided a list of over 1,000 other properties to the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and I am informed that it is now in discussions with the Minister for Housing, his officials and the Irish Council for Social Housing with a view to identifying properties which may be suitable for social housing.

More generally, the NAMA Board has committed to giving first option to public bodies on the purchase of property which may be suitable for their purposes, including social housing. In addition, NAMA advises me that it is willing to facilitate dialogue between debtors and third parties interested in acquiring property for social or public purposes.

Ministerial Appointments

118. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33215/11]

119. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33216/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 118 and 119 together.

In response to the Deputy's questions I have not appointed any former Government office holders to any organisations since I was appointed Minister for Finance in March 2011.

Mr. Eoin Ryan was nominated to serve Ireland at the Board of Directors of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in February 2010 for a period of three years. He is currently serving as Alternate Director. Under the Danish/Irish constituency arrangements, he is due to be nominated as Director in mid 2012. The annual salary of an Alternate Director is £112,184 sterling and that of Director is £135,162. In addition, there are a number of benefits and allowances associated with the position, including relocation and resettlement, accommodation, education and severance payments. Details of expenses or other benefits claimed are a matter between the EBRD and the Alternate Director/Director.

Former Attorney General, Mr. David Byrne, was appointed chairman of the National Treasury Management Advisory Committee on 1 January 2008 and is paid an annual fee of €500,00.

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Mr. Alan Dukes was appointed Non-Executive Chairman on the June 2010. The role carries a salary of €250,000 per annum but Mr. Dukes has voluntarily agreed to accept a lower annual fee of €150,000.

For completeness sake, I would also bring to the attention of the Deputy that three former Government office holders namely Mr. Ray MacSharry, Mr. Joe Walsh and Mr. Dick Spring hold the position of public interest director at Irish Life and Permanent, Bank of Ireland and Allied Irish Banks respectively. All three were included on a panel formed by the previous Minister, under the provisions of the relevant covered institutions legislation, from which the respective institutions selected and then appointed the named individuals in late 2008/early 2009. All costs are borne by the particular institution.

Tax Code

120. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Finance if there has been a change in the repayment of vehicle registration tax on vehicles adapted for disabled persons; the number of VRT rebates refused on an annual basis because the VRT was already repaid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33271/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that Section 134(3) of the Finance Act 1992 (as amended) and Statutory Instrument No. 353 of 1994 (Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1994) (as amended) provide for permanent relief from the payment of specified maximum amounts of VAT and VRT for persons registered under the scheme. An individual who qualifies under the scheme may obtain relief as a driver or a passenger in respect of VRT and VAT subject to a maximum of:

- €9,525 for a driver,
- €15,875 for a passenger.

This relief (comprising of both VAT and VRT) is available on the registration of a vehicle in the State where such vehicle has been constructed or adapted for use by the person with a qualifying disability and has an engine size of less than 2,000cc in the case of a driver and 4,000cc in the case of a passenger. Additionally, in the case of a qualifying passenger, the cost of the modifications must amount to at least 10% of the tax free cost of the vehicle. The legislation further provides that the relief is paid where the qualifying person or organisation satisfies the Revenue Commissioners that that person or organisation, has borne or paid value-added tax, vehicle registration tax or residual vehicle registration tax in respect of a vehicle or in respect of the adaptation of a vehicle”.

It has come to the attention of the Commissioners that occasions have arisen where relief of the residual registration tax was allowed to qualifying individuals on the purchase of used vehicles in the State where no VRT was paid in the first instance e.g. on the purchase of a used vehicle by a qualifying individual where the relief was allowed to an earlier owner of the vehicle who had previously qualified for the relief. Consequently, procedures are being put in place to ensure that relief for the payment of VRT and VAT will only be allowed to qualifying persons or organisations in situations where the person or organisation has borne or paid value-added tax, vehicle registration tax or residual vehicle registration tax in respect of a vehicle or in respect of the adaptation of a vehicle. To date no claim has been refused in instances where the VRT was already repaid.

Budget Submissions

121. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a submission (details supplied) regarding smuggling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33297/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The contents of the Pre-Budget submission from the named organisation regarding cigarette smuggling will be considered in the context of the forthcoming Budget.

Tax Collection

122. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the tax take on a motorist who spends €40 on petrol; the tax take on a motorist who spends €40 on diesel; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33307/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the tax take on a motorist who spends €40 on petrol is €22.32 based on an average price of petrol of €1.499 per litre. The tax take on a motorist who spends €40 on auto-diesel is €19.89 based on an average price of auto-diesel of €1.439 per litre.

123. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the tax take on ATM cards, credit cards and so on for the years 2007 to 2010, inclusive, and to-date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33308/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the net receipt from Stamp Duty on financial cards and cheques from 2007 to 31 October 2011, broken down both by year and type of card, is as set out in the following table:

Card Type	2007 €m	2008 €m	2009 €m	2010 €m	2011 €m (To 31/10)
Credit	72.4	107.3	61.6	57.24	9.06
ATM	18.0	10.6	2.7	1.65	0.04
Debit	0	0	1.0	0.37	0
Combined (ATM/Debit)	24.3	27.4	12.9	12.62	4.98
Cheques	18.6	30.5	37.4	34.37	28.46
Total	133.3	175.8	115.6	106.25	42.54

The main payment date for Stamp Duty on financial cards is in December, which accounts for the low yield in 2011 to date. In Budget 2008 the Stamp Duty on credit cards, ATM cards, debit cards and combined cards was reduced, while the Stamp Duty on cheques was increased, which partly accounts for the changes in yield from those sources between 2008 and 2009.

Illicit Trade in Tobacco

124. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of cigarettes, tobacco products, alcohol and so on seized by customs and excise for the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33309/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners who have primary responsibility for detecting and preventing the smuggling of fiscal and prohibited goods, that they regard the tackling of the illicit trade in tobacco, mineral oil and alcohol products to be a high priority area. The strategy employed by Revenue to tackle

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illicit trading is multi-faceted. It includes ongoing analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, developing and sharing intelligence on a national, EU and international basis, ongoing review of operational policies, development of analytics and detection technologies, optimum deployment of resources at point of importation and internally to intercept the contraband product and to prosecute those involved. Interception at the point of importation is achieved through a combination of risk analysis, profiling, intelligence, and the screening of cargo, vehicles, baggage and postal packages. Revenue enforcement officers also target illicit trading at the post-importation level by carrying out intelligence-based operations and random checks at retail outlets, markets and private and commercial premises. Revenue also carries out regular multi-agency operations, particularly in relation to tobacco and mineral oil products. The information requested by the Deputy is listed as follows.

Product	2008	2009	2010	2011 to Date
Cigarettes	135.2m	218.5m	178.4m	94.7m
Tobacco	3,083kg	10,452kg	3,367kg	10,034kg
Alcohol	83,037 ltr	96,759 ltr	44,276 ltr	41,411 ltr
Mineral Oil	100,470 ltr	283,817 ltr	289,484 ltr	843,270 ltr

Banking Sector

125. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Finance the action taken by him towards making finances available for small businesses; the funding and policy initiatives for small business; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the banks are still refusing to give credit to small businesses to continue their important role in the local community. [33323/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The restructuring of the domestic banking sector creates capacity for the pillar banks to lend in excess of €30 billion over the next three years in SME and other important sectors. This is in excess of Central Bank estimates of the likely demand for SME and mortgage credit over this period. Both pillar banks are concentrating on the Irish economy and need to issue credit to make profits and rebuild their balance sheets. As the Deputy may be aware, the Government has imposed lending targets on the two domestic pillar banks for the three calendar years, 2011 to 2013. Both banks will be required to sanction lending of at least €3 billion this year, €3.5 billion next year and €4 billion in 2013 for new or increased credit facilities to SMEs.

Both pillar banks have provided me with their plans to ensure that the 2011 target is achieved. This is particularly relevant given the comments contained in the fifth quarterly report of the Credit Review Office, which stated that “it will be a challenge for each of the banks to reach their €3 billion sanction target for new and restructured facilities in the current year.”

On the issue more generally of the demand for credit, my Department has commissioned an independent survey of the demand for credit within the SME sector, the results of which will be submitted to me shortly. The outcome will provide the necessary information to better inform Government policy in this important sector of the Irish economy.

It is vital that the banks continue to make credit available to support economic recovery. However, it is not in the interest of the banks, businesses or the economy for finance to be provided unless the business is viable and has the capacity to meet the interest payments and repay the sum borrowed.

The Deputy should also be aware of the plans of the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation to introduce a temporary partial loan guarantee scheme, which is a commitment included in the Programme for Government, and work is advancing on the arrangements for the introduction of this scheme.

Tax Code

126. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Finance when a VAT refund will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon. [33324/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): This is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners. I am advised by Revenue that they have no unprocessed VAT refund claims for the person concerned.

Departmental Expenditure

127. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to reduce salaries being paid to National Asset Management Agency developers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33339/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): NAMA advises me that in many instances working with the people who know the business will secure a better return for the taxpayer. The Chairman of NAMA said some time ago that while foreclosing on all 850 developers and getting someone else to run the businesses would be the popular option, it would not make commercial sense. It is also the case that employing an external asset manager to manage the assets could cost significantly more than the cost of employing the original debtor. The fact that NAMA has had to take enforcement action in 91 cases so far shows that many developers consider NAMA's terms and conditions too onerous. It also shows that NAMA is not soft on developers in general and is looking to impose tough conditions. However, NAMA has also advised that where it decides to work with developers, the debtors must be given some incentive to work with NAMA.

I understand from NAMA that, as part of its business plan agreements with debtors, it normally looks for and obtains a reduction of 50% to 75% in overhead costs and that any remuneration paid to debtors is payable from this much-reduced budget. The Chairman of NAMA has recently stated that the majority of debtor remuneration packages fall into the €70,000 to €100,000 range, including all benefits-in-kind. He also confirmed that in two cases the debtor's remuneration package, authorised by NAMA as part of the budget for overheads, is €200,000. In these cases, I am advised by NAMA that these were considered essential to reaching an agreement that would generate a much better return to the taxpayer than the option of enforcement and the employment of asset managers for what are very large portfolios. NAMA will continue to make such decisions on a case-by-case basis in line with its commercial mandate.

Budget Submissions

128. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will review a matter (details supplied) regarding the Society of St. Vincent de Paul; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33352/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have received a pre-Budget submission from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. Its contents will be considered in the context of the

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forthcoming Budget and Finance Bill. As Deputies are aware it would not be appropriate for me to comment in advance of the Budget on possible Budget decisions.

Tax Reliefs

129. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Finance the consideration that has been given to the negative impact of the restriction of premature abolishing of section 23 relief, on the livelihood of property owners and those in the commercial and residential letting business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33359/11]

130. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Finance the safeguards being put in place to alleviate the potential fallout from the termination of section 23 which may kill off economic activity in the middle of the investment cycle to the detriment of economic viability, in view of the fact that the whole purpose of urban and town renewal was to rebalance development to less economically advantaged areas by the encouragement of investment in these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33360/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 129 and 130 together.

As the Deputy may be aware my Department is carrying out an impact assessment of the potential effects of amending, curtailing and/or abolishing property-based “legacy” tax reliefs including Section 23 type reliefs in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government.

The impact assessment process is examining the benefits that may accrue to the Exchequer in terms of additional tax yield as well as consequences for investor groups and the wider economy arising from possible changes to the treatment of these reliefs.

A public consultation was undertaken in order to afford all interested parties an opportunity to present their views and to assist our understanding of the possible effects of potential changes on individual investors. This resulted in the submission of over 700 individual responses.

The response to the consultation forms an integral part of the assessment and is currently being appraised in tandem with information and research collated as part of the overall impact assessment. It is anticipated that the analysis of the submissions along with the results of the impact assessment process will be available for consideration in the context of the forthcoming budget.

As is customary, I do not propose to comment in advance of the Budget on any matters that might be the subject of Budget decisions.

Financial Institutions Support Scheme

131. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the date from which the six covered institutions were legally covered by the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33369/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware that the previous Government announced the bank guarantee on 30 September 2008 as a matter of public law. The formal statutory legal basis for the guarantee was provided by the Credit Institution (Financial Support) Act 2008 (No. 18 of 2008) and the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008 (S.I. No. 411 of 2008) (“CIFS”). The CIFS was formally approved by both Houses of the Oireachtas on 17 October 2008. Seven financial institutions were covered by the CIFS: Bank of Ireland, Allied Irish Bank, Anglo Irish Bank, the EBS Building Society, Irish Nation-

wide Building Society, Irish Life and Permanent and Postbank. Most of the institutions joined the Scheme on 24 October 2008, with the exceptions of Postbank Ireland Ltd which was added on 5 November 2008 and EBS Mortgage Finance added on 4 December 2008.

Those institutions executed a guarantee acceptance deed and were designated in an order by the Minister for Finance and were “covered institutions”. The list of “covered institutions”, including their subsidiaries is set out in the table:

Covered Institution	Subsidiary	Date added to the Scheme
Allied Irish Bank plc	AIB Mortgage Bank AIB Bank (CI) Limited AIB Group (UK) plc AIB North America Inc.	24 October 2008
Anglo Irish Bank Corporation Ltd.	Anglo Irish Bank Corporation (International) Ltd.	24 October 2008
The Governor and Company of the Bank of Ireland	Bank of Ireland Mortgage Bank ICS Building Society Bank of Ireland (I.O.M.) Limited	24 October 2008
EBS Building Society	EBS Mortgage Finance	24 October 2008 4 December 2008
Irish Life and Permanent plc	Irish Permanent (I.O.M.) Limited	24 October 2008
Irish Nationwide Building Society	Irish Nationwide (I.O.M.) Limited	24 October 2008
Postbank Ireland Limited		5 November 2008

CIFS expired on 29 September 2010 and was effectively superseded by the Credit Institutions (Eligible Liabilities) Guarantee Scheme (“ELGS”) which came into effect on 9 December 2009. ELGS differs to the CIFS in several ways, for example, certain types of funding such as dated subordinated debt and asset backed securities are not covered.

All of the covered institutions under the CIFS, with the exception of Postbank Ireland Limited which has been wound-down, are also covered under the ELGS. I provided the Deputy with details of those institutions covered under the ELGS recently.

Tax Yield

132. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money that was brought in during the full year 2010 from the income levy on the proportion that was levied at 2% that is income up to €75,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33370/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Income Levy was collected by the Revenue Commissioners as a component of Income Tax. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that it is estimated that over €1.4 billion was collected from the Income Levy in the calendar year 2010. However, as is normal, it would have been expected that the total Income Levy liability for the income tax year 2010 would be higher at €1.7 billion with the difference being collected in 2011/12. I am further advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is estimated that the lower rate of Income Levy (2%) which applied to income up to €75,036 per annum will account for nearly €1.3 billion. This represents about three quarters of the estimated full year liability of €1.7 billion for the income tax year 2010.

These figures are estimates from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2009 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends for the year 2010. They are, therefore, provisional and may be revised.

Mortgage Arrears

133. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding personal debt and mortgage arrears; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33394/11]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Minister for Justice and Equality and Defence has advised me that, in line with a commitment in the Programme for Government, the Personal Insolvency Bill is currently being developed in his Department. This Bill will provide a new framework for settlement and enforcement of debt and for personal insolvency. Under the EU/IMF Programme for Financial Support for Ireland there is a requirement to publish the Bill during the first quarter of 2012. The Minister for Justice and Equality and Defence has advised me that it is his objective to publish the measure as soon as possible. In the details supplied reference is made to the Keane Report. This report was discussed in the Dáil last month during which all Members were given an opportunity to put forward their views. Once the debate has concluded I will put forward proposals to the Government on next steps including an implementation mechanism.

Higher Education Grants

134. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the situation regarding determination for adjacent and non-adjacent rates of higher education grants; his views on a case in which an entire faculty is located some twelve miles from the main college campus and the way students attending at this location are to be assessed with regard to their eligibility for maintenance grants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32750/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under Budget 2011, the previous Fianna Fáil-Green party Government changed the qualifying distance criterion for the non-adjacent rate of student grant from 24kms to 45kms.

The measurement of the distances for the non-adjacent rate of grant is a matter for grant awarding bodies. There has been no change as to how these distances are measured. As in the past for all cases, the shortest most direct route to the institution attended is measured.

Mental Health Policy

135. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the inter-departmental guidelines in relation to mental health in schools will be published; if these guidelines will follow a whole-school approach to mental health, including procedures on the way teachers should respond to the mental health difficulties of individual students; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32775/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Work is under way on the development of Mental Health Guidelines for Schools involving personnel from my Department and the Health Service Executive. There will be an appropriate emphasis on the need for a whole-school approach to mental health including procedures on the way teachers should respond to mental health difficulties of individual students.

136. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of officials in his Department responsible for mental health policy in the education system; the other responsibilities that these same officials also have; if mental health is their primary role; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32776/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Department adopts a holistic and integrated approach to supporting the work of schools, and it is not possible to identify a number of officials who are uniquely responsible for promoting positive mental health. This issue spans the curriculum in schools, whole-school ethos, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, pastoral care, the provision of professional development for teachers, other supports such as educational psychological services and guidance and counselling services, and the interface with other agencies, both nationally and locally.

Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is a mandatory part of the curriculum in primary schools and in junior cycle since 2003 and is designed to promote positive mental health. It is supported by comprehensive teacher guidelines and curriculum support services which provide training and advice for schools and a resource directory. The Department has also issued guidelines to schools on the development of whole-school policies in the areas such as anti-bullying, RSE, substance use, managing critical incidents, whole-school guidance planning etc which are also important in promoting positive mental health.

Pastoral care supports are promoted in schools through year heads, key tutor systems, home/school links, etc. This is one of the key areas which is evaluated as part of a Whole School Evaluation. Schools also engage in a wide range of sport and cultural co-curricular activities which provide an important opportunity for students to experience success and personal growth.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) operating within the Department provides a range of services both direct and indirect which support the personal, social and educational development of students in primary and post primary schools, and assistance in supporting pupils with particular social emotional or behavioural difficulties. NEPS promotes the development of structures and supports among teachers and schools care teams which assists and encourages the development of contact and collaboration with the relevant local HSE mental health agencies including the Community Psychology Services and Mental Health Promotion Officers and the referral services of the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS).

All post-primary schools provide a guidance and counselling service for their students and they receive ex-quota hours from the Department for this provision. Some 670 teachers are employed in this area. The service includes the provision of individual guidance and counselling for students either at critical stages in their education or at times of personal crisis.

School Enrolments

137. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school place in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [32783/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The selection and enrolment of pupils in schools is the responsibility of the authorities of the individual school. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As schools may not have a place for every applicant, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

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

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Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department, or in the case of a Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) school to the VEC in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year. My Department has no authority to compel a school to admit a pupil, except in the case of an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 being upheld.

The parents/guardian of the pupil in question may wish to contact my Department at the Section 29 Unit Friars Mill Road, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, (phone 044 9337008) if they wish to take an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act 1998.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The NEWB may be able to offer assistance and advice on securing a school placement within the pupil's area. The contact details for the NEWB in your area is National Educational Welfare Board, Block 3 Floor 1, Grove Court, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, phone number 01-8103260.

Higher Education Grants

138. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans, if any, to increase student grants for third level students attending college; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32784/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I assume that the Deputy is referring to potential changes to the student grant scheme under the Budget for 2012. The Deputy will appreciate that the preparation of the Estimates for any Budget is carried out on a strictly confidential basis and it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific issues or proposals, including those relating to student grants, in advance of the Budget announcement.

Higher Education Fees

139. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans, if any, to reduce college fees for students attending third level education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32785/11]

156. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views regarding a submission (details supplied) on the student contribution charge and maintenance grant; the actions he proposes to take to address the issues raised; if he has met with the representative bodies regarding such concerns; if so, the determination of such meetings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33116/11]

157. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views regarding a submission (details supplied) on the student contribution charge and maintenance grant; the actions he proposes to address the matters highlighted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33117/11]

175. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied); if he has met with any of the representative groups in regard to this matter; if so, the results of such meetings and the proposals reached or agreed to meet with the concerns expressed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33380/11]

179. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a submission (details supplied) regarding student contribution charge and maintenance grant; the actions he will take to address this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33404/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 139, 156, 157, 175 and 179 together.

As the Deputies will be aware, the reality of our economic situation presents significant challenges that have to be reconciled with limitations on public resources. Ireland must adhere to its agreed economic recovery programme in order to reduce the budget deficit to 3% of GDP by 2015 and to restore our independence. This will mean that forthcoming budgets will involve further adjustments in taxation and public spending. Regrettably, education cannot be spared from this adjustment as the size of the challenge is so large. This is the unfortunate legacy caused by the reckless economic management of the previous Fianna Fáil-Green Party Government.

I am very conscious of the fundamental role played by the free fees and student grant schemes in supporting families who are putting their children through further and higher education and I understand their concerns at the measures announced in Budget 2011 by the previous Government.

I will take account of those concerns in considering any future changes to the schemes as part of the budgetary process for 2012 and beyond, having regard to the position of the public finances.

A study on the sustainability of overall higher education funding arrangements is currently being undertaken by the Higher Education Authority. I expect that their final report will be available to me very shortly and will help inform the Government's decision-making in the context of finalising December's budget.

The Deputies will also be aware that my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, is undertaking a Comprehensive Expenditure Review across all areas of Government spending. This process will inform funding allocations for the coming years. In this context, the Deputies will appreciate that in line with normal budgetary protocol I am unable to comment on specific savings options that are under consideration as part of budgetary deliberations.

Bullying in Schools

140. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide statistics on the numbers of children experiencing bullying in our schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32821/11]

141. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide statistics on the number of schools implementing the bullying code of behaviour, as implemented by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32822/11]

142. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding his approach to the problem of cyber bullying; if he has made specific recommendations to schools on the way to deal with cyber bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32823/11]

143. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will implement an awards system for schools to help combat the problem of bullying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32824/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 140 to 143, inclusive, together.

Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, all schools are required to have in place a Code of Behaviour and this code must be drawn up in accordance with the guidelines of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB). The NEWB guidelines were issued to schools in 2008 and make it clear that each school must have policies to prevent or address bullying and harassment and schools must make clear in their code of behaviour that bullying is unacceptable. The guidelines further state that as well as making explicit that bullying is prohibited in the school, and having an anti-bullying policy, the code of behaviour should indicate what action the school will take in relation to alleged breaches of the school's bullying policy.

Every school therefore must have in place a policy, within the framework of the school's overall school code of behaviour, which includes specific measures to deal with bullying behaviour. Such a code, developed through consultation with the whole school community and properly implemented, can be the most influential measure in countering bullying behaviour in schools.

Responsibility for tackling bullying falls to the level of the individual school, as it is at local level that an effective anti-bullying climate must be established and at that level that actions should be taken to address allegations of bullying.

There is no requirement for local school authorities to report incidents or allegations of bullying to my Department. My Department does receive a number of complaints and queries from parents regarding matters such as bullying involving schools. It is important to highlight that in many of these instances, parents are seeking guidance from the Department on how to resolve an issue or an alleged incident within a school.

In dealing with complaints the Department's role is to provide advice to parents and students on the operation of schools' complaints procedures and to clarify for parents and pupils how grievances and complaints against schools can be progressed. My Department has issued Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour as an aid to schools in devising measures to prevent and deal with instances of bullying behaviour. These guidelines were drawn up following consultation with representatives of school management, teachers and parents, and are sufficiently flexible to allow each school authority to adapt them to suit the particular needs of their school.

As a further aid to post-primary schools my Department published in 2007 a template that can be used by post-primary schools in developing an anti-bullying policy. The anti-bullying policy template is based primarily on the key document Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour. However, it also takes account of more recent legislative and regulatory changes, and reference is made to issues of contemporary concern such as the need to tackle text bullying, cyber-bullying and homophobic bullying.

When a Whole School Evaluation (WSE) is conducted by my Department's Inspectorate, the code of behaviour, including its anti-bullying policy, is reviewed by the inspection team to check that it is in line with the Department's guidelines. Inspectors normally meet with the principal, the board, post-holders, year heads, class teachers, programme co-ordinators, the pastoral care team, representatives of the students and parents. During these meetings there is a particular emphasis on the quality of student care and support. The inspectors' evaluation is also informed by observations in classroom settings and throughout the school. Where there are weaknesses in a school's policy or implementation of policies clear recommendations for improvement are made and are included in the published report of the inspection.

Revised procedures for WSE in schools have recently been put in place. A new element of the revised WSE process involves the issuing of questionnaires directly to pupils and parents.

Children and parents will be asked to respond to questions about how the school deals with bullying, discipline in the school and whether or not the school provides a safe environment for children. This enhanced engagement with parents and pupils through questionnaires aims to further support all schools to implement effective measures to counter bullying.

The Deputy will also be aware that the education of students in both primary and post-primary schools in relation to anti-bullying behaviour is part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. SPHE is now a compulsory subject both at primary level and in the junior cycle of post-primary schools. Since 2001, national professional development support services have provided ongoing support to schools in planning policies on child protection and the code of behaviour and in supporting teachers and principals in the implementation of SPHE. In addition, training on The Stay Safe Programme is offered on an ongoing basis to primary schools.

Other measures in place include the Webwise Internet Safety Initiative, the EU Safer Internet Programme campaign and the establishment of the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) which is currently working with over 80 post-primary schools to promote and support positive student behaviour.

I welcome any practical suggestions that would help in the prevention of bullying and I would encourage schools to look at how they might benefit from putting in place their own incentive or awards schemes at local level in order to support and encourage a whole school culture of awareness and prevention of school bullying.

Employment Support Services

144. **Deputy Charlie McConologue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he has introduced, or is considering, to encourage those on the live register to retrain in information technology related skills in order to increase the number of Irish persons available to work in a sector which currently has significant job vacancies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32836/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A number of measures have been introduced in the education and training sectors to support unemployed people to retrain in information technology related skills.

Springboard is a specific initiative to provide 6,000 part time higher education places targeted at unemployed people who have lost jobs in sectors where employment levels will not return and who will need new qualifications and skills to re-enter employment as the economy recovers. 2,074 of the places on offer under the Springboard initiative are on 65 programmes in the area of Information and Communications Technology. These programmes, at levels 6 to 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications, are being delivered by 19 different higher education providers located throughout the country.

Skillnets, which is funded through the National Training Fund (NTF) to support networks of private enterprises to engage in training under the Training Networks Programme (TNP), also offers a range of opportunities for unemployed people to participate in training programmes relevant to the needs of the ICT sector. Under the Jobseekers Support Programme operated by Skillnets, 4 ICT networks have committed to providing places for almost 400 jobseekers in key areas identified by the ICT sector with current skills deficits. FÁS is also currently providing a range of IT-related occupational-specific courses such as MySQL and PHP for Dynamic Websites, Programming in JAVA, Software Developer, VB Net Programming and is finalising development of a number of other programmes to support jobseekers access ICT related employment opportunities.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

My Department, in collaboration with Forfás and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, is also working closely with representatives of the ICT sector to develop an Action Plan to address specific high level skills needs for the sector.

Departmental Bodies

145. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to deliver fully on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32849/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): For the Deputy's information, work is ongoing in my Department with regard to:

- the amalgamation of the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the Further Education and Training Awards Council and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. The new agency will be known as the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority of Ireland (QQAAI)
- the establishment of a new further education and training authority to be called SOLAS (Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna) SOLAS and the disbandment of FÁS
- the restructuring of the VECs.

The Deputy may also be aware of the proposal to dissolve the Education Finance Board on the establishment of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund. I intend to publish the necessary legislation at the earliest opportunity. In addition, since September 2011, the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE) is within the remit of Dublin West Education Centre alongside the Department's largest support service, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The process of integrating the functions of the NCTE with the support services and with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is underway. The new configuration will ensure greater integration of ICT within teaching and learning both in terms of policy and practice and will deliver synergies in this regard.

In May 2011, the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) transferred to the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. For the Deputy's information the following is a list of those bodies currently under the aegis of my Department:

- An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG),
- Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA),
- Education Finance Board (EFB),
- FÁS,
- Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC),
- Grangegorman Development Agency,
- Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC),
- Higher Education Authority (HEA),
- Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET),
- Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS),
- Léargas,

- The Exchange Bureau,
- National Centre Guidance in Education (NCGE),
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA),
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE),
- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI),
- Residential Institution Redress Board (RIRB),
- Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC),
- Skillnets Ltd,
- State Examinations Commission (SEC),
- The Teaching Council.

Special Educational Needs

146. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his policy on applied behaviour analysis; the role he sees for ABA within the education system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32860/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department's policy on educating children with autism is centred on an inclusive approach promoting the use of a range of autism specific interventions including TEACCH, PECs and Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA). Under this approach, each child can benefit from a number of different interventions to ensure the optimum individualised educational programme for him/her. Educational intervention for children with ASD needs to be child-centred and tailored to meet the needs of each child, rather than matching the needs of a child to one particular or exclusive intervention. This view is informed by advice received from international experts on autism, the National Educational Psychological Service and the Inspectorate. An analysis of research — including the report of the Irish Task Force on Autism — supports this approach too, while Autism societies in other countries also caution against relying on just one intervention.

My Department's policy is to provide for children with special educational needs, including autism, to be included in mainstream schools unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated. Some children may be supported in a special class attached to a mainstream school. These students have the option, where appropriate, of full/partial integration and interaction with other pupils. Other children may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school. Students with special educational needs have access to a range of support services including additional teaching and/or care supports. In special schools and special classes, students are supported through lower pupil teacher ratios. Special needs assistants may also be recruited specifically where pupils with disabilities and significant care needs are enrolled.

The Deputy will be aware that the establishment of a network of autism-specific special classes in schools across the country to cater for children with autism has been a key educational priority in recent years. In excess of 450 classes have now been approved around the country at primary and post primary level, including many in special schools. Children in special classes have the benefit of fully-qualified teachers who are trained in educating and developing children generally and who have access to additional training in autism-specific approaches, including ABA. The level of such training available to teachers has improved dramatically in recent years and is a major priority for the Government.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

However, the Department does not accept based on research, advice and best practice that ABA should be the only intervention used. It is important that children have access to a range of approaches so that their broader needs can be met. By enabling children in special classes to have access to a range of methods, including Applied Behavioural Analysis, the Government is doing what we are advised is in the best interests of such children.

School Staffing

147. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the number of resource teaching hours held back by him for allocation during the new school year that have now been allocated; when he expects 100% of these resource hours to have been allocated to schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32861/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. Circular 37/2011 provides information to schools regarding the arrangements which are being put in place for the 2011/12 school year for the allocation of Resource Teaching hours for children with assessed special educational needs.

I wish to advise the Deputy that approximately 9,950 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) learning support/resource teacher posts, including those provided under the General Allocation Model, are being provided in primary and post primary schools in the 2011/12 school year in order to provide additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs. This represents an increase of approximately 350 whole time equivalent posts over last year's allocation. Of the 9,950 posts being provided for Learning Support/Resource Teaching, 9,430 WTE posts were sanctioned in schools (including 4450 posts provided for under the General Allocation Model or Learning Support Posts) in advance of the 2011/12 school year.

In relation to the allocation of individual Resource Teaching hours, the position is that for the 2011/12 school year an initial allocation of 90% of valid identified resource teaching allocations was made by the NCSE to schools. This allocation, in the first instance, provided schools with the majority of their allocation, yet preserved enough capacity to deal with late applications and ensure that my Department can remain within Employment Control Framework obligations. Schools had been requested to forward any outstanding applications, or additional outstanding materials to support incomplete applications to the NCSE for consideration before 16th September 2011. These applications have been considered and my Department has approved the allocation of further Resource Teaching supports in schools by the NCSE, as well as allowing for limited capacity for further allocations by the NCSE as and when valid applications arise throughout the remainder of the school year. The NCSE will be in contact with schools in the near future to inform them of their individual allocations.

The NCSE has recently published statistical information in relation to the allocation of SNA posts and resource teaching hours to Primary, Special and Post Primary Schools. The information is provided on a county by county and school by school basis on its website at www.ncse.ie.

School Enrolments

148. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the implications

that a circular (details supplied) will have for schools that provided short-term stays for pupils that travel to Ireland to learn English. [32880/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The total number of recognised pupils submitted in a school's annual enrolment return to my Department is used to calculate staffing and grant allocations for that school. Under my Department's Rules and Programmes for Second Level Schools a recognised pupil must be following an approved course for junior or senior cycle and must be not less than 12 years of age on 1st January of the school year in question.

Circular 57/2011 notified school authorities that pupils who are from outside of the Republic of Ireland and on short term placement are not recognised pupils for the purposes of staffing and grant allocations. In this context, short term placement refers to any enrolment of a student from outside of the Republic of Ireland which is for a period of less than a full school year.

Higher Education Grants

149. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a third level grant (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32947/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, the reality of our economic situation presents significant challenges that have to be reconciled with limitations on public resources. This is a very stark reality, which, unfortunately, means that changes to any public service, including the student grant scheme, cannot be ruled out.

I empathise with students and I am very conscious of the fundamental role played by the student grant scheme in supporting families who are putting their children through further and higher education. However, the state of the public finances is such that tough decisions have to be made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. For this reason it is the responsibility of Government to take into consideration all areas of public services when formulating Budget 2012. Ultimately, our budgetary decisions now will play a major part in creating a sustainable economy and in regaining our economic independence. I will take the concerns of students into consideration during the budgetary process in this context.

State Examinations

150. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an examination reader will be provided to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32954/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations and determining procedures in places where examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations. I can inform the Deputy that the Commission operates a scheme of Reasonable Accommodations in the certificate examinations. Applications for such accommodations are submitted by schools on behalf of their students.

In view of the above I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

FÁS Training Programmes

151. **Deputy Regina Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person

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(details supplied) in County Meath was refused funding from FÁS for a building energy rating training course on the basis that the profession was over-subscribed and employment was unlikely; the reason participants from different countries on the same course had their place fully funded by FÁS; when the person is likely to receive a refund from FÁS for the moneys paid out in fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33008/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): From inquiries made with FÁS, I understand that in March 2009, FÁS Employment Services made a policy decision to cease funding the Domestic BER Assessor training course (through TESH Technical Employment Support Grant) on the grounds that the profession was over-subscribed and employment was unlikely. I understand that at the time the SEAI (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland) confirmed that there was a surplus of registered BER Assessors in the context of potential employment opportunities. In addition, I understand that most clients who were not in a position to fund the training course themselves, found themselves also in the position of being unable to afford the registration fees with SEAI when they had completed the course. These SEAI registration fees (in the region of €1,000) are a pre-requisite for employment in the industry.

In relation to the allegation that other participants from different countries on the same course had their place fully funded by FÁS, if the Deputy will provide further particulars, I will have that matter looked into. It is FÁS policy not to fund training retrospectively through the TESH.

School Staffing

152. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools in line to lose a developing-school teacher in this academic year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33013/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria used for the allocation of teaching posts to schools includes the provision whereby schools experiencing rapid increases in enrolment can apply for additional mainstream posts on developing grounds, using projected enrolment. The retention of such posts in the current school year is subject to schools' having achieved their projected enrolment on 30 September. If the enrolment is not achieved the post allocated on developing grounds is suppressed. Based on information available to my Department 53 schools did not achieve their projected enrolments to retain a total of 55 developing school posts.

EU Funding

153. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if moneys secured under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for retraining of redundant workers from a company (details supplied) were returned unspent to the fund; the amounts returned from each application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33109/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): Under the European Globalisation Fund (EGF), a maximum contribution of 65% may be paid by the EU towards the cost of retraining and upskilling programmes for workers covered under an approved EGF application and delivered over a 24 month EGF implementation period, with the remaining 35% being funded from national resources. An EGF Final Report and Statement of Eligible Expenditure are then required to be submitted formally to the European Commission within 6 months of the end of the EGF implementation period. It is only at that stage

that final certified expenditure is notified to the European Commission and any unused funds returned if applicable.

Of the 3 approved EGF applications submitted by Ireland to date, the Dell, Waterford Crystal and SRT EGF programmes ended on 28 June 2011, 6 August 2011 and 9 October 2011 respectively. Given that final reports have not yet been made to the EU, no EGF funding has been returned to date. In this context, as final claims on the first Irish EGF application, in respect of Dell workers, have not yet been received from various service providers and as the EGF final report and final statement of eligible expenditure are not required by the European Commission until 28 December 2011, I am not currently in a position to indicate the percentage of funds that will ultimately be returned to the EU. However, I can say that it is likely that a significant portion of the EU funding will be returned to the EU under the Dell EGF programme.

154. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if any of the redundant construction workers named in the most recent application to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund were contacted in advance of the application being made in 2010 or since he came into office; the number who were contacted; the date on which they were contacted; the number currently in a position to avail of this programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33110/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): No individual contact has been made to date with the almost 9,000 workers made redundant in the NACE 41 Construction of Buildings, NACE 43 Specialised Construction Activities and NACE 71 Architectural Services construction sub-sectors between 1 July 2009 and 31 March 2010 in the context of the EGF application to which the Deputy refers. However, many of these workers have received supports and interventions from State training and education Agencies since they were made redundant.

My Department, in conjunction with other Government Departments and Agencies, is currently finalising proposals for opportunities for these workers to avail of further supports between now and the end of the EGF programmes next June, in addition to the supports that they have already received.

155. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a review of the use of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund programmes for redundant workers in companies (details supplied) has been conducted; if he will place the report on the record of Dáil Éireann; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33111/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I have instituted a review in my Department of the EGF programmes in support of redundant workers at Dell, Waterford Crystal, S R Technics and relevant ancillary enterprises. My officials are currently finalising a consultation document for external circulation. It is intended to seek the views of and inputs from, inter alia, various redundant worker representative bodies on this document.

Following on input from all relevant stakeholder bodies and the completion of the review process in due course, I intend to make public the outcome of the review.

Questions Nos. 156 and 157 answered with Question No. 139.

Scéimeanna Tógála Scoile

158. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cén fáth nach mbeidh

[Éamon Ó Cuív.]

an scéim deontais do mhionoireacha do bhunscoileanna ar fáil don scoilbhliain 2011/2012; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33121/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Tá sé curtha in iúl do scoileanna nach ceart dóibh tiomantais a ghlacadh orthu féin mar gheall ar choinne a bheith acu le heisiúint deontas na mionoireacha bunscoile sa scoilbhliain reatha (2011/12). Is é is dóichí go ndéanfar an cinneadh maidir le hóc an deontais go rí-ghairid.

Soláthar Pinsin

159. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna ag éirí as freagra a thug sé ar cheist uimhir 162, uimhir thagartha 19581/11, an 12 Iúil 2011, an bhfuil iarratas faighte anois ón duine a bhí i gceist (sonraí tugtha) ar phinsean drochshláinte; agus má tá cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh air; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33122/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Tá an duine i gceist tar éis iarratas ar shochar pinsean scortha de dheasca drochshláinte a chur faoi bhráid mo Roinne ach níl an fhoirm iarratais comhlánaithe go hiomlán. Tá Rannóg na bPinsean i mo Roinne i dteagmháil leis an duine i gceist i dtaobh an iarratais seo.

Coistí Gairmoideachais

160. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Oideachais agus Scileanna cé na bearta atá i gceist aige a dhéanamh le go mbeidh Gaeilge sách líofa ag na príomhfheidhmeannaigh atá le ceapadh ar na coistí gairmoideachais nua-eagraithe ar fud na tíre le go mbeidh siad in ann a gcuid gnóthaí laethúla a dhéanamh trí Ghaeilge leis na gaelcholáistí agus na scoileanna Gaeltachta a bheidh faoina gcúram; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33132/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Le déanaí thug mo Roinn comhaontú i gcrích leis an gCeardchumann Seirbhísí, Tionsclaíoch, Gairmiúil agus Teicniúil, an ceardchumann a dhéanann ionadaíocht do na Príomhoifigigh Feidhmiúcháin (POFanna) ar na CGOanna, faoi scéim ath-implonaithe do POFanna i gcomhthéacs chomhaontú Pháirc an Chrócaigh.

Bainfear feidhm as an scéim seo, sa chéad ásc, chun ceapacháin POFanna ar na comhlachtaí nua CGO a chinneadh, nuair a bheidh an reachtaíocht ábhartha achtaithe. Cuireann an scéim chomhaontaithe deis ar fáil dóibh siúd atá ceaptha ar ghrád an POF ar CGO (seachas i gcáil ghníomhach shealadach) ath-implonú insna poist nua POF a roghnú. Áit a bhfuil níos mó ná deonach amháin ann i gcás poist ar bith de na poist nua POF, déanann an scéim foráil go dtairgfear an post, sa chéad ásc, don deonach intofa is sinsearaí.

Sa chás nach líontar na poist go léir mar thoradh ar an bpróiseas roghnaithe, déanann an scéim foráil do shannadh POF bhuaín atá ann cheana do phost nach ndearna sé/í roghnú ina leith, nó do cheapadh shealbhóra poist analógaigh sa tSeirbhís Phoiblí ar cheann ar bith de na poist atá ar fáil de réir forálacha chomhaontú Pháirc an Chrócaigh. Is mian liom a chur in iúl don Teachta gurb í an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí a leagann amach na cáilíochtaí atá riachtanach chun Príomhfheidhmeannach buan a cheapadh ar Choiste Gairmoideachais (CGO). I measc na gcáilíochtaí sin tá riachtanas go mbeadh Gaeilge agus Béarla araon ag iarrthóir. Cruthaítear go bhfuil Gaeilge ag iarrthóir trí bhéaltríail inniúlachta a chur ar an iarrthóir agus éilítear marc pas de 65% chun go mbeadh iarrthóir intofa dona c(h)eadpadh. Tá feidhm ag an riachtanas seo i gcás ceapachán Príomhfheidhmeannach buan insna CGOanna go léir, ní insna CGOanna amháin sin a bhfuil Gaelcholáistí iontu nó insna CGOanna amháin

a chuimsíonn ceantair Gaeltachta. Tá na riachtanais seo sásaithe ag na POFanna buana go léir atá ann faoi láthair.

School Staffing

161. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of retired first level and second level teachers teaching in first level and second level schools; if he will provide details of any circular or instruction he has issued on this matter since he was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33169/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I issued Circular 0031/2011 in May of this year one purpose of which is to ensure, as far as practicable, that schools prioritise unemployed teachers over retired teachers. In particular, it prohibits schools from employing retired teachers to cover short-term absences unless all efforts to employ an appropriately qualified and registered teacher have failed. This circular also requires a school principal to keep a record as to why a retired teacher had to be employed and to report to the school's board of management on the instances where this arises.

In addition to the above, under Circular 0040/2011 which issued in June, teachers who are retired and who return to teaching are now remunerated at the first point of the revised salary scales applicable to new entrants. This represents a significant financial disincentive for teachers who retired at the top of their salary scale, often with a post of responsibility allowance, to return to teaching. The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Act 2009 provided for a reduction in the pay of public servants. Under the Public Service Pension Rights Order 2011, 29 February 2012 was set as the final date on which public servants could retire and have their pension entitlements calculated on the older, higher rates.

I am conscious of the potential impact of teachers retiring on State examination classes in post-primary schools. My Department has had discussions with second-level management bodies on this matter and intends to issue information to schools on re-employing such teachers for the remainder of the school year where this is considered necessary to reduce that impact. These measures will be confined to teachers teaching State examination classes in post-primary schools and do not apply to teachers with no exam classes or to primary school teachers. Vacancies left by retiring primary and post-primary teachers of non-exam classes may be filled in a temporary capacity for the remainder of the school year in accordance with the existing procedures.

My Department is collating the information regarding the numbers of retired teachers currently employed at primary and post-primary level. This information will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as it becomes available.

Departmental Reports

162. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the small schools review is completed; if it is, the recommendations in the report; if it is intended to publish the report; if he intends implementing its recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33170/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A value for money review on small primary schools is under way in my Department and is not expected to be completed until the end of the year. This review is part of the normal review processes undertaken by all Departments on an annual basis on selected areas of expenditure and is being conducted in line with the standard procedure for value for money reviews. I expect a report to be made available to

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me on completion of the review and I will then consider its outcomes and proposals. When this process is complete, publication will be arranged.

Schools Building Projects

163. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application for funding in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33196/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy contacted my Department in December 2010 regarding a proposed extension. Following communications between my officials and the school, an application for major capital works was furnished to my Department in July 2011. This application is being assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large-scale building projects. The outcome of this assessment will be conveyed to the school authority in due course. If appropriate, a band rating will be assigned to the proposed project and details will be published on the Department's website at *www.education.ie*.

The progression of all large-scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of the Department's multi-annual school building and modernisation programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not currently possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project. The Deputy will be aware that the most recent projections are forecasting a substantial increase in enrolments at both primary and post primary level in the coming years. The delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet the increase in demand, will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years.

164. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a submission to the building unit capital appraisal section from a school (details supplied) in County Kerry will be successful; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33203/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that a new 12 classroom school is currently under construction to facilitate the amalgamation of the boys' and girls' schools in the area to which he refers. The school authority had confirmed to my Department that the scale of the project would meet its needs for the foreseeable future. However, the school has now submitted an application for additional accommodation. This application is currently being considered and a response will be conveyed to the school as soon as this process has been completed.

Higher Education Grants

165. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of applications received for higher education grants by Dublin City Council for the academic year 2011-2012; the number processed to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33208/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Details of the number of the student grant applications received and processed by Dublin City Council for the 2011/12 academic year are contained in the attached document. This information, which was provided to my Department by Dublin City Council, is as at 4 November 2011.

The Deputy will be pleased to know that plans are well under way to replace the 66 grant awarding bodies with one single authority and I have approved the appointment of the CDVEC

to operate this centralised body. The single authority will be operative from 2012 and I believe it will lead to a more efficient system for the processing of applications and improve the overall customer experience for those who apply for grants. I am sure the Deputy will agree this much needed overhaul of the grants system is a positive example of public sector reform.

Special Educational Needs

166. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding resource hours in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 10; and if the matter will be expedited. [33211/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

Circular 37/2011 provides information to schools regarding the arrangements which are being put in place for the 2011/12 school year for the allocation of Resource Teaching hours for children with assessed special educational needs.

I wish to advise the Deputy that approximately 9,950 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) learning support/resource teacher posts, including those provided under the General Allocation Model, are being provided in primary and post primary schools in the 2011/12 school year in order to provide additional teaching support to pupils with special educational needs. This represents an increase of approximately 350 whole time equivalent posts over last year's allocation.

Of the 9,950 posts being provided for Learning Support/Resource Teaching, 9,430 WTE posts were sanctioned in schools (including 4,450 posts provided for under the General Allocation Model or Learning Support Posts) in advance of the 2011/12 school year.

In relation to the allocation of individual Resource Teaching hours, the position is that for the 2011/12 school year an initial allocation of 90% of valid identified resource teaching allocations was made by the NCSE to schools. This allocation, in the first instance, provided schools with the majority of their allocation, yet preserved enough capacity to deal with late applications and ensure that my Department can remain within Employment Control Framework obligations.

Schools had been requested to forward any outstanding applications, or additional outstanding materials to support incomplete applications to the NCSE for consideration before 16th September 2011. These applications have been considered and my Department has approved the allocation of further Resource Teaching supports in schools by the NCSE, as well as allowing for limited capacity for further allocations by the NCSE as and when valid applications arise throughout the remainder of the school year. The NCSE will be in contact with schools in the near future to inform them of their individual allocations.

The NCSE has recently published statistical information in relation to the allocation of SNA posts and resource teaching hours to Primary, Special and Post Primary Schools. The information is provided on a county by county and school by school basis on its website at www.ncse.ie.

Schools Refurbishment

167. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an exemption will be

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made for a school (details supplied) in Dublin 10 at the end of this calendar year to allow all necessary upgrades to take place. [33219/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm that the school referred to by the Deputy applied for funding under the 2011 Summer Works Scheme.

A list of 453 successful schools was announced on 30 March 2011. Applications from schools for gas, mechanical and electrical works were prioritised under the Summer Works Scheme funding this year and I regret that the application made by the school in question was not selected. A letter to this effect has issued to the school.

While further funding has been made available for school projects under the Government's Jobs Initiative, I regret that the application was also unsuccessful under the Initiative as it was necessary to prioritise some categories of works over others.

The Deputy will be aware that the most recent projections are forecasting a substantial increase in enrolments at both primary and post primary level in the coming years. The delivery of new schools, together with extension projects to meet the increase in demand, will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years. It is not therefore possible to make the exemption requested by the Deputy.

FÁS Training Programmes

168. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is entitled to seek assistance from FÁS regarding a course; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33223/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I understand that FÁS does provide Truck Driving Courses with appropriate and relevant driving lessons.

I understand that FÁS records show that the person in question is not currently registered with FÁS. However, to allow him the opportunity to complete the FÁS registration process and to discuss training and employment opportunities FÁS has requested that he meet with a FÁS Employment Services Officer on 9th November, 2011, at 3.30 p.m. in the FÁS Clinic in Athy. Alternatively the person should contact his local FÁS Employment Office to arrange a suitable date to discuss his options.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio

169. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that the long-established safeguards that enabled Protestant and other minority faith families to send their children to schools which reflected their faith will continue and that the pupil-teacher ratio in respect of Protestant secondary schools will be maintained at the current rate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33250/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I, along with my colleagues in Government, recognise the importance of ensuring that students from a Protestant background can attend a school that reflects their denominational ethos. At this point I do not propose to give any specific commitment on the allocation of teachers to schools for the 2012/13 school year.

The number of teaching posts that we can afford to fund in schools is a matter that I will have to consider with my colleagues in Cabinet in the context of the next budget and meeting our obligations under the EU/IMF Programme.

The Government will endeavour to protect front-line education services as best as possible. However, this must be done within the context of bringing our overall public expenditure into line with what we can afford as a country. All areas of Government will have to manage on a reduced level of resources. The challenge will be to ensure that the resources that can be provided are used to maximum effect to achieve the best possible outcome for pupils.

Higher Education Grants

170. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding cuts in education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33276/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I regret that I am not in a position to reverse or vary any of the changes to the student grant scheme introduced by the last Government under Budget 2011 because the savings from these measures had been factored into the public expenditure programme for 2011 by that Government. However, while a qualifying student may receive a lower rate of grant for the 2011/12 academic year, he/she will not lose grant assistance. Students on particularly low incomes will also receive a top-up in the special rate of grant.

Students experiencing exceptional financial hardship can apply for assistance under the Student Assistance Fund. This fund continues to be made available through the access offices of third-level institutions. The access offices themselves will also provide support and advice to students to help them to continue with their studies.

I understand that the institute that the student is attending also operates a short-term loan facility through a Benevolent Fund to help students to overcome financial difficulties. The institute also advises students that are experiencing difficulty sourcing or managing finance to contact the Access Office or the Chaplain. This information may be helpful to the student concerned.

Schools Refurbishment

171. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will review the decision to refuse an application for funding by a school (details supplied) in County Limerick. [33290/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department received an application for replacement furniture from the school in question.

This application has been considered by my Department. However, in light of the competing demands on the available budget, it is not possible to approve funding to replace existing furniture at this time.

Student Support Schemes

172. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the steps being taken in the US and UK to increase the number of students coming to Ireland to study; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33311/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The USA is a priority market for the promotion of international education. I myself visited Chicago in July to address a gathering of over 100 US universities at the National Association of Fellowship Advisors to highlight Ireland as a centre for international study. The UK is not a priority market for recruitment of international students, and no promotional activities are planned in that market.

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The Education in Ireland US market plan 2011-2012, which is being implemented by Enterprise Ireland, outlines a cohesive, multi-pronged approach which is aimed at firmly establishing Ireland on the radar of American students (and their advisors) who are considering international study.

Among the actions being carried out under the US plan are: recruitment roadshows (held twice a year); online college fairs; participation in US international education week events; annual tours to Ireland by US high school counsellors; attendance of Irish higher education institutions at major international education conferences; targeted advertising and promotion, particularly on social networks including the roll out of a US-specific website in 2012; the development of a US student ambassador programme as well as a number of institutional-level supports to enhance the effectiveness of our efforts.

The George Mitchell Scholarship Programme, which is managed by the US-Ireland Alliance, and for which my Department has provided funding, also continues to be a major contribution to the development of the Irish educational profile within the US market.

Third Level Institutions

173. **Deputy Shane Ross** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views that quality assurance is being complied with in Irish third level institutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33343/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Quality assurance processes in Irish higher education institutions operate to best international standards. Universities are primarily responsible for their own quality assurance procedures and have delegated their statutory obligations in relation to reviewing and reporting on the effectiveness of their procedures to the Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB). In the institutes of technology and independent colleges, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) agrees and reviews quality assurance arrangements. The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) acts as the external quality assurance agency for the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) and the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI). All three bodies have been independently reviewed by international panels and have shown to be successful in implementing their functions.

The IUQB is currently completing a second cycle of Institutional Reviews of Irish Universities and reports on four of the seven universities have been published in the last two years. NQAI recently published its second review of DIT and is preparing for the first review of RCSI. Since 2009, HETAC has published reviews of all thirteen institutes of technology as well as reviews of ten other higher education institutions for which it validates programmes. Each of these processes results in recommendations to the institutions for the improvement of their quality assurance and a systematic published follow-up on the institutions' implementation of the recommendations. The reports are readily available on the agency websites.

While each of the agencies has worked well, a new single qualifications and quality assurance agency is currently being established. This will bring a unified focus to external quality assurance in higher education, establish a closer link between quality assurance and the standards underpinning awards on the National Framework of Qualifications and provide for thematic quality reviews on a cross-institutional basis.

Higher Education Grants

174. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a back

to education grant has been refused in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; the reason they have also been refused a vocational training opportunities scheme allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33355/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Back to Education Allowance is a Department of Social Protection scheme.

The vocational training opportunities scheme is administered by VECs.

My Department understands from the Department of Social Protection and the relevant VEC that the student in question has not applied for either allowance.

Question No. 175 answered with Question No. 139.

Special Educational Needs

176. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when the general allocation model for learning support review will be completed; if he will provide an indicative date for when schools will be made aware of its outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33389/11]

177. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) which had 83 pupils five years ago and has 143 pupils today is still receiving 0.8 learning support; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33390/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 176 and 177 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the General Allocation Model (GAM) was introduced in primary schools in September 2005 to ensure that each school has learning support/resource teaching support available to meet the needs of children with high incidence special educational needs.

Teaching allocations to primary schools under the GAM have not been updated other than in schools with developing school status.

A review of the General Allocation Model has been undertaken and completed by my Department. The recommendations of the review are currently being considered in the context of my Department's Employment Control Framework obligations and competing demands on teacher numbers and educational resources available. It is intended to readjust allocations under the General Allocation Model to schools from the commencement of the 2012 school year.

Asbestos Remediation Programme

178. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will address the matter of asbestos in a school (details supplied) as a matter of urgency on health and safety grounds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33392/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An application under my Department's Emergency Works Scheme for the removal of asbestos floor tiles and the provision of new floor covering has been received from the school referred to by the Deputy. Additional information is being sought from the school in question and as soon as this information is received further consideration will be given to the school application.

Question No. 179 answered with Question No. 139.

Departmental Expenditure

180. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current and capital expenditure profile for his Department up to the end of October 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33420/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Gross Voted Expenditure Allocation for my Department for 2011 is €8,888 million, made up of Current Expenditure of €8,387 million and Capital Expenditure of €501 million.

Up to the end of October 2011 estimated expenditure of €7,181 million has been incurred, made up of €6,813 million in Current expenditure and €368 million in Capital expenditure.

School Staffing

181. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total number of special needs assistants employed in schools at the end of October 2011; when it is proposed to make further appointments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33421/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource teachers and Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support. This now includes a requirement for the NCSE to have regard to an overall cap on the number of SNA posts. This number is 10,575 whole time equivalent (WTE) posts.

The NCSE has advised all mainstream schools of their SNA allocations for the 2011/12 school year and has recently published statistical information in relation to the allocation of SNA posts and resource teaching hours to Primary Special and Post Primary Schools. The information is provided on a county by county and school by school basis on its website at www.ncse.ie. In total, approximately 10,100 WTE SNA posts were allocated at the end of October 2011, for the current school year.

The NCSE retained 475 SNA posts in order to allocate them over the current school year in cases such as emergency, appeals, acquired injuries or new school entrants with care needs.

The allocation of the 475 SNA posts is underway. It is expected that the bulk of the posts will be distributed to schools by the end of November with recruitment being undertaken by individual schools as soon as they are notified of any additional allocation. A number of schools have already started the recruitment process to fill posts allocated to them recently and others will start recruiting once they receive their notification.

The NCSE will advise schools in the near future of a process to review allocation decisions to ensure that correct procedures were followed and that they comply with my Department's policy. The merits of individual allocation decisions will not be open to appeal under this mechanism.

Higher Education Grants

182. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33422/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for a student's grant awarding body. Where a grant awarding authority

turns down an application and subsequently rejects an appeal, the applicant may appeal this decision to my Department or to the Student Grants Appeal Board, as appropriate.

No appeal has been received in my Department from the student to date. I am not, therefore, in a position to say why her grant awarding authority does not consider her to be eligible for a grant under the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme. A review of the case will be carried out should an appeal be received.

183. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on a matter (details supplied); the actions proposed to address this issue; if he has met with any of the representative groups in regard to the issue of concern; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33482/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy will be aware, the reality of our economic situation presents significant challenges that have to be reconciled with limitations on public resources. This is a very stark reality, which, unfortunately, means that changes to any public service, including the student grant scheme, cannot be ruled out.

I empathise with students and I am very conscious of the fundamental role played by the student grant scheme in supporting families who are putting their children through further and higher education. However, the state of the public finances is such that tough decisions have to be made to control public expenditure and to ensure sustainability in the long run. For this reason it is the responsibility of Government to take into consideration all areas of public services when formulating Budget 2012. Ultimately, our budgetary decisions now will play a major part in creating a sustainable economy and in regaining our economic independence. I will take the concerns of students into consideration during the budgetary process in this context. I have met with and expressed my views to the USI in this regard.

Ministerial Appointments

184. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33945/11]

185. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33959/11]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 184 and 185 together.

In respect of question 185 I can confirm to the Deputy that since my appointment as Minister for Education and Skills I have not appointed a former Government office holder to any position.

In respect of question 184 I can confirm that:

- In relation to bodies currently under the aegis of my Department one former Government office holder, Mr. Noel Davern is a member of the Board of the Higher Education Authority (HEA). Mr. Davern was appointed to the Board by the previous Fianna

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Fáil-Green Party Government in May 2009 for the period up until end January 2012. He is entitled to a fee of €7,695 p.a. Members are entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances in accordance with approved public sector rates.

- In relation to higher level institutions Mr. Ray MacSharry is the current Chairperson of the governing body of IoT Sligo. He was appointed by the previous Fianna Fáil-Green Party Government in February 2011 for a five year term. While no fees are applicable members of the governing body are entitled to claim travel and subsistence allowances in accordance with approved public sector rates.

For the Deputy's information the following is a list of those bodies currently under the aegis of my Department:

- An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG),
- Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (CICA),
- Education Finance Board (EFB),
- FÁS,
- Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC),
- Grangegorman Development Agency,
- Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC),
- Higher Education Authority (HEA),
- Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET),
- Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS),
- Léargas,
- The Exchange Bureau,
- National Centre Guidance in Education (NCGE),
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA),
- National Council for Special Education (NCSE),
- National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI),
- Residential Institution Redress Board (RIRB),
- Residential Institutions Review Committee (RIRC),
- Skillnets Ltd,
- State Examinations Commission (SEC),
- The Teaching Council.

Flood Relief

186. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if the Office of Public Works is aware of the persistent flooding threat posed in Northlands, Bettystown, County Meath; if the OPW has recently visited the site; if the OPW will outline the way it intends to deal in a comprehensive fashion with flooding in the estate; if it will indicate a timeframe within which any such works will be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32842/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The area in question is part of the Mornington Drainage District, which is the responsi-

bility of Meath County Council. The Council has requested the Office of Public Works to carry out maintenance work on the Northlands and Eastham Court areas of Bettystown, Co. Meath on their behalf. An agreement in relation to this work has been reached and it is expected that the work will be completed, weather permitting, during the months of November and December 2011.

Departmental Agencies

187. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the total number of State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State boards or other quangos which currently exist here; if he will provide a breakdown of each, listing in particular full name, location, the total amount of funding allocated to it in 2011 and total staff number; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32915/11]

188. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will confirm the number of State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State boards or other quangos which have been abolished or wound down since he took office; the total amount of savings achieved with each closure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32917/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 187 and 188 together.

In response to the Deputy's questions, I understand that each Department keeps the information in relation to bodies that come under their aegis. In relation to my own Department the following tables contain details in respect of bodies which receive Exchequer Funding and bodies which do not receive Exchequer funding.

Table A bodies in receipt of exchequer Funding

Name of Body	Location	Budget 2011	Staff Numbers
Special EU Programmes Body	Belfast Office 7th Floor The Clarence West Building 2 Clarence Street West Belfast BT2 7GP Omagh Office EU House 11 Kevlin Road Omagh Northern Ireland BT78 1LB Monaghan Office M:Tek II Building Armagh Road Monaghan Ireland	The 2011 Budget for the Body is €78,741,000. This breaks down as follows: €76,075,000 Programme Expenditure (expenditure under the EU co-funded PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes), and €2,666,000 Administration Expenditure. The Body's Budget is provided by Irish and Northern Irish Government Departments. The Irish contribution to the 2011 Budget is: €28,406,000 Programme (note that a large portion of this is recoupable from EU) €1,242,500 Administration. The Body's Administration costs are co-funded by the Department of Finance and Personnel in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.	65

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Name of Body	Location	Budget 2011	Staff Numbers
Civil Service Arbitration Board	No Fixed location meets at various locations as required.	A separate budget for each Board is not provided. The budget for the Boards is included in an overall budget of €43,000 which includes provision for payments to the Civil Service Adjudicator and the Independent Mediator for the Civil Service, as may arise.	No Staff
Civil Service Disciplinary Code Appeal Board			
Independent Mediator for the Civil Service			
Outside Appointments Board	No fixed location meets at various locations as required	€2,296 — legal fees €9,200 – to be paid at end of 2011 in relation to fees for 5 board members	No Staff

Table B

Name of Body	Location	Board Numbers
An Post National Lottery Company	An Post National Lottery Company Abbey Street Lower, Dublin 1	7

No bodies under the aegis of my Department have been abolished since I took Office.

189. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will confirm the number of State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State boards or other quangos being considered for abolition in the context of Budget 2012; if he will furnish a list of the organisations under consideration, specifying in particular their annual running costs, primary function, and staff number in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32920/11]

190. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if there is a rationalisation programme in place in respect of State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State boards or other quangos for the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32926/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 and 190 together.

The question of rationalisation and the reduction in the number of State bodies is being considered in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and the overall budgetary and estimates process for 2012, and decisions on such matters will be made by the Government over the coming weeks.

The priorities set out in the Programme for Government for the rationalisation of State Agencies states that rationalisation must be cost effective and lead to a more transparent, democratically accountable and efficient public service. This underscores the need for radical streamlining of bodies, abolishing those bodies whose remit is no longer essential and amalgamation of other agencies or sharing of services between bodies. All State agencies will be subject to critical evaluation in this overall context and the outcome of the Government's deliberations will be published in due course.

Flood Relief

191. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if funding is still to be provided for the flood protection scheme on the River Dargle, County Wicklow, following the capital expenditure review. [33006/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Office of Public Works (OPW) has provided substantial funding to Bray Town Council which has allowed the Council to bring the flood relief scheme through the design stage and the procurement of a civil works contractor.

The OPW hopes that it will be in a position to provide funding to enable the Council to progress the project during 2012. However, a definitive decision cannot be taken in this regard pending the publication of details of the outcome of the Government Review of Capital Expenditure and the financial allocation for flood relief activities to the OPW in 2012.

Pension Provisions

192. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the former Ministers currently in receipt of ministerial and TD pensions; the names of the recipients; and the amount of money they receive from the pensions on an annual basis. [33255/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The data in respect of Ministerial and TDs' pensions requested by the Deputy are in the tabular statement below. The figures were provided by the Office of Paymaster General in respect of Ministerial pensions and from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in respect of TD pensions.

The amount of pension is on an annual basis; Ministers' and TDs' pensions may not be in payment since January 2011.

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Ahern	Noel	€47,717.52	€22,515.83	€70,233.35
Ahern	Michael	€53,136.12	€23,308.43	€76,444.55
Ahern	Dermot	€50,722.44	€69,242.79	€119,965.23
Ahern	Bertie	€49,934.88	€102,396.78	€152,331.66
Allen	Lorcan	€52,359.48	€11,684.35	€64,043.83
Allen	Bernard	€52,206.24	€12,329.54	€64,535.78
Andrews	David	€49,934.88	€58,495.57	€108,430.45
Aylward	Liam	€49,934.88	€0.00	€49,934.88
Barry	Richard	€65,768.04	€9,842.18	€75,610.22
Barry	Peter	€65,768.04	€60,713.16	€126,481.20
Begley	Michael	€49,934.88	€19,517.92	€69,452.80
Bhreathnach	Niamh	€11,609.76	€35,566.48	€47,176.24
Birmingham	George	€20,157.12	€17,733.41	€37,890.53
Brady	Vincent	€38,913.84	€20,716.72	€59,630.56
Browne	John	€44,220.60	€10,981.76	€55,202.36
Bruton	John	€50,282.40	€91,566.87	€141,849.27
Burke	Richard	€20,157.12	€33,177.49	€53,334.61
Burke	Ray	€49,934.88	€53,903.85	€103,838.73
Byrne	Hugh	€49,934.88	€18,456.08	€68,390.96

[Deputy Brendan Howlin.]

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Calleary	Sean	€49,336.92	€23,504.88	€72,841.80
Callely	Ivor	€0.00	€14,754.28	€14,754.28
Carey	Donal	€53,975.88	€12,046.99	€66,022.87
Cassidy	Donie	€0.00	€11,505.90	€11,505.90
Collins	Edward	€45,085.32	€18,328.25	€63,413.57
Collins	Gerard	€49,934.88	€52,629.66	€102,564.54
Connaughton	Paul	€49,934.88	€17,733.41	€67,668.29
Connolly	Gerard	€49,934.88	€24,800.47	€74,735.35
Cooney	Patrick	€49,934.88	€52,629.65	€102,564.53
Cosgrave	Liam T.	€36,282.00	€18,767.59	€55,049.59
Cosgrave	Liam (Snr)	€65,768.04	€67,257.58	€133,025.62
Cowen	Brian	€49,934.88	€101,126.89	€151,061.77
Creed	Donal	€49,934.88	€16,871.95	€66,806.83
Cullen	Martin	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Currie	Austin	€47,070.48	€12,313.36	€59,383.84
Daly	Brendan	€51,974.76	€43,540.67	€95,515.43
D'Arcy	Michael	€51,982.44	€16,871.95	€68,854.39
Davern	Noel	€53,930.88	€20,220.76	€74,151.64
De Valera	Síle	€49,934.88	€53,712.63	€103,647.51
Deasy	Austin	€51,974.76	€35,520.82	€87,495.58
Dempsey	Noel	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Desmond	Barry	€49,934.88	€36,488.74	€86,423.62
Donnellan	John	€31,749.36	€9,049.59	€40,798.95
Doyle	Avril	€45,346.08	€14,789.49	€60,135.57
Dukes	Alan	€51,507.36	€42,960.44	€94,467.80
Fahey	Jackie	€49,934.88	€18,077.01	€68,011.89
Fahey	Frank	€51,411.24	€61,730.12	€113,141.36
Faulkner	Padraig	€49,934.88	€52,629.66	€102,564.54
Fitzpatrick	Tom	€45,085.32	€10,991.42	€56,076.74
Flood	Chris	€38,428.92	€17,364.25	€55,793.17
Flynn	Padraig	€39,186.24	€47,942.98	€87,129.22
Gallagher	Pat 'The Cope'	€50,805.96	€19,756.12	€70,562.08
Harney	Mary	€49,934.88	€79,870.79	€129,805.67
Higgins	Jim	€51,390.36	€5,973.14	€57,363.50
Higgins	Michael D.	€50,178.12	€37,750.42	€87,928.54
Honan	Tras	€27,699.84	€23,050.41	€50,750.25
Hussey	Thomas	€44,107.56	€17,107.79	€61,215.35
Hussey	Gemma	€30,536.88	€35,520.82	€66,057.70
Hyland	Liam	€49,489.80	€11,837.23	€61,327.03
Jacob	Joe	€49,934.88	€29,190.78	€79,125.66
Kavanagh	Liam	€53,466.72	€38,068.96	€91,535.68
Kiely	Rory	€35,386.68	€16,937.68	€52,324.36
Kitt	Tom	€50,642.52	€30,833.88	€81,476.40
Lalor	Paddy	€49,934.88	€51,219.01	€101,153.89

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Lyons	Denis	€29,241.48	€19,502.52	€48,744.00
MacSharry	Ray	€49,934.88	€39,001.92	€88,936.80
McCarthy	Sean	€26,760.36	€11,843.75	€38,604.11
McCreevy	Charlie	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
McDaid	Jim	€49,934.88	€47,471.81	€97,406.69
McDonald	Charles	€46,690.44	€11,810.88	€58,501.32
McDowell	Michael	€30,244.56	€30,144.08	€60,388.64
McManus	Liz	€0.00	€12,309.97	€12,309.97
Moffatt	Tom	€23,736.72	€18,456.08	€42,192.80
Molloy	Robert	€49,934.88	€63,742.65	€113,677.53
Mullooly	Brian	€35,386.68	€21,916.30	€57,302.98
Nealon	Ted	€40,229.28	€19,507.48	€59,736.76
Noonan	Michael J.	€49,934.88	€30,749.62	€80,684.50
O'Brien	Fergus	€47,483.52	€19,507.48	€66,991.00
O'Connell	Dr. John	€49,934.88	€26,374.97	€76,309.85
O'Donnell	Liz	€40,104.72	€18,799.16	€58,903.88
O'Donnell	Tom	€49,934.88	€35,862.33	€85,797.21
O'Donoghue	Martin	€21,371.76	€29,958.33	€51,330.09
O'Donoghue	John	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
O'Hanlon	Rory	€49,934.88	€66,682.65	€116,617.53
O'Keefe	Edward (Ned)	€50,389.08	€15,126.57	€65,515.65
O'Keefe	Jim	€51,289.32	€19,507.79	€70,797.11
O'Kennedy	Michael	€53,945.88	€68,857.71	€122,803.59
O'Malley	Tim	€12,544.08	€18,648.89	€31,192.97
O'Malley	Desmond	€54,092.04	€52,629.66	€106,721.70
O'Rourke	Mary	€50,938.32	€67,042.69	€117,981.01
O'Shea	Brian	€49,934.88	€17,036.04	€66,970.92
O'Sullivan	Toddy	€41,711.88	€14,713.32	€56,425.20
O'Toole	Paddy	€35,386.32	€38,683.10	€74,069.42
Owen	Nora	€46,586.64	€27,239.56	€73,826.20
Parlon	Tom	€12,544.08	€18,648.88	€31,192.96
Pattison	Seamus	€53,466.72	€63,738.74	€117,205.46
Power	Sean	€27,899.28	€8,564.85	€36,464.13
Power	Patrick	€49,934.88	€26,033.71	€75,968.59
Reynolds	Albert	€49,934.88	€99,805.41	€149,740.29
Ryan	Eoin	€47,884.56	€5,929.57	€53,814.13
Ryan	John	€49,934.88	€17,400.25	€67,335.13
Ryan	Richie	€57,170.40	€35,862.33	€93,032.73
Smith	Michael	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Spring	Dick	€49,934.88	€71,173.40	€121,108.28
Taylor	Mervyn	€40,229.28	€37,750.42	€77,979.70
Treacy	Noel	€51,392.52	€32,216.61	€83,609.13
Treacy	Sean	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Wallace	Dan	€52,283.16	€20,809.08	€73,092.24
Wallace	Mary	€51,009.84	€26,436.80	€77,446.64
Walsh	Joe	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67

[Deputy Brendan Howlin.]

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Woods	Michael	€53,453.16	€69,242.79	€122,695.95
Yates	Ivan	€47,607.00	€27,229.65	€74,836.65

Dr. Maurice Manning and Ms Marian Harkin are gifting their TD pensions.

Ms Eithne Fitzgerald, Ms Maire Geoghegan Quinn, Mr. Gay Mitchell and Mr. Proinsias de Rossa are gifting their TD and Ministerial pensions.

*Mr. Liam Aylward is gifting his Ministerial pension for 2011.

*Mr. Liam Cosgrave (Snr) is gifting part of his Ministerial pension for 2011.

The following revised reply was received on 14 November 2011:

The data in respect of Ministerial and TDs' pensions requested by the Deputy are in tabular statement below. The figures were provided by the Office of Paymaster General in respect of Ministerial pensions and from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in respect of TD pensions.

The amount of pension is on an annual basis; Ministers' and TDs' pensions may not be in payment since January 2011.

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Ahern	Noel	€47,717.52	€22,515.83	€70,233.35
Ahern	Michael	€53,136.12	€23,308.43	€76,444.55
Ahern	Dermot	€50,722.44	€69,242.79	€119,965.23
Ahern	Bertie	€49,934.88	€102,396.78	€152,331.66
Allen	Lorcan	€52,359.48	€11,684.35	€64,043.83
Allen	Bernard	€52,206.24	€12,329.54	€64,535.78
Andrews	David	€49,934.88	€58,495.57	€108,430.45
Aylward	Liam	€49,934.88	€0.00	€49,934.88
Barry	Richard	€65,768.04	€9,842.18	€75,610.22
Barry	Peter	€65,768.04	€60,713.16	€126,481.20
Begley	Michael	€49,934.88	€19,517.92	€69,452.80
Bhreathnach	Niamh	€11,609.76	€35,566.48	€47,176.24
Birmingham	George	€20,157.12	€17,733.41	€37,890.53
Brady	Vincent	€38,913.84	€20,716.72	€59,630.56
Browne	John ¹	€0.00	€10,981.76	€10,981.76
Bruton	John	€50,282.40	€91,566.87	€141,849.27
Burke	Richard	€20,157.12	€33,177.49	€53,334.61
Burke	Ray	€49,934.88	€53,903.85	€103,838.73
Byrne	Hugh	€49,934.88	€18,456.08	€68,390.96
Calleary	Sean	€49,336.92	€23,504.88	€72,841.80
Callely	Ivor	€0.00	€14,754.28	€14,754.28
Carey	Donal	€53,975.88	€12,046.99	€66,022.87
Cassidy	Donie	€0.00	€11,505.90	€11,505.90
Collins	Edward	€45,085.32	€18,328.25	€63,413.57
Collins	Gerard	€49,934.88	€52,629.66	€102,564.54
Connaughton	Paul	€49,934.88	€17,733.41	€67,668.29
Connolly	Gerard	€49,934.88	€24,800.47	€74,735.35

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Cooney	Patrick	€49,934.88	€52,629.65	€102,564.53
Cosgrave	Liam T.	€36,282.00	€18,767.59	€55,049.59
Cosgrave	Liam (Snr)	€65,768.04	€67,257.58	€133,025.62
Cowen	Brian	€49,934.88	€101,126.89	€151,061.77
Creed	Donal	€49,934.88	€16,871.95	€66,806.83
Cullen	Martin	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Currie	Austin	€47,070.48	€12,313.36	€59,383.84
Daly	Brendan	€51,974.76	€43,540.67	€95,515.43
D'Arcy	Michael	€51,982.44	€16,871.95	€68,854.39
Davern	Noel	€53,930.88	€20,220.76	€74,151.64
De Valera	Síle	€49,934.88	€53,712.63	€103,647.51
Deasy	Austin	€51,974.76	€35,520.82	€87,495.58
Dempsey	Noel	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Desmond	Barry	€49,934.88	€36,488.74	€86,423.62
Donnellan	John	€31,749.36	€9,049.59	€40,798.95
Doyle	Avril	€45,346.08	€14,789.49	€60,135.57
Dukes	Alan	€51,507.36	€42,960.44	€94,467.80
Fahey	Jackie	€49,934.88	€18,077.01	€68,011.89
Fahey	Frank	€51,411.24	€61,730.12	€113,141.36
Faulkner	Padraig	€49,934.88	€52,629.66	€102,564.54
Fitzpatrick	Tom	€45,085.32	€10,991.42	€56,076.74
Flood	Chris	€38,428.92	€17,364.25	€55,793.17
Flynn	Padraig	€39,186.24	€47,942.98	€87,129.22
Gallagher	Pat 'The Cope'	€50,805.96	€19,756.12	€70,562.08
Harney	Mary	€49,934.88	€79,870.79	€129,805.67
Higgins	Jim	€51,390.36	€5,973.14	€57,363.50
Higgins	Michael D.	€50,178.12	€37,750.42	€87,928.54
Honan	Tras	€27,699.84	€23,050.41	€50,750.25
Hussey	Thomas	€44,107.56	€17,107.79	€61,215.35
Hussey	Gemma	€30,536.88	€35,520.82	€66,057.70
Hyland	Liam	€49,489.80	€11,837.23	€61,327.03
Jacob	Joe	€49,934.88	€29,190.78	€79,125.66
Kavanagh	Liam	€53,466.72	€38,068.96	€91,535.68
Kiely	Rory	€35,386.68	€16,937.68	€52,324.36
Kitt	Tom	€50,642.52	€30,833.88	€81,476.40
Lalor	Paddy	€49,934.88	€51,219.01	€101,153.89
Lyons	Denis	€29,241.48	€19,502.52	€48,744.00
MacSharry	Ray	€49,934.88	€39,001.92	€88,936.80
McCarthy	Sean	€26,760.36	€11,843.75	€38,604.11
McCreevy	Charlie	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
McDaid	Jim	€49,934.88	€47,471.81	€97,406.69
McDonald	Charles	€46,690.44	€11,810.88	€58,501.32
McDowell	Michael	€30,244.56	€30,144.08	€60,388.64
McManus	Liz	€0.00	€12,309.97	€12,309.97
Moffatt	Tom	€23,736.72	€18,456.08	€42,192.80
Molloy	Robert	€49,934.88	€63,742.65	€113,677.53

[Deputy Brendan Howlin.]

Surname	Forename	Annual Amount of TD's Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial Pension less Public Service Pension Reduction	Annual Amount of Ministerial and TD Pension less Public Service Pension Levy
Mullooly	Brian	€35,386.68	€21,916.30	€57,302.98
Nealon	Ted	€40,229.28	€19,507.48	€59,736.76
Noonan	Michael J.	€49,934.88	€30,749.62	€80,684.50
O'Brien	Fergus	€47,483.52	€19,507.48	€66,991.00
O'Connell	Dr. John	€49,934.88	€26,374.97	€76,309.85
O'Donnell	Liz	€40,104.72	€18,799.16	€58,903.88
O'Donnell	Tom	€49,934.88	€35,862.33	€85,797.21
O'Donoghue	Martin	€21,371.76	€29,958.33	€51,330.09
O'Donoghue	John	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
O'Hanlon	Rory	€49,934.88	€66,682.65	€116,617.53
O'Keefe	Edward (Ned)	€50,389.08	€15,126.57	€65,515.65
O'Keefe	Jim	€51,289.32	€19,507.79	€70,797.11
O'Kennedy	Michael	€53,945.88	€68,857.71	€122,803.59
O'Malley	Tim	€12,544.08	€18,648.89	€31,192.97
O'Malley	Desmond	€54,092.04	€52,629.66	€106,721.70
O'Rourke	Mary	€50,938.32	€67,042.69	€117,981.01
O'Shea	Brian	€49,934.88	€17,036.04	€66,970.92
O'Sullivan	Toddy	€41,711.88	€14,713.32	€56,425.20
O'Toole	Paddy	€35,386.32	€38,683.10	€74,069.42
Owen	Nora	€46,586.64	€27,239.56	€73,826.20
Parlon	Tom	€12,544.08	€18,648.88	€31,192.96
Pattison	Seamus	€53,466.72	€63,738.74	€117,205.46
Power	Sean	€27,899.28	€8,564.85	€36,464.13
Power	Patrick	€49,934.88	€26,033.71	€75,968.59
Reynolds	Albert	€49,934.88	€99,805.41	€149,740.29
Ryan	Eoin	€47,884.56	€5,929.57	€53,814.13
Ryan	John	€49,934.88	€17,400.25	€67,335.13
Ryan	Richie	€57,170.40	€35,862.33	€93,032.73
Smith	Michael	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Spring	Dick	€49,934.88	€71,173.40	€121,108.28
Taylor	Mervyn	€40,229.28	€37,750.42	€77,979.70
Treacy	Noel	€51,392.52	€32,216.61	€83,609.13
Treacy	Sean	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Wallace	Dan	€52,283.16	€20,809.08	€73,092.24
Wallace	Mary	€51,009.84	€26,436.80	€77,446.64
Walsh	Joe	€49,934.88	€69,242.79	€119,177.67
Woods	Michael	€53,453.16	€69,242.79	€122,695.95
Yates	Ivan	€47,607.00	€27,229.65	€74,836.65

Dr. Maurice Manning and Ms Marian Harkin are gifting their TD pensions.

Ms Eithne Fitzgerald, Ms Maire Geoghegan Quinn, Mr. Gay Mitchell and Mr. Proinnsias de Rossa are gifting their TD and Ministerial pensions.

*Mr. Liam Aylward is gifting his Ministerial pension for 2011.

*Mr. Liam Cosgrave (Snr) is gifting part of his Ministerial pension for 2011.

¹Payment of this ministerial pension should have ceased in March 2011 when Deputy Browne was re-elected to the Dáil. No further ministerial pension payments will be made while he is a member of either House, and arrangements will be put in place to recoup any overpayment.

Departmental Funding

193. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will ensure that an application for funding will be finalised and approved without further delay in respect of a project (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33419/11]

195. **Deputy Joe O'Reilly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress that has been made on reaching an agreement with Northern Ireland Accountable Departments DFP and DETI regarding the match funding percentage split for the Border uplands project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33483/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 193 and 195 together.

As the Deputies are aware, this project is due to be implemented under the INTERREG IVA Programme 2007-13 which is co-funded by the Irish and UK (NI/Scotland) Governments and the European Regional Development Fund. The objective of the programme is to support strategic cross-border co-operation for a more prosperous and sustainable region. It has a total allocation of €256m and focuses on the development of a dynamic economy and provision of support to cross-border infrastructure that will improve access to services and thereby improve the quality of life for those living in the eligible region of Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and Western Scotland. The programme is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), one of the six North South Bodies established under the Good Friday Agreement.

To implement the programme, SEUPB issues calls for project applications, assesses applications received (with independent economic appraisal for projects over £500k, as per UK requirements) and presents assessed projects for final selection by Steering Committee. Funding for the approved projects is then provided by the relevant Accountable Departments in Northern Ireland and Ireland (and Scotland partners for tripartite projects).

The INTERREG programme should take account of the overall agreed apportionment of funding from Member States for the period 2007-2013 (IRL 27.6%, UK 72.4%). Currently, Ireland's contribution is in excess of agreed rates (in the order of 40%). My Department, together with the Department of Finance and Personnel in NI and the SEUPB, is working closely to address this issue and ensure that the correct funding ratios are met by end of the programme. Remaining projects will need to be funded with relatively higher UK and relatively lower Irish contributions and an approach is being agreed and finalised to facilitate this. However, pending a resolution, all letters of offer for INTERREG IVA projects have been temporarily on hold. We hope to have a resolution to this issue shortly so that the letter of offer for this tourism project can issue.

Departmental Bodies

194. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32856/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The question of rationalisation and the reduction in the number of State bodies is being considered in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and the overall budgetary and estimates

[Deputy Brendan Howlin.]

process for 2012, and decisions on such matters will be made by the Government over the coming weeks.

The priorities set out in the Programme for Government for the rationalisation of State Agencies states that rationalisation must be cost effective and lead to a more transparent, accountable and efficient public service. The overriding imperative is the absolute requirement to achieve major savings in all areas of expenditure and to reduce staff numbers and administrative overheads. This underscores the need for radical streamlining of bodies, abolishing those bodies whose remit is no longer essential and amalgamation of other agencies or sharing of services between bodies, so that public services and functions can be delivered more cost-effectively.

Bodies which come under the aegis of my Department are An Post National Lottery, Outside Appointments Board, Decentralisation Implementation Group and Valuation Tribunal.

In the period in question no bodies under the aegis of my Department have been reformed, merged or abolished.

Question No. 195 answered with Question No. 193.

Ministerial Appointments

196. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33951/11]

197. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33965/11]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 196 and 197 together.

Since my appointment as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform I have not appointed any former Government office holder to any organisation under the remit of my Department .

On foot of motions, both the Dáil and the Seanad approved the appointment by the Government, with effect from 19 December 2007 and for a period of 6 years, of Mr. Michael Smith as ordinary member of the Standards in Public Office Commission, and the Government made the appointment accordingly. Mr. Michael Smith is a former office holder (i.e. Minister of State at the Department of Agriculture (1980); Minister for Energy (1988–1989); Minister for the Environment (1992–1994), Minister for Education (1994) and Minister for Defence (1997–2004). The ordinary member's fee is €17,500 pa, plus €372.80 per day for days in excess of 47.

Terms of office: Under the Standards in Public Office Act 2001, an ordinary member of the Standards Commission (a) shall hold office for a term of 6 years and may be re-appointed to that office for a second or subsequent term; (b) shall cease to hold office if he or she (i) is nominated as a member of Seanad Éireann; (ii) is nominated for election as a member of either

House or to be a representative in the European Parliament, or (iii) is regarded as having been elected to the European Parliament; (c) holds office upon such terms and conditions) as may be determined by the Minister [for Public Expenditure & Reform]; (d) may resign from office by notice in writing given to the Minister; and (e) may be removed from office at any time by the Government but shall not be removed from office except for stated misbehaviour, incapacity or bankruptcy and then only following resolutions passed by each House calling for his or her removal.

Departmental Bodies

198. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32854/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): No State bodies or companies have been created or abolished by my Department since March 2011.

My Department currently has 13 State Agencies supporting us in our work. These are:

1. Enterprise Ireland,
2. IDA Ireland,
3. Science Foundation Ireland,
4. Shannon Development,
5. County and City Enterprise Boards (35),
6. National Standards Authority of Ireland,
7. InterTradeIreland (the North/South Trade and Business Development Body),
8. Forfás,
9. National Consumer Agency,
10. The Competition Authority,
11. Irish Auditing and Accounting Standards Authority,
12. Personal Injuries Assessment Board, and
13. The Health and Safety Authority,

In relation to Regulatory Agencies and Statutory bodies, my Department is working to effect the merger of the National Consumer Agency (NCA) and the Competition Authority. As work on a review of the operation and implementation of the 2002 Competition Act was well underway, rather than give effect to the amalgamation of the NCA and Competition Authority in a stand-alone piece of legislation, to be followed in due course by legislation to amend, reform and update the 2002 Act, it was decided to introduce a single comprehensive Bill and Government has approved the drafting of the Consumer and Competition Bill in July 2011. It is expected that drafting of this Bill will be completed in the first half of 2012.

[Deputy Richard Bruton.]

In relation to the Employment Rights and Industrial Relations bodies within my Department's remit, I have announced my intention to streamline the work of five bodies currently dealing with employment disputes in the workplace into a two-tier structure. Four of the existing bodies — the Employment Appeals Tribunal, the National Employment Rights Authority, The Labour Relations Commission and the Labour Court — are currently within my remit. One — the Equality Tribunal — is currently within the remit of the Minister for Justice and Equality. I expect this reform and streamlining project to deliver a measurable improvement in the quality of services provided to users of the State's employment rights/industrial relations dispute resolution services and reduce the burden of accessing such services for users and reduce costs to the State. I have announced an ambitious timeline for delivery, including a number of initiatives to be delivered by the end of this year, including a single portal of entry for all claims, a single website containing all relevant information and a single application form for workplace dispute claims.

Regarding the Enterprise agencies under my Department's remit, I am currently considering how the policy and research functions of Forfás could be integrated with my Department's resources to further enhance the formulation and development of national enterprise policy.

Work is well advanced in my Department on determining the extent of a restructuring of the network of CEBs in a way that brings greater cohesion to the way that local enterprise supports are embedded into the national enterprise policy framework and interact with key local stakeholders. My intention is to ensure appropriate and targeted local delivery of enterprise supports within the context of national enterprise policy in a manner which eliminates overlap and duplication and provides an enhanced focused model for entrepreneurs.

Work Permits

199. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide an employment permit in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 14; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33018/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department processes applications in respect of the different types of employment permits and all applications are processed in line with the Employment Permits Act 2006.

I wish to advise the Deputy that this Work Permit application was refused on the 18th October 2011 on the grounds that it is current Government policy to issue new employment permits only in respect of:

- highly skilled, highly paid positions or;
- non-EEA nationals who are already legally resident in the State on valid employment permits or;
- positions requiring specialist or scarce skills, expertise or qualifications which cannot be filled otherwise.

Furthermore, new work permit applications can only be considered where it is established that the position has been advertised with FÁS/EURES for a period of 8 weeks and advertised for at least six days in both local and national newspapers.

The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and of their right to appeal within 21 days. To-date no such appeal has been received in the Employment Permits Section.

EU Directives

200. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he has held any discussions with representatives of the biotechnology or pharmaceutical industry in relation to the decision of the European Court of Human Rights to limit their ability to patent stem cells; his views that the decision will have an adverse effect on jobs here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33112/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The decision the Deputy is referring to is the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) Case C-34/10, also known as the *Brüstle* case. This highly technical case centred on the Court’s interpretation of EU Directive 98/44/EC on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions.

This decision results from a referral to the German Court, in relation to a German patent granted to Oliver Brüstle in 1999. This patent concerned the generation of brain cells derived from embryonic stem cells and their use for the treatment of neural disorders such as Parkinson’s disease.

On the fundamental question of what is meant by the term ‘human embryo’ the CJEU concluded that any human ovum must, as soon as fertilised, be regarded as a ‘human embryo’ within the meaning and for the purposes of the application of Article 6(2)(c) of the Directive, if that fertilisation is such as to begin the process of development of a human being. On the more specific question as to whether an invention is unpatentable, even though its purpose is not the use of human embryos per se, but rather the use of a product whose production necessitates the prior destruction of human embryos or a process requiring a base material obtained by the destruction of human embryos. When considering this question, the Court noted the November 2008 decision of the European Patents Office Enlarged Board of Appeal that the patentability of products prepared exclusively by a method involving the destruction of human embryos was to be rejected. The Court concluded that the Directive excludes an invention from patentability where the patent application requires the prior destruction of human embryos or their use as base material, even if the description of the claimed invention does not refer to the use of human embryos.

It now remains to be seen how the European Patents Office and the national courts will interpret the wording of the CJEU. Accordingly, it is not possible, at this stage, to indicate if the CJEU’s decision will impact adversely on job creation in Ireland.

Departmental Funding

201. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the action taken by him towards making finances available for small businesses; the funding and policy initiatives for small business; and if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the banks are still refusing to give credit to small businesses to continue their important role in the local community. [33322/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The initiatives taken by the Minister for Finance to restructure and re-capitalise the banking system is the principal response to making credit available. At the end of March 2011, a range of measures was announced to reorganise, recapitalise and deleverage the domestic financial system in order to restore the banks to health and continue to provide a secure banking system for deposits.

This latest restructuring of the domestic banking sector creates capacity for the pillar banks to lend in excess of €30 billion over the next three years in SME and other important sectors. This is in excess of Central Bank estimates of the likely demand for SME and mortgage credit over this period. Government has imposed lending targets on the two domestic pillar banks for

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the three calendar years, 2011 to 2013. Both banks will be required to sanction lending of at least €3 billion this year, €3.5 billion next year and €4 billion in 2013 for new or increased credit facilities to SMEs.

In addition to the initiatives of the Minister for Finance, work is underway within my Department on the design of a Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme. The Scheme will provide a level of guarantee to banks against losses on qualifying loans to job-creating firms to get banks lending again to industry and entrepreneurs.

This Scheme will be closely targeted at commercially viable, well performing companies that have a solid business plan and a defined market for their products or services which can demonstrate repayment capacity for the additional credit facilities but which do not secure credit facilities due to the following two market failures:

- Insufficient collateral for the additional facilities or,
- Growth/expansionary SMEs which due to their sectors, markets or business model are perceived higher risk under current credit risk evaluation practices.

Furthermore, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government, a Microfinance Fund to provide loans to small businesses is being developed. My Department is also taking the lead on this initiative and has carried out detailed discussions with relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the European Investment Bank and other organisations with experience in the area. The Fund, including scheme design and appropriate delivery mechanisms, is being developed with a view to formalising proposals before the end of the year.

These initiatives are not designed to replace current lending through the banking system but to provide additional lending where specific measures are warranted.

Businesses having difficulty with credit refusals can use the services of the Credit Review Office, which will carry out an independent and impartial review of a bank's decision to refuse or reduce credit.

Credit Guarantee Scheme

202. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the partial loan guarantee scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33395/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The design phase of a Temporary Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme is nearing completion and I will be bringing formal proposals to Cabinet shortly. Once a suitable scheme design has been finalised and approved by the Government, there will then be a further Request for Tender published at the end of November to select an operator to allow for the roll out of the scheme over the coming months.

In parallel with the work taking place on the design of the Scheme, the Department is preparing primary legislation to make the necessary statutory provision for such a scheme.

The Scheme will provide a level of guarantee to banks against losses on qualifying loans to job-creating firms to get banks lending again to industry and entrepreneurs.

This Scheme will be closely targeted at commercially viable, well performing companies that have a solid business plan and a defined market for their products or services which can demonstrate repayment capacity for the additional credit facilities but which cannot secure credit facilities due to the following two market failures:

- Insufficient collateral for the additional facilities or,
- Growth/expansionary SMEs which due to their sectors, markets or business model are perceived higher risk under current credit risk evaluation practices.

The Government's commitment will be for an initial period of one year. Specific performance criteria will be set down that allow for review and revision of the scheme at the end of that initial period before any commitment to a roll-over of the scheme for subsequent years. The temporary partial credit guarantee scheme will complement the Government's plans on the restructuring and recapitalisation of the banking system which seek to secure an adequate flow of credit into the economy to support economic recovery.

Ministerial Appointments

203. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33949/11]

204. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33963/11]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 203 and 204 together.

It has not been possible in the time available to compile the information sought by the Deputy. My Department has, however, begun the process of collating the information requested and I will communicate with the Deputy as soon as the exercise has been completed.

Pension Provisions

205. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if long-term carers will qualify for contributory pension entitlements in recognition of the savings to the State; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33344/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): To qualify for a State pension (contributory), three conditions must be satisfied:

- (i) Date of entry into insurance (at full or modified rate) before age 56.
- (ii) A certain number of full-rate contributions must be paid. From 6 April 2012, the minimum number of paid contributions required to pass the first contribution test for a State pension (contributory) will increase from 260 to 520.
- (iii) A minimum yearly average of at least 10 (using full-rate contributions and credits) from date of entry into insurance to the end of the last full contribution year before age 66.

People who have been carers since April 1994 may avail of the homemakers' scheme. It is of benefit to those who worked outside the home for a period, then spent a number of years as carers and then return to the workforce.

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From 5 April 1994, any contribution year spent as a homemaker or carer may be disregarded in the calculation of the yearly average up to a maximum of 20 years. The fact that a carer does not have any contributions in those years will not affect his or her entitlement to a pension so long as they otherwise meet the eligibility criteria.

Social Welfare Benefits

206. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way in which an alleged debt of €600 in respect of one parent family allowance payment has arisen from in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32737/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An overpayment arose in this case as the income of the person concerned increased when she started a FÁS course in June 2010. Her participation on the FÁS course did not come to notice until April 2011.

207. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if supplementary welfare allowance will be paid in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare whose application for disability allowance is currently on appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32738/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Supplementary welfare allowance payments are continuing to issue to the person concerned.

208. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 300 of 20 September 2011, if payment will issue in respect of a rent support application in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32739/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The community welfare service (CWS) and the community welfare officers providing it transferred formally to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from 1 October 2011. The service and the staff are now part of the DSP.

The position remains as advised in question 99 which I answered for the Deputy on 28th September. That is, the information that was requested previously from the client remains outstanding. The person concerned has been advised that the following documents must be supplied in order for her file to be processed:

- A copy of the Housing Needs Assessment letter from Kildare County Council.
- A completed Habitual Residence Condition form.
- Copy of photo identification.
- 6 months bank statements or if the person concerned does not possess a bank account, a declaration of this fact and.
- A letter from her Social Worker confirming the long term plan regarding access to her eldest daughter.

Redundancy Payments

209. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason for the delay

in processing an application for redundancy in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; when a decision will be determined and conveyed to the applicant; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32752/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Under the Redundancy Payments Scheme all eligible employees are entitled to a statutory redundancy lump sum payment on being made redundant. In this case no claim appears to have been submitted for the individual concerned.

Social Welfare Appeals

210. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive a decision on their invalidity pension appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32753/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 16 August 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in due course to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

211. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32758/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

212. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an oral hearing in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32759/11]

214. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an oral hearing for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32765/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 and 214 together.

I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts. The legislation also provides that an Appeals Officer may decide a case before him/her on the basis of the documentary evidence. This course of action was taken in this case as it was considered that an oral hearing was not warranted.

Following the submission of additional evidence the Appeals Officer has agreed to review the case. The person concerned will be contacted when the review of her appeal has been finalised.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

213. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32763/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The community welfare service (CWS) and the community welfare officers providing it transferred formally to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from 1 October 2011. The service and staff are now part of the DSP. The Department's representative administering the supplementary welfare allowance scheme refused the person's rent allowance application on the grounds that her accommodation needs are being provided for by Youghal Town Council. The person concerned was advised of this decision and of her right of appeal if dissatisfied.

Question No. 214 answered with Question No. 212.

Social Welfare Appeals

215. **Deputy Charlie McConologue** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32770/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 17th August 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 21st October 2011 and the appeal will be assigned, in due course, to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

216. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [32778/11]

217. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the assistance available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 [32779/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 216 and 217 together.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 10 May 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 7 September 2011 and the appeal was assigned to an Appeals Officer on 26 October 2011 who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing. It is open to the person concerned to apply to the Community Welfare Officer for financial assistance while his appeal is pending.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Redundancy Payments

218. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a supplementary redundancy application for years 1991 to 1996 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32786/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand that my officials are in ongoing contact with the person concerned. A decision on the case will be made as soon as possible.

Social Welfare Appeals

219. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal for domiciliary care allowance will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32787/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

220. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the grounds on which an application for invalidity pension was refused in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if this parliamentary question will be accepted as notification of an appeal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32806/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions.

This department received an application for invalidity pension for the person concerned. The medical evidence provided was examined by a medical assessor who found that the person

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concerned is not eligible for invalidity pension as she does not satisfy the medical criteria. Accordingly, the application for invalidity pension was disallowed. She was notified of this decision on 21 October 2011 and was advised of her right to request a review of the decision and also of her right to lodge an appeal with the social welfare appeals office.

If the person concerned wishes to request a review of the decision she may provide further medical evidence in support of her application. This should be sent directly to invalidity pension section. Any further medical evidence will be evaluated by a medical assessor and a decision on the review will issue to the applicant. The applicant will be notified of her right to appeal this decision if she is still not satisfied.

If the person concerned wishes to lodge an appeal they should forward a letter detailing the grounds of their appeal to the social welfare appeals office within 21 days of the date they were notified of the decision on their claim. Instructions on how to request a review and/or appeal a decision are set out in the decision letter which issued to the person in question.

Departmental Records

221. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection the delays and waiting time in the scanning unit of the various sections of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32816/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I understand that the Deputy is referring to delays and waiting times in the scanning unit for carer's allowance scheme.

As part of my department's Document, Record and Information Management (DRIM) programme and in tandem with Service Delivery Modernisation (SDM) projects underway for carer's allowance scheme, scanning of medical documents in Social Welfare Services (SWS) Longford commenced in November 2010. At the beginning of September 2011, scanning was extended to include carer's allowance application forms and associated documentation.

The DRIM programme is a key part of my department's ongoing change and modernisation programme. The rationale for the programme is to reduce the volume of paper documents used and stored in scheme areas by scanning the documents, making the scanned images available online to staff and, where appropriate, extracting data from scanned images for integration to ICT systems to facilitate automation of business processes.

As I have mentioned, carer's allowance section is currently undergoing major modernisation projects under SDM and DRIM. While these projects will yield considerable benefits and enhance customer service, there is a short-term cost. The deployment of scheme staff to project development and implementation and the development and delivery of appropriate staff training programmes was and is vital to the success of these projects. As a consequence, backlogs of new claims awaiting decisions and medical assessments have increased.

Carer's allowance section has commenced full operation of the new SDM system for new claims since the beginning of September 2011. Since then, resources have been prioritised as far as possible to the reduction of backlogs and progress has been made in the past number of weeks in this regard.

Social Welfare Benefits

222. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amounts paid in respect of back to school allowance for each year from 2008; the number of recipients; if she will confirm the portion of the payment which pertains to the provision of school uniform; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32825/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) scheme provides a one-off payment to eligible families to assist with the cost of school clothing and footwear. There is no specific amount of the payment that is specifically for the cost of the uniform versus the cost of footwear. The tabular statement sets out the cost of the scheme in the years 2008 to 2010. The full cost of the 2011 scheme will not be known for some weeks yet but it will significantly exceed the costs incurred in 2010.

Table — BSCFA Expenditure & recipient numbers 2008 to 2010

Year	2008	2009	2010
Expenditure	€49.6m	€67.2m	€77.4m
Families assisted	102,065	139,000	162,500
Children assisted	200,246	277,000	325,000

Departmental Bodies

223. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Social Protection the action she has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under her remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within her Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32857/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The three statutory bodies operating under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection are the Social Welfare Tribunal, the Citizens Information Board and the Pensions Board. In addition, the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman comes under the remit of the Department.

No statutory body under the aegis of the Department has been merged or abolished since March 2011.

The Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes proposed the merging of the Pensions Board with the Financial Regulator and the merging of the Pensions Ombudsman with the Financial Services Ombudsman. It is planned to look in more detail at the feasibility of these recommendations.

Social Welfare Appeals

224. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32885/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the disability allowance claim of the person concerned was disallowed following an assessment by a Medical Assessor who expressed the opinion that he was medically unsuitable for the allowance. An appeal was registered on 5th October 2011 and in accordance with the statutory procedures the relevant department papers and the comments of the Social Welfare services on the matter raised in the appeal have been sought. In that context, an assessment by another Medical Assessor will be carried out.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

225. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive arrears of carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32893/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was awarded carer's allowance with effect from 17 February 2011. The first payment reached his bank account on 14 July 2011. Arrears due from 17 February 2011 to 13 July 2011 less the amount received during this period on his jobseeker's allowance will issue by cheque shortly.

Social Welfare Appeals

226. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reasons rent allowance has not been awarded in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; if she will review this case; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32914/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The community welfare service (CWS) and the community welfare officers providing it transferred formally to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from 1 October 2011. The service and the staff are now part of the DSP.

The position remains as advised in question number 111 which I answered for the Deputy on 20th October 2011. That is, that the designated Appeals Officer upheld the decision not to award a rent supplement to the person concerned on the grounds that the rent payable was in excess of the prescribed limit for a single person.

It remains open to the person concerned to make a new application for rent supplement if his circumstances have changed.

Community Employment Schemes

227. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a request (details supplied) regarding community employment schemes. [32919/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Artane Coolock Resource Development Centre is primarily a family resource centre funded under the Family Support Agency. The centre receives a range of additional supports specific to other services that it provides. The Centre is not part of the community employment programme operated by FÁS.

My understanding is that the centre is seeking funding, or similar support, to recruit extra staff to service ever increasing demand on its current staffing levels and volunteer team. The centre has a number of options that it may wish to explore. Although there is an overall limit on the number of participants on community employment, opportunities do arise as participants complete their terms. I have been informed that contact has already been made with FÁS in this regard. The community services programme, funded by my Department, provides sustainable options to resource centres of this type, particularly where a non-public stream of income can be generated from the services offered to the public. Although there has been no public call for new proposals under this programme in recent years, my Department is in a position to respond where established providers wish to enhance the services they offer or are responding to increasing demands arising from difficult economic circumstances. Northside Partnership is tasked with the delivery of Tús, the new community work placement initiative in part of the Dublin North region. I understand that the centre has made an application to Northside Partnership but that persons with suitable skills have not yet been identified. I have

asked my officials to make contact with the centre and Northside Partnership with a view to examining the opportunities to meet the need of the centre for additional supports.

Social Welfare Appeals

228. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an oral hearing will be heard in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32953/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

229. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) is not entitled to social welfare support; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33046/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer initially disallowed the jobseekers appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision.

Following a review of the case, the Appeals Officer has revised his original decision and has allowed this appeal. The person concerned has been advised of the Appeals Officer's revised decision.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

230. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Clare has not received payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33048/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The position remains as advised in question number 149 which I answered for the Deputy on 27th October 2011.

Social Welfare Appeals

231. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue

[Deputy Barry Cowen.]

on an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33052/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on grounds that the care recipient is not so disabled as to require full-time care and attention as prescribed in regulations. On 7 October 2011, she was notified of this decision, the reason for it and of her right of review or appeal within 21 days. Additional medical evidence was received on 24 October and has been forwarded to the Department's medical assessor for review. She will be notified directly of the outcome of the review in due course.

232. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for disability allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33053/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

233. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33054/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

234. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for invalidity pension will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33055/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 17 September 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 27 September 2011 and the appeal was assigned to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

235. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33057/11]

248. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33071/11]

260. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33094/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 235, 248 and 260 together.

I confirm that the Department is in receipt of applications for disability allowance from the above named persons. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of the claims a decision will be made and the persons concerned will be notified directly of the outcome. The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means, medical condition and habitual residence status is approximately 17 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

236. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for domiciliary care allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33058/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 5 July 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 4 August 2011 and the appeal was assigned to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

237. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33059/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

238. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33060/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

239. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33061/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disability allowance on 21 April 2011. The medical evidence supplied with her claim was referred to one of the department's medical assessors who was of the opinion, based on the information supplied, that that person was not medically suitable for disability allowance. The deciding officer accepted this opinion and the claim was refused and the person was notified in writing of this decision on 16 August 2011.

Further medical evidence received has now been referred to a medical assessor. When the medical assessor's opinion is received by the deciding officer, s/he will review the decision and the person will be notified directly of the outcome

Social Welfare Appeals

240. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for domiciliary care allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Waterford. [33063/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts.

Following the submission of additional evidence the Appeals Officer has agreed to review the case. The person concerned will be contacted when the review of her appeal has been finalised.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

241. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33064/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused a disability allowance on the ground that, based upon the medical assessor's assessment of the medical evidence supplied in support of the claim, the person is not medically suitable for disability allowance.

The person was notified in writing of this decision and the reason for it on 25 October 2011.

242. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33065/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

243. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for domiciliary care allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33066/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 5 September 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in due course to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

244. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33067/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

245. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois. [33068/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on grounds that the care recipient is not so disabled as to require full-time care and attention as prescribed in regulations. On 8 September 2011, she was notified of this decision, the reason for it and of her right to a review/appeal within 21 days.

246. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33069/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

247. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for jobseeker's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33070/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 22 July 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 27 September 2011 and the appeal was assigned to an Appeals Officer on 20 October 2011 who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 248 answered with Question No. 235.

249. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for invalidity pension will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33076/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 21 June 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 21 September 2011 and the appeal was assigned to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

250. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33079/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of his claim, a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome. The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

251. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a review for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33080/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 19 August 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 19 October 2011 and the appeal will be assigned in due course to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

252. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for State pension non-contributory will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33081/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, including that adduced at oral hearing, has partially allowed the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the decision. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

253. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33084/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on grounds that the care recipient is not so disabled as to require full-time care and attention as prescribed in regulations. On 17 October 2011, he was notified of this decision, the reason for it and of his right to a review or appeal within 21 days.

Social Welfare Appeals

254. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for invalidity pension will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33085/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 4 July 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 4 October 2011 and the appeal will be assigned in due course to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

255. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33087/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing on 10 November 2011. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

256. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for invalidity pension will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33088/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, an appeal was registered on 17 September 2011, and in accordance with the statutory requirements, the Appeals Office has contacted the applicant and asked him to set out the complete grounds of his appeal. On receipt of his response, the relevant departmental papers will be requested from the Department and the appeal will then be referred in due course to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister of Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

257. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for disablement benefit will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33089/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned applied for disablement benefit, under the occupational injuries scheme, on 10 October 2011 in respect of an accident that occurred on Saturday, 27 November 2010. The application has been refused as the person concerned was not working on the day of the accident. Therefore, the accident cannot be considered an occupational accident and, consequently, is not covered under the occupational injuries scheme.

Social Welfare Appeals

258. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33092/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the decision. Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Benefits

259. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33093/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been awarded half rate carer's allowance in respect of two care recipients with effect from 21 April 2011. The first payment reached her bank account on 13 October 2011. Arrears due for the intervening period, which includes her entitlement to two respite care grants, issued to her home address by cheque on 3 November 2011.

Question No. 260 answered with Question No. 235.

Question No. 261 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Appeals

262. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for domiciliary care allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33099/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) was received for the person in question on the 5th August 2011. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who found that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 18th October 2011 refusing

[Deputy Joan Burton.]

DCA and informing the applicant of her right to appeal the decision. To date no appeal has been registered by the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

Social Welfare Benefits

263. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an application for carer's allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33101/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that an application for carer's allowance has been received from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspect of her claim a decision will be made and the person in question will be notified directly of the outcome.

The average time taken to process a claim to completion, including assessment of the claimant's means and the entitlement of the care recipient to full time care and attention on medical grounds is approximately 19 weeks.

Social Welfare Appeals

264. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for disability allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33103/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

265. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a domiciliary care allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [33115/11]

275. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for domiciliary care allowance now under appeal will be expedited and approved in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Cork; the medical grounds on which the application was initially refused; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33242/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 265 and 275 together.

I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that a revised decision favourable to the person concerned has been made by Department. The person concerned has been contacted regarding this decision.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

266. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33145/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 267 withdrawn.

268. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason payment of jobseeker's allowance has been discontinued in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and the status of their appeal. [33154/11]

270. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason payment of jobseeker's allowance has been discontinued in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and the status of their appeal. [33157/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 268 and 270 together.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 11 October 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 03 November 2011 and the appeal will be assigned, in due course, to an Appeals Officer who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 269 withdrawn.

Question No. 270 answered with Question No. 268.

Social Welfare Benefits

271. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the grounds on which it was considered that circumstances of exceptional need did not exist in respect of an application for supplementary welfare allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33194/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of a fuel allowance at the weekly rate of €20.00. His application for an exceptional needs payment to cover the cost of fuel was refused on the basis that there was no exceptional need established in his case. He has been advised of his right to request a review of this decision and was given a form for this purpose.

Social Welfare Appeals

272. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [33213/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that there are five appeals pending for the person concerned and the appeals were registered in that office as follows, supplementary welfare allowance 06 September 2010, child benefit 07 December 2010, domiciliary care allowance 26 January 2011, disability allowance 02 February 2011 and carers allowance 28 September 2011. The appeals were referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in all cases.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 273 withdrawn.

Employment Support Services

274. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will allow a person (details supplied) in County Kerry to participate in the JobBridge programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33225/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): JobBridge, the National Internship Scheme, provides internship opportunities of either 6 or 9 months for unemployed individuals on the Live Register, in organisations in the private, public and community and voluntary sectors.

Internships are available across all sectors of the economy, including the education sector where individuals can avail of teaching internships. However, in order to avail of these internships, a person must be eligible to participate on the scheme. In this regard, the scheme is limited to individuals who are currently on the Live Register and have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance/Benefit or are signing on for credits for at least 78 days in the last 6 months. The 78 day criterion exists because evidence shows that a significant number of people leave the Live Register for employment within the first 3 to 6 months of signing on.

Question No. 275 answered with Question No. 265.

Social Welfare Appeals

276. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an oral hearing date regarding a disability allowance appeal has been scheduled in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33247/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Social Welfare Code

277. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views that a person who is separated and has received a share of the family home but has not as of yet used the payment to purchase a new property is discriminated against in that the payment they receive will be assessed as means against them (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33282/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In assessing means for social assistance purposes, account is taken of any cash income the person may have, together with the value of capital and property (except the family home). Capital may include the following:

- Stocks and shares of every description, which are assessed according to their current market value.
- Savings certificates / bonds / national instalment savings, which are also assessed according to their current market value.
- Monies invested in a bank, building society etc.

[Deputy Joan Burton.]

For the purposes of most social assistance schemes, the first €20,000 of capital is disregarded for means test purposes and the balance is assessed by reference to a formula. In the case of disability allowance, the first €50,000 is disregarded, while in the case of supplementary welfare allowance, the first €5,000 is disregarded.

In the case of disability allowance, blind pension and state pension (non-contributory), the proceeds derived from the sale of the principal private residence can be disregarded, subject to an upper limit of €191,500. These arrangements do not apply to other schemes such as jobseeker's allowance or one-parent family payment.

I am mindful of the difficulties that can arise for people if there is any significant delay between the sale of the principal private residence and the purchase of a new residence. However, any change in the current arrangements would have to be considered in a Budgetary context.

Child Support

278. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to tackle child poverty; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33286/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The elimination of poverty is a key objective of Government and the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016 (NAPSincl) includes a target to reduce the number of people experiencing consistent poverty to between 2 and 4 per cent by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. Consistent poverty is the Government's official measure of poverty. People are in consistent poverty if their household income is below 60% of median income (at-risk-of-poverty) and they are living in a household experiencing two or more items of basic deprivation, out of an 11 item list. The NAPSincl target is restated in the National Reform Programme 2010, which sets out Ireland's commitments to achieving the poverty target in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

Tackling child poverty is a priority for the Government and a key goal of NAPSincl. Four-fifths of those in consistent poverty are found in households with children and 8.7 per cent of children (96,000 in absolute numbers) were in consistent poverty in 2009. Factors contributing to childhood poverty include living in lone parent households, labour market inactivity, low educational attainment and living in households dependent on income support.

A review of the national poverty target, arising out of the deliberations in drawing up the National Reform Programme, is currently underway. It will enable the Government to adopt appropriate and achievable national poverty targets to meet Ireland's contribution to Europe 2020 and the commitments in the Programme for Government. The Department also contributes to wider efforts to address child poverty, for example by inputting into the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and taking part in a review of that strategy.

The overriding objective for the Government is to increase employment and build real and sustainable economic growth and to protect those who are most vulnerable in our society. The Government Programme sets out the framework to achieve these aims. Employment opportunities will be increased through labour market activation, skills training and education measures. In general, the best route out of income poverty is through sustainable and stable paid employment. It is recognised that work, and especially full-time work, may not be an option for parents of young children. However, it is believed that supporting parents to participate in the labour market, once their children have reached an appropriate age, will improve their own economic situation and contribute to the wider well-being of themselves and of their families.

The Government is committed to ensuring that the social protection system remains a strong support for people against the impact of the economic and fiscal downturn. Government targets in the area of financial support for low-income families continue to be met. One of the high level goals relating to children in NAPs is to maintain the combined value of child income support measures at 33-35 per cent of the minimum adult social welfare payment rate over the course of the plan. The value of the combined child income supports measures (child benefit plus qualified child increases) in both Budget 2010 and Budget 2011 was equivalent to 33 per cent of the main working age payment rates.

A value for money review of child income support policies and associated programmes was published by the Department in November 2010, with some follow-up work including a consultation seminar to gather the views of stakeholders as to the future direction of policy on these payments. The issue of family and child income supports is currently being examined by the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare, which was established last June. The Group has been tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how employment disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved, particularly child poverty outcomes.

Social Welfare Offices

279. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to refurbish social welfare offices (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33306/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Refurbishment works were undertaken at both the Coolock and the Kilbarrack Local Offices over the past 12 months.

In the Coolock local office, the public waiting area was enlarged and a new reception counter and extra customer service points were installed to cater for the increased numbers attending the office. An additional interview room was also constructed.

Refurbishment works undertaken at the Kilbarrack office included the installation of a new reception area and the modification of a number of counter service points. Some repairs to the roof were also required.

Having completed those improvements, there are no plans for further refurbishment works at either of these offices.

Social Welfare Benefits

280. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a rent supplement for a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33329/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The community welfare service (CWS) and the community welfare officers providing it transferred formally to the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from 1 October 2011. The service and the staff are now part of the DSP.

The person concerned has a claim for rent supplement that is currently temporarily suspended. His Family Income Supplement payment has recently been reassessed and confirmation of his recent part time earnings has now been sought. A decision in relation to entitlement will be made when this information has been received.

281. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33348/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The position remains as advised in Question No.149 which I answered for the Deputy on 27th October 2011.

Social Welfare Code

282. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is any provision or discretion allowed for persons claiming carer's allowance who are from the State but who have moved to Northern Ireland and wish to continue to care for their elderly parents or family relations. [33400/11]

283. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is any provision's or discretion for a person to claim carer's allowance if they now live in close proximity to the Border in the North of Ireland but are originally from the South and wish to care for their relatives who live in close proximity south of the Border, based on the premise that they satisfy all other eligibility and are not claiming any other entitlements North or South. [33401/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 282 and 283 together.

Carer's Allowance is a means-tested payment that may be paid to people living within the jurisdiction who are providing full time care and attention to a person in need of such care. There are a number of conditions that carers must satisfy before they can claim this payment.

Section 180(2) of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act specifies that "A carer shall not be entitled to an allowance under this section unless he or she is habitually resident in the State at the date of the making of the application for the allowance."

Under EU rules, which prohibit discrimination on nationality grounds in relation to social security, it is not possible to exempt Irish citizens on the basis of residency within Northern Ireland without extending the same treatment to all EU nationals within the EU.

Departmental Appointments

284. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33952/11]

285. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Social Protection the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by her to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33966/11]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 284 and 285 together.

I have not appointed any former Government office holders to any position in this Department or agency under the aegis of this Department. There are no former Government office holders appointed by any other current or former Minister in positions in this Department or in any agency under aegis of the Department.

Inland Waterways

286. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his views in relation to the issuing of mooring permits on Muckcross Lake, Killarney, County Kerry; his further views that the permit holders can pass their permits from one generation to the next and that this act is discriminatory to all other anglers and recreational users of the lake who cannot obtain permits; his further views that the lottery system in place for 20 one year permits to accommodate the other 800 persons on a waiting list to obtain a permanent boat pass is unrealistic and in need of urgent review; his further views that it is unjustifiable and indeed discriminatory that an Irish citizen should have to pay a boat keeper €40 a visit to use a State lake; if he has any plans to review the issuing of mooring permits on Muckcross Lake; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32951/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Private boats on the lakes in Killarney National Park are regulated by way of mooring discs. In a scheme introduced in 1991, mooring discs were issued to all boat owners having a recognised traditional mooring on the lakes subject to an overall limit on the number of discs issued. It is considered that a limit is necessary so as to balance recreational use with the conservation imperative of flora and fauna of the lakes and surrounding areas and also taking account of obligations under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

My Department does not permit the placing of boats on the lakes on a daily basis, as boats and engines coming from outside the Park carry the risk of spreading invasive alien species such as zebra mussels and various pond weeds. To facilitate others, persons applying for discs are placed on a waiting list and as discs become available, they are allocated to those on the waiting list. In addition, a lottery is held annually to allow 20 additional people use the lakes for a year.

My Department receives numerous requests for mooring spaces but unfortunately, the demand far exceeds the number of spaces available. My Department is currently carrying out a review of all issues relating to the ongoing management of the lakes in the Park, including all boating activities, with a view to developing a long-term sustainable strategy for the lakes as an integral part of Killarney National Park.

Turbary Rights

287. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) will receive payment for a special area of conservation bog offered to his Department in 2005 and which was closed to turf cutting in 2010; the reason for the delay in making payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32804/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In May 2010, the voluntary bog purchase scheme was closed to new applicants. Processing of applications on hand has been slower than anticipated due to capacity constraints in undertaking the conveyancing work involved. The time it takes to process applications can also vary depending on the legal complexities involved.

The Chief State Solicitor's Office has forwarded the contract for the sale of the site referred to in the Deputy's question for execution and this contract is currently under review by officials of my Department. Following the conclusion of this review, I expect that the CSSO will be in contact with the applicant's solicitor in due course with a view to closing this sale.

288. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a person (details supplied) will receive payment for a special area of conservation bog offered

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to his Department in 2005 and which was closed to turf cutting in 2010; the reason for the delay in making payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32808/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): In May 2010, the voluntary bog purchase scheme was closed to new applicants. Processing of applications on hand has been slower than anticipated due to capacity constraints in undertaking the conveyancing work involved. The time it takes to process applications can also vary depending on the legal complexities involved.

With regard to the site referred to in the question, a letter of offer issued to the applicant on 15 June 2006 and the contract for the sale of the site was forwarded by the applicant's solicitor to my Department on 5 May 2010. Officials from my Department have examined this contract and are awaiting clearance from the Chief State Solicitor's Office in order to forward the file to that office.

It is acknowledged that some applicants have been waiting for some time for their sales to complete. My Department will be writing to all remaining applicants under the voluntary bog purchase scheme in the coming weeks to outline their options in light of recent policy decisions regarding the availability of alternative compensation arrangements.

Departmental Bodies

289. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32845/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): There are currently 14 State bodies/agencies funded from my Department's Vote Group. I should advise the Deputy that the question of the rationalisation and the reduction of State bodies is currently being considered in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and the overall budgetary and estimates process for 2012, and decisions on such matters will be made by the Government over the coming period.

The priorities set out in the programme for Government for the rationalisation of State agencies states that rationalisation must be cost effective and lead to a more transparent, accountable and efficient public service.

Commemorative Events

290. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of plans for the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising; the structures in place to arrange this commemorative event; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32873/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Following the Taoiseach's invitation to Party Leaders earlier this year, nominations for the Oireachtas Consultation Group on Centenary Commemorations, which includes the 1916 Centenary, were:

Mark Daly

Aonghus Ó Snodaigh

Catherine Murphy

Maureen O'Sullivan

Kathryn Reilly

Mary White

This Consultation Group, which is chaired by me, held its first meeting in July and I will shortly be arranging to hold another meeting. The Deputy will appreciate that planning for a commemoration programme will have to be sensitive to the current circumstances and I anticipate that this will be reflected in the scope and scale of any proposals emerging.

National Asset Management Agency

291. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he has had any discussions with the National Assets Management Agency regarding the possibility of capturing for the public good buildings under NAMA's remit which have no commercial potential and which might be suitable as local facilities for art and culture; if any discussions have yielded a positive outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32874/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I refer the Deputy to my answer to Parliamentary Question No 60 of Tuesday 18 October, 2011. I have met the chair and chief executive of NAMA in relation to the potential use of NAMA buildings for cultural purposes.

NAMA states that it is required to deal with a range of sensitive financial matters in carrying out its functions and is restricted in regard to the information it may make available in relation to assets. Contacts, as appropriate, continue with NAMA.

Turbary Rights

292. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the numbers and take up of the various schemes offered as a solution to turf cutting cessation programme for individual counties; the number of cases outstanding; and if all applicants will have their moneys by end of year. [32886/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): Earlier this year, the Government announced a compensation package for those affected by the cessation of turf cutting in 53 raised bog special areas of conservation (SACs). The package offers qualifying turf cutters the option of a financial payment of €1,000 per year, index linked, for a period of 15 years or, where feasible, relocation to a non-designated bog where they can continue to cut turf. Qualifying applicants awaiting relocation can avail of the annual €1,000 payment or an annual delivery of turf to their homes.

My Department is currently processing applications under this Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme. Following a reminder issued from my Department, there has been an increased interest in the scheme with the vast majority of applications, and requests for application forms, being received in the week preceding the closing date for the scheme (31 October 2011). I have decided to extend the deadline for the receipt of applications until 31 December 2011 to allow potential applicants the time to gather the necessary legal documents.

The process of confirming details of ownership rights or of turbary rights, determining whether turf has been cut on a particular bog plot in the current year, following up with some applicants regarding supporting documentation can be complex and time consuming. However,

[Deputy Jimmy Deenihan.]

work on processing these applications is ongoing with a view to commencing payments before the end of this year.

In 2010 an interim payment scheme was operated and this scheme paid a once-off amount of €1,000 to those who could not continue to cut turf on designated sites in 2010.

Details of the numbers of applications under the two schemes are set out in the tables at Appendix 1 and 2.

Since 1999 my Department has operated a voluntary bog purchase scheme under which sites in designated bogs have been purchased by the Department at agreed rates. In May 2010, this scheme was closed to new applicants. Processing of applications on hand has been slower than anticipated due to capacity constraints in undertaking the conveyancing work involved. The time it takes to process applications can also vary depending on the legal complexities involved.

It is acknowledged that some applicants have been waiting for several years for their sales to complete. My Department will be writing to all remaining applicants under the voluntary bog purchase scheme in the coming weeks to outline their options in light of recent policy decisions regarding the availability of alternative compensation arrangements.

Details of the scheme are not readily available in the format requested. This information is currently being compiled by my Department and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme 2011

Site Name	County	No. of applications
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	Cavan/Meath	37
Barroughter Bog	Galway	25
Cloonmoylan Bog	Galway	32
Kilsallagh Bog	Galway	11
Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinstack Turlough	Galway	9
Lough Lurgeen Bog/ Glenamaddy Turlough	Galway	19
Shankill West Bog	Galway	4
Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog	Kerry	1
Ballynafagh Bog	Kildare	38
Derrynabrock Bog	Mayo/Roscommon	2
Flughany Bog	Mayo/Sligo	11
Tawnaghbeg Bog	Mayo	1
All Saints Bog and Esker	Offaly	19
Clara Bog	Offaly	87
Ferbane Bog	Offaly	3
Mongan Bog	Offaly	2
Moyclare Bog	Offaly	24
Raheenmore Bog	Offaly	0
Sharavogue Bog	Offaly	2
Bellanagare Bog	Roscommon	69
Carrowbehy/Caher Bog	Roscommon	2
Cloonchambers Bog	Roscommon	4
Derrinea Bog	Roscommon	1
Cloonshanville Bog	Roscommon	6
Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog	Tipperary	2

Site Name	County	No. of applications
Kilcarren-Firville Bog	Tipperary	14
Garriskil Bog	Westmeath	0
Carrownagappul Bog	Galway	39
Lough Forbes Complex	Longford/Roscommon	7
Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog	Galway/Roscommon	9
Lough Corrib	Galway/Mayo	21
Applications received with no details of site		8

Interim Payment Scheme 2010

Site Name	County	No. of applications	Invalid Applications	Paid	In Processing
Killyconny Bog (Cloghbally)	Cavan/Meath	25	25	0	0
Barroughter Bog	Galway	17	3	14	0
Cloonmoylan Bog	Galway	11	5	5	1
Kilsallagh Bog	Galway	2	0	2	0
Lisnageeragh Bog and Ballinstack Turlough	Galway	4	2	2	0
Lough Lurgeen Bog/ Glenamaddy Turlough	Galway	12	8	4	0
Shankill West Bog	Galway	1	1	0	0
Sheheree (Ardagh) Bog	Kerry	0	0	0	0
Ballynafagh Bog	Kildare	27	8	19	0
Flughany Bog	Mayo/Sligo	1	0	1	0
All Saints Bog and Esker	Offaly	13	2	11	0
Clara Bog	Offaly	84	14	70	0
Ferbane Bog	Offaly	1	0	1	0
Mongan Bog	Offaly	2	2	0	0
Moyclare Bog	Offaly	21	1	20	0
Raheenmore Bog	Offaly	1	1	0	0
Sharavogue Bog	Offaly	1	1	0	0
Bellanagare Bog	Roscommon	17	6	11	0
Carrowbehy/Caher Bog	Roscommon	3	2	1	0
Cloonchambers Bog	Roscommon	2	2	0	0
Derrinea Bog	Roscommon	0	0	0	0
Cloonshanville Bog	Roscommon	3	2	1	0
Ballyduff/Clonfinane Bog	Tipperary	4	2	2	0
Kilcarren-Firville Bog	Tipperary	9	4	5	0
Garriskil Bog	Westmeath	0	0	0	0
Carrownagappul Bog	Galway	11	5	4	2
Lough Forbes Complex	Longford/Roscommon	0	0	0	0
Corliskea/Trien/Cloonfelliv Bog	Galway/Roscommon	4	2	2	0
Lough Corrib	Galway/Mayo	2	0	2	0
River Moy	Mayo/Roscommon/Sligo	3	3	0	0
Other Sites		2	2	0	0

Grúp-Scéimeanna Uisce

293. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil deontais ar fáil óna Roinn le cabhrú le grúp-scéimeanna uisce Gaeltachta; agus mura bhfuil cén uair a cuireadh an scéim ar fionraí agus ar fógraíodh é seo go poiblí; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33123/11]

294. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cé mhéid iarratas ar dheontas a rinneadh faoi scéim deontais na ngrúp-scéimeanna Gaeltachta ó cuireadh an scéim ar fionraí, méid na ndeontas a lorgaíodh san iomlán, líon na scéimeanna a bhí i gceist; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33124/11]

295. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aige an scéim deontais do ghrúp-scéimeanna a athoscailt; agus má tá cén uair atá sé i gceist é sin a dhéanamh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33125/11]

296. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén soláthar a rinneadh i meastacháin na Roinne don bhliain 2011 do scéimeanna uisce agus séarachais; an méid atá caite go dáta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33126/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tá i gceist agam Ceisteanna Uimh. 293, 294, 295, agus 296 a thógáil le chéile.

Faoi mar is eol don Teachta, tá scéim ag mo Roinn faoina gcuirtear cúnaimh ar fáil do ghrúpscéimeanna uisce agus séarachais sa Ghaeltacht. Cé nach bhfuil an scéim sin curtha ar fionraí go foirmiúil, níl mo Roinn ag glacadh le hiarratais nua faoin scéim faoi láthair de bharr méid na ngealltanas atá ar lámh aici. Go deimhin, cuireadh in iúl d'fhiafraitheoiríéagsúla ó chomhairlí contae ó thús na bliana seo — ar a n-áirítear cás amháin ó Chontae Mhaigh Eo a luadh go sonrath — nach bhfuil mo Roinn ag glacadh le hiarratais nua faoin scéim.

Cuireadh soláthar €20,000 ar fáil don scéim in 2011 le freastal a dhéanamh ar scéimeanna atá ceadaithe le tamall. Cé nach bhfuil an soláthar seo caite go fóill, táim dóchasach go mbeidh a dhóthain ann le freastal a dhéanamh ar na riachtanais a bheidh ann i mbliana.

Polasaí Oileánda

297. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil freagracht aige as polasaí oileánda; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33127/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Is féidir liom a dheimhniú don Teachta go bhfuil na feidhmeanna a bhíodh lonnaithe sa Roinn Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta, mar a bhí, maidir leis na hoileáin amach ón gcósta tarmligthe chugamsa, mar Aire Stáit sa Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta.

Calafóirt Oileánda

298. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aige fóirdheontais a chur ar fáil do na húdaráis áitiúla a bhfuil céibheanna oileánda faoina gcúram a mbíonn seirbhísí fóirdheonaithe farantóireachta ag teacht chucu agus ag imeacht uathu agus an bhfuil costais arda reáchtála ag baint leo le cuidiú leis an gcostas maireachtála, atá i bhfad níos airde ar na hoileáin cheana féin, a choinneáil síos; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33129/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tá sé mar fhreagracht ar na húdaráis áitiúla íoc as na costais chothabhála a bhaineann leis na saoráidí atá faoina gcúram. Dá bhrí sin, níl i gceist ag mo Roinn fóirdheontas a chur ar fáil.

299. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aige diúltú d'aon éileamh ar arduithe ar tháillí paisinéirí ag éirí as cinneadh Chomhairle Condae na Gaillimhe táillí calafoirt a chur i bhfeidhm i gCill Rónáin, Inis Mór; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33130/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tá uasmhéid na dtáillí taistil le haghaidh paisinéirí don tseirbhís seo sonraithe sa chonradh idir an comhlacht farantóireachta agus mo Roinnse. Is cúram do Chomhairle Contae na Gaillimhe é na táillí calafoirt atá luaite sa cheist. Tá na táillí sin neamhspleách ar na táillí taistil atá fóirdheonaithe ag mo Roinnse. Dá bhrí sin, níl aon fhreagracht ag mo Roinn i leith na dtáillí calafoirt.

300. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé i gceist aige dul i gcomhairle leis na hAirí Ránna Comhshaoil, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil agus Talamhaíochta, Bia agus Iascaigh le cinntiú nach mbeidh ar bháid iascaigh a íocann táillí cuain ag na calafoirt iascaigh táillí breise a íoc ar na calafoirt oileánda; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33131/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Bíonn teagmháil rialta ag mo Roinnse leis na Ránna cuí maidir le nithe éagsúla ar na hoileáin. Sa chás atá luaite ag an Teachta, luíonn an fhreagracht maidir leis na táillí ar úinéirí na saoráidí agus níl aon ról díreach ag mo Roinn chomh fada is a bhaineann sé leis na táillí sin.

301. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta le pleanáil don síneadh ar Chéibh Inis Oírr; agus cén uair atá súil an togra seo a chur ar tairiscint agus cén uair atá súil go mbeidh sé críochnaithe; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33133/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tuigtear do mo Roinn go bhfuil cead pleanála agus ceadúnas forchladaigh faighte ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe don fhorbairt atá i gceist. Tuigtear do mo Roinn fosta nach bhfuil sé beartaithe dul chun tairisceana sa ghearrthéarma toisc nach bhfuil na hacmhainní ar fáil chun dul i mbun na forbartha faoi láthair ar Ché Inis Oírr.

Céibheanna na nOileán

302. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta an ndearna Comhairle Condae na Gaillimhe iarratas ar dheontas le solas a chur ar an tonn-chosc ag Céibh an Chalaigh Mhóir; agus má rinne cén uair a dhéanfar cinneadh ar an iarratas; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33134/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Níl aon iarratas faighte ag mo Roinn ó Chomhairle Contae na Gaillimhe ar dheontas le solas a chur ar an tonn-chosc ag Cé an Chalaigh Mhóir ar Inis Meáin.

303. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta leis an gcéad chéim eile d'fhorbairt Chéibh an Chalaídh Mhóir in Inis Meán; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33135/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Tuigtear do mo Roinn go bhfuil réamh-ullmhúchán á dhéanamh ag Comhairle Contae na Gaillimhe d'iarratas ar chead pleanála don fhorbairt seo ar Ché an Chalaídh Mhóir in Inis Meáin.

Scéimeanna Feabhsúcháin Gaeltachta

304. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta Ealaíon cén soláthar a cuireadh ar fáil sna meastacháin athbhreithnite i mbliana do shaoráidí spóirt agus caitheamh aimsire; cé méid de sin atá caite go dáta; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33136/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Cuireadh €1.3m ar fáil do mo Roinn le caitheamh ar shaoráidí spóirt agus caitheamh aimsire sa Ghaeltacht in 2011 agus táthar sásta gur leor an méid sin le freastal bunúsach a dhéanamh ar na riachtanais atá ann.

Tuigtear dom go bhfuil caiteachas de €655,236 déanta faoin scéim go dáta agus go bhfuiltear ag súil leis go mbeidh éilimh íocaíochta déanta ar an bhfuilleach roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Turbary Rights

305. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if a farmer who has 19 acres of bogland in special area of conservation (details supplied) in County Roscommon who has not cut turf for the past five years on this land is entitled to the compensation package. [33321/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The qualifying criteria for the Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme, announced earlier this year require that:

- the claimant must have a legal interest in a site that is in one of the 53 raised bog Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). This could be through ownership of land or a turbary (turf-cutting) right within one of these designated sites.
- the claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbary rights on the land in question on 25th May 2010.
- the turbary on the site must not be exhausted.
- the claimant must have been cutting turf on the lands in question during the five year period up to the 25th of May 2010.
- up to 29 raised bog SACs on which turf cutting has ended, no turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property or has occurred in 2011. If turf was cut in 2011 and all other qualifying criteria are met, payment or delivery of turf will not commence until 2012.

Any person, who feels that they qualify for compensation, should submit a completed Cessation of Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme application form to my Department. Each application will be examined within my Department.

The operation of this scheme will be kept under review. In this regard, the Peatlands Council has been tasked with advising me in relation to issues of compensation that may arise under the scheme.

If an individual has a legal interest in one of the 53 designated sites and had not been extracting turf in the five years up to 25th of May 2010, my Department is willing to examine the feasibility of relocating such interests to alternative non-designated bogs.

Ministerial Appointments

306. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if former Government officeholders are in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33941/11]

307. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33955/11]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 306 and 307 together.

I wish to advise the Deputy that I have not appointed any former Government office holders to any position under the remit of my Department. In relation to the Deputy's query as to whether any former Government office holders are currently in positions and were appointed by former Governments, I must also advise the Deputy that a former Minister, Mr. Gerry Collins, is a member of the Board of the National Museum of Ireland and his term of office will expire on 20 October 2015. Remuneration for this position is €5,985 per annum. In relation to expense arrangements that apply in the bodies funded from my Department's Vote Group, I am advised that any such expenses are paid in accordance with the guidelines and rules set down by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Fisheries Protection

308. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there is a sufficient number of fishery officers dedicated to the Barrow, Nore, Suir rivers catchment area to police illegal fishing activity; the number of personnel involved; the number of fines issued or court cases taken against individuals for illegal fishing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32790/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is charged with ensuring the protection and conservation of our inland fisheries resource including enforcement of the Fisheries Acts, conservation Bye-laws and orders.

I am advised that there are currently 12 full-time IFI officers involved in, amongst other duties, policing illegal fishing activity in the area that covers the River Barrow, Nore and Suir catchments. In addition, there were three temporary officers employed for four months during the high season of 2011. The area (10,260 km²) that these officers police also covers the

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Wexford and Waterford coasts including the freshwater and tidal sections of the rivers Mahon, Colligan, Tay, Owenduff and Corock.

I am informed that IFI officers patrol the area in a manner which optimises staff resources and targets areas and times when illegal activity is likely to be greatest. This involves undertaking land and boat based policing over a 24 hour, 7 day per week period, including responses to reported incidents. I am reluctant to offer any more details in case it might compromise their operations.

I understand that so far this year there have been eight court cases progressed through the courts relating to illegal fishing in the Rivers Barrow, Nore and Suir and 25 on the spot fines have been issued by fisheries officers.

It is a day-to-day operational matter for IFI to deploy the protection and enforcement resources available according to appropriate risk assessment and identified priorities.

Energy Prices

309. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the new practice of electricity supply companies of requiring a substantial deposit on new and renewing contracts; if consideration has been given to the detrimental effect on business, the restriction on competition and the risk to the deposit if the supplier should cease trading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32818/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Responsibility for the regulation of the electricity and gas markets is a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), which is an independent statutory body. I have no statutory function in the setting of electricity supply contracts in the business or domestic sectors.

The setting of supply contracts is a day to day operational matter for electricity supply companies. These contracts are governed by the CER's guidelines for suppliers' Codes of Practice, Customer Charter and Terms and Conditions of Supply for Household Customers.

My Department is advised by the CER that suppliers have always had requirements regarding the provision of deposits in advance. Due to the general economic situation, it is possible that suppliers are strictly applying these requirements as standard, whereas in the past they may have waived them.

One of the main reasons that electricity and gas suppliers require deposits is that their customers consume the energy supplied in advance and pay in arrears. Therefore suppliers must always meet the cost of providing the energy in advance of payment and consequently they run the risk of non-payment from their customers. This is in contrast to suppliers of other energy products, such as heating oil or Liquid Petroleum Gas (LPG), as customers are required to pay for these products in advance.

The CER is currently consulting on revised guidelines for suppliers' Codes of Practice, Customer Charter and Terms and Conditions of Supply for Household Customers. It has been proposed in the consultation process that in relation to household customers, the supplier should return a deposit after one year if the customer has met the supplier's credit terms.

In any commercial dealings, if a customer pays a deposit to an enterprise that subsequently goes out of business, that customer risks losing their deposit. If a business goes into liquidation, customers may end up as unsecured creditors, the last group to be paid by the liquidator.

Television Reception

310. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will request RTE to conduct an assessment of the level of Saorview availability in the area around Clonmany, County Donegal, before the switch off of analogue television in October 2012; if RTE will consider erecting a digital mast in the area to ensure a strong Saorview service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32834/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Issues relating to television coverage and the levels of availability in specific areas of the country are an operational matter for RTE as is the building and maintaining of television broadcast masts.

The Broadcasting Act 2009 provides for RTE to build, roll-out and maintain a digital TV network. RTE has informed my Department that the current analogue TV network covers 98% of the population and that its new digital TV network called SAORVIEW will also cover 98% of the population.

RTE has developed a website (*www.saorview.ie*) providing information on the SAORVIEW service including coverage information and information on transmission sites. Further information on transmitter locations is available from RTE Networks Limited.

Departmental Bodies

311. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32847/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I can inform the Deputy that State bodies and companies under the remit of my Department have been cut by 9 through merger or abolition since the formation of my Department in 2007 as set out in the table below. Proposals for further restructuring of bodies under my remit are being considered by Government in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure.

Restructuring since establishment of Department in June 2007	Current Status/Savings
1. Abolish The National Salmon Commission	Abolished on the enactment of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010. No Exchequer spending was incurred in relation to the National Salmon Commission in either 2009 or 2010.
2. Merge BCI and BCC	BCI and BCC were dissolved under the Broadcasting Act 2009 and subsumed into the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland. The BAI is now a levy based organisation and is not funded by the Exchequer. The last full year of Exchequer funding in 2008 amounted to €6.5m.
3. Merge Regional Fisheries Boards	Merger took effect on 1 July 2010 on the establishment of Inland Fisheries Ireland following the enactment of the Inland Fisheries Ireland Act 2010. Direct Exchequer funding for Inland Fisheries Ireland was reduced by €2.582 million in 2010 compared to 2009 and there was a further €0.749 million reduction in 2011 although not all of this is attributable to savings arising from restructuring of the inland fisheries sector.

Grant Payments

312. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in

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County Donegal which was approved by Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta under the warmer homes scheme but has yet to be allocated to a contractor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33014/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers Better Energy: Warmer Homes on behalf of my Department, which is delivered through a range of Community Based Organisations (CBOs), augmented by a panel of private contractors. The energy poverty strand of Better Energy aims to provide energy efficiency improvements to low-income homes unable to afford the cost of implementing such measures. This will enable over 20,000 low-income homes to benefit from energy efficiency retrofit measures this year. Queries in relation to individual applications are an operational matter for the SEAI and dedicated hotlines for both schemes are available (Better Energy: Warmer Homes hotline — 1800 250 204 and Better Energy: Homes hotline — 1850 927 000). In addition, the SEAI has recently established a specific email address for queries from Oireachtas members, which can be sent to oireachtas@seai.ie and will be dealt with promptly.

The SEAI advises that all CBOs are required to upload details of applicants to Better Energy: Warmer Homes to the national database. SEAI also advises that there are challenges associated with the liquidation of Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) and the Authority is endeavouring to reconcile all homes registered for Warmer Homes with MFG against this database. All homes previously registered with MFG identified on the national database will be delivered through a panel of private contractors in order to address those homes with works outstanding, subject to available resources.

My officials have requested that the SEAI contact the homeowner in question directly to follow up on the application. MFG applicants should be encouraged to contact the SEAI hotline directly to ensure that they are on the national database.

There has been a significant uptake in applications and interest in the scheme over the last three years. The success of the scheme has led to an unprecedented demand and a subsequent increase in waiting times. While surveys are carried out on eligible homes and a number of measures are identified, the SEAI has to prioritise lower cost measures, in order to address the maximum number of vulnerable homes.

Telecommunications Services

313. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding problems with landlines in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [33199/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Issues relating to the provision of telecommunications services are, in the first instance, a matter for the relevant service provider operating in a fully liberalised market. The service provider retains the primary responsibility for complaint resolution.

Statutory responsibility for the regulation of the electronic communication sector including issues surrounding the quality of services delivered to the consumer rests with the independent regulator, the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). Users of services who are experiencing problems with the services they receive may wish to contact ComReg.

ComReg can be contacted as follows:- Commission for Communications Regulation, Block DEF, Abbey Court, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1, — on 01 804 9600/Lo call 1890 229668 or at www.askcomreg.ie.

Appointments to State Boards

314. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the names of the persons on the boards of RTE, ESB, and Bord Gáis; when the term of each member of the board is due for renewal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33310/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I wish to inform the Deputy that the information requested is set out in the following table, which outlines all appointment dates for current members of RTE, ESB and BGÉ.

Board	Member	First Appointed	Term	Reappointed	Term-End Date
RTE	Mr Tom Savage	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Mr Alan Gilsean	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Mr Fergus Armstrong	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Mr Sean O'Sullivan	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Ms Patricia Quinn	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Ms Karlin Lillington	24/02/2009	2	01/09/2009	31/08/2014
RTE	Mr Noel Curran	Ex Officio			
RTE	Ms Orlaith Carmody	16/02/2010	1		16/02/2015
RTE	Mr Joe Little	30/09/2009	1		31/08/2014
RTE	Ms Aileen O'Meara	16/02/2010	1		16/02/2015
RTE	Ms Eunice O'Raw	16/02/2010	1		16/02/2015
RTE	Mr Stuart Switzer	16/02/2010	1		16/02/2015
ESB	Mr Brendan Byrne	01/09/2004	2	09/09/2009	08/09/2014
ESB	Mr Lochlann Quinn	22/01/2008	1		21/01/2013
ESB	Mr Pdraig Mc Manus	Ex Officio			
ESB	Ms Ellvena Graham	05/10/2010	1		04/10/2015
ESB	Ms Noreen Wright	28/06/2011	1		27/06/2016
ESB	Mr Garry Keegan	06/06/2007	1		05/06/2012
ESB	Mr Seamus Mallon	21/02/2006	2	03/05/2011	02/05/2016
ESB	Mr Sean Conlan	23/10/2007	1		22/10/2012
ESB	Mr John Coleman	01/01/2007	2	01/01/2011	31/12/2014
ESB	Mr Tony Merriman	01/01/2007	2	01/01/2011	31/12/2014
ESB	Mr Dave Byrne	01/01/2011	1		31/12/2014
ESB	Mr Sean Kelly	01/01/2011	1		31/12/2014
BGÉ	Ms Rose Hynes	21/06/2006	2	28/07/2009	27/07/2014
BGÉ	Mr John Mulins	Ex Officio			
BGÉ	Mr Aidan Eames	03/03/2004	2	10/06/2009	09/06/2014
BGÉ	Mr Prionsias Kitt	17/04/2002	2	06/06/2007	05/06/2012
BGÉ	Mr Mike O'Hara	18/12/2007	1		17/12/2012
BGÉ	Mr Laurence Crowley	01/08/2009	1		31/07/2014
BGÉ	Mr Laurence Shields	10/06/2009	1		09/06/2014
BGÉ	Mr Joe O'Flynn	28/11/2008	1		27/11/2013
BGÉ	Ms Imelda Hurley	23/11/2010	1		22/11/2015

National Inland Fisheries Forum

315. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

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Resources if he will provide the details of members making up the inland fisheries forum; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33336/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The National Inland Fisheries Forum was established by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in accordance with section 7(4)(a) of the Inland Fisheries Act 2010, (No 10, 2010).

The Forum consists of 60 members who were appointed, in accordance with the terms of reference agreed with IFI as provided for in section 7(4)(b) of the statute, following an open selection process conducted by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of IFI. I am advised that details of the membership of the forum are published on Inland Fisheries Ireland's website (www.fisheriesireland.ie).

The first meeting of the Forum took place on 20 October 2011.

I believe that the Forum will provide a meaningful channel of communication which will provide interested stakeholders with an opportunity to influence policies on how the resource is managed and developed in the current challenging economic climate and into the future.

Fishing Licences

316. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of salmon rod licenses sold nationwide in 2005 to 2010, inclusive; the amount of revenue raised in each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33393/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I am advised that details of the sale of all rod licences are appended to the annual report published by Inland Fisheries Ireland (and previously the Central and regional fisheries boards), which is available on its website. The following table provides the number of rod licences sold from 2005 to 2010 and the revenue raised from those sales.

Year	Licences Sold	Revenue Raised
2005	28,738	€897,851
2006	27,341	€895,376
2007	19,986	€1,208,492
2008	20,061	€1,329,626
2009	18,314	€1,227,592
2010	17,983	€1,093,598

I understand that in 2007, as part of a suite of conservation measures for the management of the wild salmon fishery following closure of the mixed stock fisheries at sea, a salmon conservation component was applied to all licence fees. This component was set at the same rate as the licence fee and effectively doubled the cost of the licence to the beneficiaries of the fishery closure.

Income generated from that component, under Ministerial direction, is specifically dedicated by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) to the rehabilitation of salmon habitats and stocks and associated conservation measures throughout the country.

I am advised that all of the proceeds of the licence fee income are reinvested, by IFI, in the conservation, protection and development of the inland fisheries resource.

Ministerial Appointments

317. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if former Government officeholders are in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33943/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I have had the records of my Department examined in relation to appointments to boards of state bodies under the aegis of my Department.

I can inform the Deputy that there are no former Government office holders currently in any position on a board under the aegis of my Department who have been appointed by me or by former Governments.

318. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33957/11]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I have had the records of my Department examined in relation to appointments to boards of State bodies under the aegis of my Department.

I can inform the Deputy that I have not appointed any former Government office holder to any position on a board under the aegis of my Department.

Security of the Elderly

319. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a panic button will be supplied to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33268/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department is responsible for the Seniors Alert Scheme. No application has been received in the Seniors Alert Section for the person referred to in the Question.

The Scheme supports qualifying older people, aged 65 and older, by providing funding towards monitored personal alarms and other items of security and safety equipment. Applications are made through the applicant's local community or voluntary group.

My Department has contacted the relevant local community group operating the scheme. The group will be in touch with the person referred to with a view to facilitating an application on his behalf.

Waste Management

320. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans for restructuring the waste market; the evaluation he has done on the benefits of side-by-side competition as opposed to franchise bidding; the scientific, economic and environmental evidence in support of this restructuring; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32747/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce competitive tendering for household waste collection, under which service providers would bid to provide waste collection services in a given area, for a given period of time and to a guaranteed level of service. This system of market structuring is known as franchise bidding. A Regulatory Impact Assessment is currently underway, the purpose of which is to evaluate options for the regulation of household waste collection markets, including both the current system of side-by-side competition and franchise bidding. The assessment is being informed by the outcomes of the recent public consultation process. I intend to bring policy proposals to Government before the end of the year.

Litter Pollution

321. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce a nationwide litter awareness initiative; the way he plans to deal with the litter problem across the country, specifically, on rural country roads which do not fall into boundaries of local tidy towns committees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32761/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In September 2011, I announced that I am preparing a new national anti-litter campaign which will raise awareness of the costs and the consequences of littering. It is intended that this campaign will be launched in spring 2012. At that time, I also announced that, in conjunction with this campaign, I would be introducing further initiatives to assist local authorities in their efforts to tackle litter generally. These include legislation designed to ensure that the punishment fits the crime in all cases and an anti-litter enforcement grant scheme for local authorities to enhance their existing enforcement activities, through measures such as the purchase of CCTV equipment to allow for the effective monitoring of known litter black spots.

In addition to these measures, my Department already has in place an Anti-Litter & Anti-Graffiti Awareness Grant Scheme, which allows local authorities the opportunity to apply for grant funding for suitable projects, such as adopt a road schemes. €1 million was made available under this Scheme this year and I specifically requested local authorities to investigate the possible roll-out of adopt a road schemes in their functional areas. Of the 34 submissions received from local authorities, 14 have applied for funding of adopt a road type schemes. This represents a significant increase over the 2010 figures, where 6 local authorities had projects of this nature in operation. It is estimated that the total cost of the projects this year will be in excess of €90,000, compared to approximately €33,000 in 2010.

Proposed Legislation

322. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding the commitment to enact climate change legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32766/11]

325. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he intends to bring climate change legislation forward for consideration before the UN talks on climate change which will take place in Durban in December 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32827/11]

341. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will ensure that climate legislation will be published in 2012 in line with the programme for Government. [33205/11]

356. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will bring the proposed climate change bill through the Oireachtas including committee stage before the UN talks on climate change in Durban, South Africa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33443/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 322, 325, 341 and 356 together.

I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 257, 258, 268, 269, 292, 294, 295 and 302 of 2 November 2011 which sets out the position in relation to climate legislation.

The Climate Policy Review was issued on 3 November 2011 and is available on my Department's website *www.environ.ie*.

Building Regulations

323. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the steps he is taking to address the non-representation of non-registered architects within the Building Regulations Advisory Body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32773/11]

324. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will acknowledge the role RIAI certified architects play in the design of buildings according to fire safety regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32774/11]

347. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will consider the introduction of a robust construction inspection regime, including mandatory inspections after the completion of every phase of building work, to ensure that standards in construction are improved and that scenarios such as that in Priory Hall, Dublin are never allowed to occur again. [33281/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 323, 324 and 347 together.

The Building Regulations Advisory Body (BRAB) is a statutory body whose primary function is to advise the Minister on matters relating to the Building Regulations. All proposals to change the Building Regulations are subject to public consultation and anyone with an interest in such matters is welcome to contribute their views in this way. Thus, while membership of BRAB is necessarily limited to a relatively small grouping of both private industry and public sector representatives, the opportunity exists for all concerned individuals and groups to contribute to the ongoing review of the Building Regulations in a real and meaningful way.

The responsibilities of owners, designers and builders/developers in relation to the design and construction of buildings are clearly set out under the Building Control Acts 1990 and 2007.

In July 2011, I announced a number of measures to be advanced by my Department and local authorities with a view to improving compliance with, and oversight of, the requirements of the Building Regulations.

In broad terms the measures will involve:—

(a) the introduction of mandatory certificates of compliance by builders and designers of buildings confirming that the statutory requirements of the Building Regulations have been met;

(b) more efficient pooling of building control staff and resources across the local authority sector to ensure more effective and meaningful oversight of building activity;

[Deputy Phil Hogan.]

(c) standardised approaches and common protocols to ensure nationwide consistency in the administration of building control functions;

(d) better support and further development of the building control function nationwide.

The mandatory certification and improved inspection arrangements outlined above are key reforms which, I believe, will have the capacity to improve the quality of buildings and will lead to further strengthening of the regulatory regime as early as possible in 2012.

Question No. 325 answered with Question No. 322.

Departmental Bodies

326. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32850/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): As part of a rigorous appraisal of the State Agencies under the aegis of my Department, I announced, in October, 2011, further measures in relation to the rationalisation programme with the overall number of agencies being reduced from 21 to 12. The Agencies under the aegis of my Department are identified in the table below.

No.	Body
1	An Bord Pleanála
2	Building Regulations Advisory Board
3	Affordable Homes Partnership
4	An Chomhairle Leabharlanna
5	Comhar
6	Centre for Housing Research
7	Dublin Docklands Development Authority
8	Environmental Protection Agency
9	Fire Services Council
10	Housing Finance Agency
11	Irish Water Safety
12	Limerick Northside Regeneration Agency
13	Limerick Southside Regeneration Agency
14	Local Government Computer Services Board
15	Local Government Management Services Board
16	National Building Agency
17	National Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committee
18	Private Residential Tenancies Board
19	Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland
20	Rent Tribunal
21	Western Development Commission

An Chomhairle Leabharlanna will be dissolved, with any key residual functions to be subsumed into an existing public body.

The Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency (HSCA) has been established and is operating on an administrative basis. It rationalises the functions of the National Building Agency (NBA), the Affordable Homes Partnership (AHP) and the Centre for Housing Research (CHR). The AHP and the CHR have been closed down and the NBA is in the process of being wound down.

The Local Government Management Services Board and the Local Government Computer Services Board are merging as the Local Government Management Agency. Pending necessary legislation, a common board and Chief Executive have been put in place on an interim basis and joint management arrangements are being implemented. The rationalisation process includes the closure of regional offices in Limerick and Waterford and other non-pay savings have been achieved by rationalising the use of products and services such as software licensing, hardware infrastructure, phone systems etc.

The Limerick Northside and Southside Regeneration Agencies are being serviced by a single executive, and resources freed up through this are being used to deliver the Phase 1 implementation plans for Limerick Regeneration. (The agencies' roles will be replaced through the development of a joint management arrangement in 2012 for Limerick City and Limerick County Council as a step to the merger of the two Councils).

The functions of the Fire Services Council are now subsumed into my Department.

The sustainable development role performed by Comhar, the Sustainable Development Council, is to be integrated into the National Economic and Social Council (NESC).

The administrative functions of the Rent Tribunal have transferred to the Private Residential Tenancies Board.

The agency rationalisation/efficiency agenda will be kept under review insofar as all agencies under my Department's aegis are concerned.

Pobal, is a not-for-profit company with charitable status, which manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU.

The Dormant Accounts Board operated with Departmental administrative support. The Dormant Accounts Board (Amendment) Bill 2011 proposes to dissolve the Dormant Accounts Board.

Community Development

327. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he expects the older people councils highlighted in the programme for Government to be established; the work done to date by him on the establishment of such councils; the role he envisages for these councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32871/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The establishment of Older People Councils is part of the delivery of the overall National Positive Ageing Strategy, which is a matter for my colleague, the Minister for Health. The Strategy is being led by that the Department of Health. I envisage that the role of local government, through the multi-agency County/City Development Board structure, will be to facilitate the county / city structure of Older People Councils if, and when, requested by the Department of Health.

Planning Issues

328. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he intends to proceed with plans to make the planning process more democratic and to rebalance power towards elected representatives; his views on whether it is desirable that before a local authority acquires any land or an asset it should seek the approval and consent of the elected members of that local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32877/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): The planning code is kept under review in my Department to ensure that there continues to be adequate participation by public representatives in decision-making and policy formulation.

The local government system is based on the principle that major decisions of policy rest with the elected council (reserved functions), with the implementation of this policy on a day-to-day basis resting with the City or County Manager (executive functions). Under the Local Government Act 2001 the acquisition or disposal of land or an agreement regarding the use of land is an Executive Function.

Departmental Investigations

329. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the action taken by him when he received a request from a local authority for a local public inquiry to be established under the Local Government Act into the granting of a waste permit (details supplied); the position regarding this issue; if it was considered by his predecessor; if a decision was reached on the way to respond to this request by the elected members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32878/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 306 and 307 of 4 February 2010 together with the reply to Question No. 1448 of 29 September 2010. This matter is the subject of ongoing consideration in my Department and a decision will be made in due course.

Local Authority Housing

330. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has given approval to Monaghan County Council and Respond Housing Association to progress their proposals for a group home at Drummond Otra, Carrickmacross which will cater for women with physical and sensory disabilities; if the housing association can submit the planning application in this regard; if he is committed to this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32936/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): Monaghan County Council submitted proposals to my Department in December 2009 for the provision of a group home for people with physical and sensory disabilities at Drummond Otra, Carrickmacross. Provisional approval for the project issued in July 2010 subject to certain cost and design issues being addressed. My Department anticipates receiving revised proposals from the Council in the near future. Further progress is contingent on a successful outcome to the assessment process.

Water Charges

331. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local

Government the way he plans to install water metres in households throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33005/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Memorandum of Understanding between Ireland and the EU/IMF includes a commitment to introduce water charges for households. The Programme for Government provides for the introduction of a fair funding model to deliver clean and reliable water. The objective is to install water meters in households connected to public water supplies and move to a charging system based on usage. My Department is currently preparing a strategy to implement these proposals and further details will be announced following the Government's consideration of the proposals.

Local Authority Services

332. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the procedure to have a housing estate taken in charge by a local authority when the developer is no longer trading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33049/11]

333. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the procedure to have a housing estate taken in charge by a local authority when the developer is no longer trading, the residents wish to instigate the procedure and when the estate and all roads and services are complete to the required standard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33051/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): I propose to take Questions Nos. 332 and 333 together.

Section 180 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 applies to estates which have been granted planning permission and include the construction of 2 or more houses (which as defined in the Act includes apartments) and the provision of new roads, open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermains or drains.

In relation to estates which have been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority in accordance with the permission, section 180 provides that the planning authority must if requested to do so by the developer or by the majority of the qualified electors who are owners of the houses involved, initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act 1993 for declaring the road(s) to be public roads, for whose maintenance the local authority will then be responsible.

Section 11 of the Roads Act empowers a local authority to, by order, declare any road over which a public right of way exists to be a public road. Before making an order the local authority must be satisfied the road is of general public utility, consider the financial implications of taking the road in charge and consult with the public/consider any objections received. The consideration of the objections and the making of the order declaring the road to be a public road is a reserved function, so that the decision whether to take the road in charge is ultimately one for the discretion of the elected members.

In relation to estates which have not been completed to the satisfaction of the planning authority and enforcement proceedings have not been commenced within the relevant period section 180 also provides that the planning authority must, if requested to do so by the majority of the owners, initiate the procedures in section 11 of the Roads Act. However, in this case the section provides that the provision in section 11 of the Roads Act requiring the authority to consider the financial implications of taking the road in charge shall be disregarded.

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Section 180 also provides that where a planning authority, in complying with S.180, makes an order under section 11 of the Roads Act, it must also take in charge any open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermains, or drains within the attendant grounds of the development.

Section 180 was amended in the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010 to provide that a planning authority may take in charge an unfinished estate, at the request of the owners of the housing units, at any time after the expiration of the planning permission, in situations where enforcement actions have commenced or where the planning authority consider that enforcement action will not result in the satisfactory completion of the estate by the developer. Planning authorities have also been empowered to take in charge part of an estate or some, but not all, of the facilities in an estate.

Calaidh agus Céanna

334. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Comhshaoil, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil cén uair a cheadófar scéim séarachais do Chill Rónáin ar Árainn; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33138/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Soláthraíonn An Clár Infheistíochta Seirbhísí Uisce 2010-2012, a bhfuil cóip ar fáil i Leabharlann an Oireachtais, maidir le forbairt raon cuimsitheach de bhonneagar na seirbhísí uisce nua i gContae na Gaillimhe. Cuimsíonn an Clár conarthaí atá faoi thógáil agus atá le tusú le luach os cionn €130 milliún i gContae na Gaillimhe i rith tréimhse an Chláir. Ní raibh an Scéim Séarachais Chill Rónáin i measc na conarthaí agus na scéimeanna tosaíochta roghnaithe le cur san áireamh sa Chlár reatha.

Is é aidhm ag an gClár tús áite a thabhairt do thionscadail a chomhlíonann saincheisteanna comhshaoil ?? agus a thugan tacaíocht do fostaíocht agus forbairt eacnamaíochta. Ba é an measúnú ar riachtanais ullmhaithe a rinne na húdaráis áitiúla lena n-áirítear Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, mar fhreagra ar iarratas ón Roinn a bhí mar príomh ionchur d'fhorbairt an Chláir. Rinneadh measúnú ina dhiaidh sin sa Roinn i gcomhthéacs na cistí atá ar fáil agus na critéir lárnacha a chomhlánú lena cinn a úsáidtear ag na húdaráis. Níl dul thairis, tríd an bpróiseas seo, bhí ar thionscadal áirithe a bhí molta slí a ghéill do thionscadal eile a bhí níos straitéiseach no tábhachtach.

Departmental Agencies

335. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 365 of 25 October 2011, the rate of interest that the Housing Finance Agency is paying on these bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33146/11]

336. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 365 of 25 October 2011, the rate of interest that the local authorities are paying to the Housing Finance Agency for loans of this type that are still outstanding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33149/11]

337. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 365 of 25 October 2011, if local authorities were permitted to charge an interest rate in excess of the 10.5% mentioned in his answer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33158/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): I propose to take Questions Nos. 335 to 337, inclusive, together.

The HFA pays an interest rate of 10% on the loans in question, with the corresponding rate charged on the loans to local authorities also being 10% per annum. The HFA thereby makes no margin on these loans.

Local authorities are permitted to add an administration charge of 0.5% and borrowers also pay an additional 0.5615% to cover their mortgage protection insurance.

Financial Services Regulation

338. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 124 of 25 October 2011, if local authorities are also obliged to establish a dedicated arrears support unit and an internal appeals board; if a decision on mortgage arrears with a local authority can be appealed directly to him or to another outside body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33159/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): In March 2010, my Department issued comprehensive guidance to local authorities on the treatment of mortgage arrears. That guidance was based on the Central Bank's first statutory Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears to ensure that cases of local authority mortgage arrears are handled in a manner that is sympathetic to the needs of the particular household, while also protecting the position of the local authority concerned. To reflect the content of the Central Bank's revised Code of Conduct — which replaced the previous code from 1 January 2011 and was informed by the deliberations of the Expert Group on Mortgage Arrears and Personal Debt — my Department is currently preparing updated guidance to local authorities in consultation with the City and County Managers Association.

The new guidance will provide for the introduction, inter alia, of:

- dedicated arrears support,
- a common mortgage arrears resolution process (MARP),
- a process for appeal of decisions reached under the MARP, and;
- a range of options for the treatment of arrears in particular cases.

Social and Affordable Housing

339. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is any restriction on a person being an applicant for social housing in a county in which they are not currently residing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33161/11]

340. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is any restriction on a person being an applicant for social housing in more than one county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33162/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): I propose to take Questions Nos. 339 and 340 together.

A new system of social housing assessments by housing authorities came into force on 1 April 2011 and is operated in accordance with regulations made under section 20 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009. One objective of the new arrangements is to streamline

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the process of applying for social housing support, both for the applicant and the local authority, while at the same time allowing a reasonable level of choice to households as to the areas in which they would like to receive social housing support.

Under the regulations, a household may apply to one housing authority only for social housing support. That housing authority is usually the housing authority for the functional area in which the household normally resides or with which the household has a local connection. A household has a local connection with the functional area of a housing authority if a household member—

- lived in the area at any time for a continuous 5-year period;
- is employed in the area or within 15 km of the area;
- is in full-time education, or attending specialist medical care, in the area; or
- has a relative living in the area for at least 2 years.

The regulations define the relative of a household member as a parent, adult child or sibling and including another relative, such as a step-parent, grandparent, grandchild, aunt or uncle, who has close links with the household member in the form of commitment or dependence.

An applicant household may specify up to three areas of choice for the receipt of social housing support within the county (including the city, where relevant) of the housing authority of application. At least one of these areas of choice must be in the functional area of the housing authority of application. For example, a household living in, or having a local connection with, a town council area may apply for housing support to that town council and may also express preferences to live in 2 other areas outside the town concerned but within the county boundaries. Similarly, a household living in, or having a local connection with, a county area may apply to the county council concerned, but may also specify 2 other areas of choice for the receipt of social housing support within city or town council areas in the county. Thus, a household qualified for social housing support from 3 different housing authorities in a county will be entered on the waiting lists of each of those authorities.

The regulations also empower a housing authority, at its discretion, to carry out a social housing assessment for a household that does not meet the residence or local connection criteria in respect of its functional area. In this case, the household may specify areas of choice within the functional area of that housing authority only.

Question No. 341 answered with Question No. 322.

Proposed Legislation

342. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht will play a central role to ensure that the final law is robust and ensures Ireland will be well placed to position itself as a hub for green energy. [33206/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I expect the Joint Committee on the Environment, Transport, Culture and the Gaeltacht to make an important ongoing contribution to the enactment of primary legislation on environmental protection.

Environmental Policy

343. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding radon testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33249/11]

344. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a radon remedial grant scheme will be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33252/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 343 and 344 together.

The RPII operates a radon advice and testing service in line with its statutory function to make the public aware of the hazards of ionising radiation including radon gas. I have no plans to review the role of the Institute in this regard.

In addition to providing information on its own testing service, the RPII also lists private radon testing services on its website. Private radon testing service providers are notified in advance of proposed RPII radon publicity campaigns. This enables private companies to avail of business opportunities created by these campaigns, and many private companies arrange advertising of their own to coincide with the RPII campaigns. RPII mailshots to householders in High Radon Areas include a list of all radon measurement services as well as information on the service offered by the RPII.

Through support for the RPII's radon advice and awareness work, my Department is supporting efforts to raise public awareness of the risks posed by radon, particularly in the home. Householders, particularly those in known high radon areas, have been strongly encouraged to have their homes tested for radon and to undertake remediation works where necessary. However, I have no plans at present to make it mandatory to have dwellings here tested for radon as a condition of sale when buying or renting a dwelling. There is no existing grant scheme administered by my Department for household radon remediation. The cost of a household radon test is typically around €55.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

345. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on the construction of integrated constructed wetlands as a method of waste water treatment; if he agrees that these are effective methods of waste water treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33261/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Integrated constructed wetlands have a role to play in the provision of waste-water treatment facilities. In support of this, my Department published Integrated Constructed Wetlands — Guidance Document for Farmyard Soiled Water and Domestic Wastewater Applications, in November 2010.

Such wetlands can not only provide a sustainable, cost-effective means of treating wastewater but can also provide ancillary services such as carbon sequestration, habitat provision and flood attenuation.

Funding for eight integrated constructed wetland projects, amounting to €1.3 million in total, has been approved under the Small Schemes element of the Rural Water Programme this year.

EU Funding

346. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will supply details of grants paid to a project (details supplied) through the Combat Poverty Agency; the levels of moneys paid and the particular activities and sectors targeted for assistance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33269/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The organisation referred to by the Deputy was awarded grant aid of €600,568 in July 2002 under the EU co-funded PEACE II Programme. This was to assist ex-political prisoners, their families and others to access education, training, advice and mentoring as a progression to employment, equality and full integration.

Specifically, the funding was committed to enhance the welfare, integration and development of ex-republican prisoners, displaced people and former combatants and their families in Leitrim, west Cavan, and the Arigna area—

- to assist survivors of conflict to overcome the psychological and emotional effects of their experiences;
- to improve their position in the economy through the welfare advice, emotional support, training, education, transport and childcare support which will address and assist in removing barriers to inclusion and reconciliation; and
- to assist in healing divisions in communities brought about by conflict.

In specifically addressing the needs of ex-prisoners and their families, this funding under PEACE II was designed to underpin the commitments made by the two governments on the reintegration of politically motivated prisoners. The project was implemented over a three and a half year period from July 2002 until December 2005 and, during this time, in excess of 800 people availed of the services or supports provided. In addition, eight individuals were trained in reconciliation and conflict resolution.

Following on from the PEACE II grant, an additional award of €385,500 was made in January 2006 in respect of the PEACE II Extension Programme. This was essentially a two and a half year extension to the work undertaken under the original project. As an Employment Enhancement Programme, it was aimed at advancing education, relieving poverty, outreaching to other groups or individuals who may consider or perceive the target group as adversaries, providing support and training for Republican political ex-prisoners and their families, displaced persons, former combatants and their families, to facilitate their resettlement and reintegration into society.

Some of the specific objectives of the Employment Enhancement Programme were:

- to build the capacity of individuals and target groups through the delivery of employment skills training and other related programmes;
- to deliver an integrated capacity building and reconciliation programme to both provide the skills and confidence for the target groups to engage with other groups and to conduct reconciliation workshops around the theme of social justice and inclusive society;
- to provide support services such as counselling, mentoring and advice, to encourage and assist target group members in obtaining gainful employment;

- to assist a further 120 individuals increase their employability by gaining at least one accredited training course and enhance the development of another 200 target group individuals;
- to improve the ability of target group individuals to compete for employment opportunities.

In excess of 500 people participated in the Employment Enhancement Programme, with 129 individuals receiving accreditation in a range of courses to enhance their employability, as well as further training in conflict resolution and reconciliation.

Question No. 347 answered with Question No. 323.

Commercial Rates

348. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will confirm when the amount of arrears owing to local authorities for the year 2010 in respect of commercial rates will be available; if he will supply them in tabular form for each authority if available now; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33288/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Audited information in relation to the amount of commercial rates arrears owing to local authorities is not yet available for 2010. The audit of the 2010 Annual Financial Statements (AFS) is scheduled for completion by end March 2012.

Water and Sewerage Schemes

349. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if, having due regard to the potential negative effects a large waste water treatment plant can have on surrounding environments, he will consider alternative proposals to the greater Dublin drainage project, including the option for a number of smaller facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33338/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Greater Dublin Strategic Drainage Study (GSDSDS) analysed the existing drainage system in the Greater Dublin Area and proposed policies, strategies and projects for developing this system to meet future needs. In relation to waste water treatment capacity, the study recommended that, in addition to the expansion of the Ringsend wastewater treatment plant, a future regional wastewater treatment plant should be constructed in the Portrane/Donabate area of Fingal. Fingal County Council decided that certain aspects of the GSDSDS should first be subjected to a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment assessed sixteen strategic drainage options for the Greater Dublin Area. I am therefore satisfied that, through this process, the issue of alternative options has been addressed.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment concluded that a new regional wastewater treatment plant should be built in the Northern Greater Dublin Area and that the outfall should be located along the North Dublin coastline following a detailed site selection process.

Fingal County Council has appointed a consultant to prepare a Preliminary Report and Environmental Impact Assessment for the scheme. The identification of potential locations for the regional wastewater treatment plant is an important step in this process. A report entitled Alternative Site Investigation Phase 1 — Preliminary Screening Outcomes Report was published by the Council in October 2011. A six week consultation process on this report will draw

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to a close on 18 November 2011. This early engagement is in addition to future statutory consultation in the context of the formal planning application process in respect of the new infrastructure.

Local Government Reform

350. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding local government reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33345/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 15 and 19 of 20 October 2011, indicating that significant progress is being made in relation to a range of work relevant to the reform and development of local government in accordance with the Programme for Government.

Initial decisions, as in the case of Limerick and Tipperary, have concentrated on structural consolidation at city and county level. I have also established a Local Government Committee to consider whether the creation of a unified authority in Waterford would be warranted. These measures are being progressed ahead of more comprehensive policy proposals which I intend to bring to Government shortly in relation to the structures at each level of the local government system, regional, county and sub-county. I have noted the views contained in the document referred to in the Question. Decisions in relation to municipal governance within counties will be a matter for Government in that context.

Consumer Protection

351. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding consumers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33347/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 114 of 3 November 2011 which deals comprehensively with the matters raised in the correspondence supplied.

Energy Efficiency

352. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there are any programmes provided by him or other State agencies to assist council tenants improve the energy efficiency of their homes, particularly with reference to providing insulation upgrades or switching to more energy fuels. [33377/11]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Willie Penrose): In line with overall national policy which promotes a reduction in energy use, the enhancement of energy efficiency standards remains a priority within my Department's overall strategy for the improvement of local authority housing.

Under the Department's Social Housing Investment Programme, local authorities are allocated capital funding each year in respect of a range of measures to improve the standard and overall quality of their social housing stock. The programme includes a retrofitting measure aimed at improving the energy efficiency of older apartments and houses by reducing heat loss through the fabric of the building and the installation of high-efficiency condensing boilers.

Since the introduction of the retrofitting initiative in 2009, my Department has provided funding for energy efficiency improvement works to some 3,000 local authority dwellings across

the country. In 2011, some €31million is being provided to local authorities in respect of their improvement works programmes. Under this year's programme there is a particular focus on returning vacant properties to productive use. Works to occupied units may also be carried out, within the allocation provided, where the local authority considers this appropriate.

Election Management System

353. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied); if he intends to address the issues raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33378/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The primary role of my Department in electoral matters is to provide an appropriate policy and legislative framework for a modern and efficient electoral system. Within that framework, local returning officers are responsible for all matters in connection with the actual conduct of elections and referendums, including the selection, appointment and training of polling station and count staff in accordance with the relevant provisions of electoral law.

To assist returning officers, my Department issues guidance to them in advance of each election and referendum. The guidance emphasises that the smooth conduct of polls is dependent on maintaining a cadre of sufficiently skilled and experienced people.

Having regard to that overall objective, returning officers are advised to employ competent and efficient persons as polling staff and asked to give consideration, where possible, to employing suitable persons who are unemployed.

Dormant Accounts Fund

354. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money transferred to the dormant accounts fund each year since 2005 in tabular form. [33398/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Dormant Accounts Acts provide for an annual transfer by credit institutions and insurance undertakings of monies in accounts determined to be dormant into the Dormant Accounts Fund (DAF). Since its establishment in April 2003 to the end of August 2011, the transfers to the DAF have totalled some €626.59m, which includes interest earned of some €35.53m. Funds reclaimed in that period by account holders amounted to approximately €218.7m.

A summary of the current status of the DAF is available on my Department's website www.environ.ie and is set out in the table below. This provides a profile of the Fund showing yearly inflows, reclaims, disbursements, etc. from 2003 to the end of August 2011.

Value of Dormant Accounts Fund at 31 August 2011

Year	Inflows					Gross Inflow of Funds	Outflows			Net Funds
	Banks/building societies	An Post products	Insurance products	Intestate Estates	Interest earned		Reclaimed by account holders	Disbursed by NTMA	Expenses & Compliance Costs	
2003	105,802,747	90,406,394	0	0	2,778,039	198,987,180	24,002,874	0	148,048	174,836,258
2004	18,387,604	14,642,260	22,994,803	0	3,802,846	59,827,513	21,080,853	14,000,000	1,055,958	198,526,960
2005	13,049,089	19,870,684	7,895,688	0	4,061,302	44,876,763	22,916,079	14,400,000	1,673,497	204,414,147
2006	20,535,464	52,513,242	7,100,575	0	6,375,902	86,525,183	44,736,631	33,250,000	1,608,356	211,344,343
2007	12,531,434	42,658,151	6,704,210	4,400,000	8,787,603	75,081,398	34,082,871	45,511,412	1,881,135	204,950,323
2008	19,644,431	6,239,735	7,149,521	0	7,561,873	40,595,560	19,500,791	73,050,705	1,999,776	150,994,611
2009	25,014,071	11,359,722	5,010,644	0	891,120	42,275,557	19,051,956	37,644,335	1,717,634	134,856,243
2010	20,970,759	12,304,426	6,010,712	0	472,958	39,758,855	20,303,827	20,267,035	1,618,257	132,425,979
2011	22,623,769	9,912,279	5,325,750	0	796,773	38,658,571	13,044,929	818,931	0	157,220,690
Totals	258,559,368	259,906,893	68,191,903	4,400,000	35,528,416	626,586,580	218,720,811	238,942,418	11,702,661	

Liabilities on the Fund: Of which				
1. Reserve for future reclaims by account holders				-47,178,335
2. Disbursements allocated to beneficiary projects by	Approved	Decommitted	Net Approved	
(a) Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursement Board	63,082,815	4,620,969	58,461,846	
(b) Government (2006)	75,642,596	2,662,872	72,979,724	
(c) Government (2007)	22,278,213	480,618	21,797,595	
(d) Government (2008)	30,134,074	29,876	30,104,198	
(e) Government — Early Childhood Initiative (2006)	18,000,000		18,000,000	
(f) Government — Rural Social Scheme (2004-2008)	64,400,000		64,400,000	
(g) Government — Catch Up Measure 5 new RAPID towns	1,250,000		1,250,000	
Sub-totals	274,787,698	-7,794,335	266,993,363	
3. Remaining funds to be disbursed by NTMA on foot of approvals				-28,050,945
Net Value of Dormant Accounts Fund (uncommitted funds)				€81,991,410

Under the Dormant Accounts Act 2001, the NTMA is required to maintain a Reserve Account to meet reclaims from account holders and operational expenses of the agency and the Dormant Accounts Board.

Flood Prevention

355. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government that following the near annual flooding of homes and businesses across the country in many locations due to climate change and insufficient infrastructure, if he will consider introducing a grant aid programme to subsidise property owners to invest in flood protection equipment such as flood door barriers, anti-flood airbricks, and other waterproofing measures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33424/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Flood risk management, including prevention and protection measures, are a matter for the Office of Public Works. I have no function in flood protection grant aid programmes for property owners.

Question No. 356 answered with Question No. 322.

Departmental Appointments

357. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33946/11]

358. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for the Environment; Community and Local Government the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33960/11]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 357 and 358 together.

There are no former Government office holders serving on the boards of Agencies under the aegis of my Department.

National Disability Strategy

359. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress made on the commitment to publish a realistic implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy; when such an implementation plan will be produced; the number of meetings that have taken place with stakeholders in the strategy to ensure widespread consultation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32867/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Programme for Government commits to publishing, “following wide consultation, a realistic implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy (NDS), including sectoral plans with achievable timescales and targets within available resources and ensuring whole-of-government involvement and monitoring of the Strategy, in partnership with the disability sector”.

As the Minister responsible for disability, in line with this commitment, I have assessed the monitoring and implementation structures already in place for the strategy, which included meeting and consulting with the key organisations in the sector. I will be announcing in the near future, the details of revised structures and processes I am establishing for the development and implementation of the new Plan for the progression of the NDS. These will involve collaboration with the key stakeholders in the sector.

I am confident that the fresh approach which I am introducing, will re-invigorate the implementation of the National Disability Strategy and will greatly assist in meeting the commitments to disability in the Programme for Government.

Daylight Savings Time

360. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has examined any proposals for changing the current daylight saving time system; if he has reviewed the current proposals before the UK parliament regarding same; if he plans to ask the relevant Oireachtas committee to examine this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33280/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to refer the Deputy to my reply to Question Nos. 10 and 16 of 23 June, 2011 below and Question No. 73 of 25 October 2011.

The position remains unchanged and with particular regard to the last paragraph of my previous replies. I can advise the Deputy that while officials of my Department continue to carefully monitor the situation in the United Kingdom I have no plans at this time to ask the relevant Oireachtas Committee to examine this matter at this time.

<Previous PQ>

10. *To ask the Minister for Justice and Equality if he had any discussions with either his British counterpart or his European colleagues regarding the possibility of changing our time zone to European Time; his views on the benefits or disadvantages to Ireland if such a change was made; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

- Noel Harrington

16. *To ask the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to conduct a cross Departmental analysis of the potential costs and benefits of advancing time by one hour all year round for Ireland; if his attention has been drawn to the passage of a Bill in the House of Commons undertaking a similar study; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

- Noel Harrington

For ORAL answer on Thursday, 23rd June, 2011.

I can inform the Deputy that I am aware of the Bill to which he refers. The Daylight Saving Bill 2010/11 passed its second reading in the House of Commons on 3 December, 2010. I understand that, if it became law, this Private Members' Bill would require the British Government to conduct a cross-departmental analysis of the potential costs and benefits of the advancing time by one hour for all, or part of, the year. I further understand that such analysis would include a breakdown, so far as possible, of the costs and benefits for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. In light of this, I would expect that each of the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland would ensure that their views and concerns would be fully reflected in any analysis that might be conducted.

Were this cost benefit analysis to be conducted, the Bill requires that an independent Commission would be established to assess it. If that Commission were to conclude that the advancing of time by one hour for all, or part of, the year would be beneficial to England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland then an Order bringing the Commission's recommendations into effect for a three-year trial period would need to be made. Given that European Union Directive 2000/84/EC results in all EU member states starting and ending summer time simultaneously in order that time differences between member states remain constant throughout the year, this would impose a limitation on the discretion available in this area.

At present Ireland and the United Kingdom operate in the same time zone. Each year summer time begins at 1:00 a.m. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) on the last Sunday in March when clocks are put forward one hour and ends at 1:00 a.m. GMT on the last Sunday in October when clocks are put back one hour. During summer time our clocks are set at GMT plus one hour and at GMT during winter time. Were clocks to be put forward for an hour for all of the year, clocks would be set at GMT plus two hours during summer time and at GMT plus one hour during winter time. To illustrate this point I wish to inform the Deputy that today in Belfast sunrise was at 4:48 a.m. and sunset will be at 10:04 p.m. If clocks were put forward by one hour sunrise in Belfast would have been at 5:48 a.m. and sunset would be at 11:04 p.m. Six months from now, if clocks were put forward by one hour, sunrise would be at 9:45 a.m. and sunset at 5 p.m. instead of 8:45 a.m. and 4 p.m.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

I can also inform the Deputy that in advance of the second reading of the Bill Mr. Edward Davey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills sought a meeting with our Ambassador in London to discuss issues concerning daylight hours. The meeting took place in November 2010.

I can further inform the Deputy that in February 2011 officials from my Department and our London Embassy met with the Bill's Sponsor, Rebecca Harris, M.P. in order to find out more about the background to her Bill as well as registering our interest in its passage and the potential implications for this country. While there has been contact with the British no discussions have been held with our European colleagues in relation to this matter as the matter is not at a sufficiently advanced stage.

I have no plans at this time to change the present time zone arrangements or to conduct a cross-departmental cost benefit analysis of advancing time by one hour all year round for Ireland. However, officials of my Department and the Department of Foreign Affairs are keeping a close watch on the issue and should the position I have outlined change I will review the situation.

Garda Stations

361. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average cost of running a rural Garda station (details supplied) in County Cork, excluding the Garda salaries; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33330/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

362. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the criteria assessed for determining the effectiveness of a particular Garda station over another; the person that makes the assessment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33332/11]

363. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will clarify who will have the final say in relation to any proposed Garda station closures; if he will have the final say in relation to any such closures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33333/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 362 and 363 together.

Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 the Garda Commissioner must each year prepare a policing plan setting out the proposed arrangements for the policing of the State, including any proposal to cease stationing members in a Garda station. The policing plan, once it has been approved by the Minister, is laid before each House.

The Garda Commissioner has been reviewing the Garda station network with the aim of identifying the scope for greater efficiencies in the delivery of a policing service. This review has included an examination of the case for the closure of some stations and for a reduction in opening hours of other stations. All relevant factors will have been taken into account in this examination, including the current status of stations, an activity analysis of stations, an impact assessment in each case of either closure or a reduction in opening hours, and the identification of an alternative model for delivering policing services.

I will consult with the Garda Commissioner as part of the statutory process of finalising the policing plan for 2012, which will be laid before each House upon approval.

364. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the options available to concerned local community groups who wish to make a submission to the deciding officer in relation to any potential Garda station closures; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33335/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 the Garda Commissioner must each year prepare a policing plan setting out the proposed arrangements for the policing of the State, including any proposal to cease stationing members in a Garda station. The policing plan, once it has been approved by the Minister, is laid before each House.

The Garda Commissioner has been reviewing the Garda station network with the aim of identifying the scope for greater efficiencies in the delivery of a policing service. This review has included an examination of the case for the closure of some stations and for a reduction in opening hours of other stations. All relevant factors will have been taken into account in this examination, including the current status of stations, an activity analysis of stations, an impact assessment in each case of either closure or a reduction in opening hours, and the identification of an alternative model for delivering policing services.

I will consult with the Garda Commissioner as part of the statutory process of finalising the policing plan for 2012, which will be laid before each House upon approval.

It is of course always open to local community groups to make submissions to local Garda management in relation to any aspect of the local policing service, and of course the Garda Síochána Act 2005 has also put in place joint policing committees in each local authority area which act as a forum for consultations and discussions on matters affecting local policing. In addition to this, I am advised that there will be consultation by the Garda Síochána within a local community in relation to any revised model for delivering a local policing service following the closure of a Garda station.

Garda Deployment

365. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he intends to fill the vacant superintendent position at Bruff Garda station, County Limerick. [32813/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner, in consultation with his senior management team, is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation, and I have no function in the matter.

The moratorium on recruitment and promotions in the Public Service continues to apply to the Garda Síochána for both sworn members and civilian support staff. The situation is continually kept under review by the Garda Commissioner and further derogations can be sought, in exceptional circumstances, from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

Garda Stations

366. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for upgrading a Garda station (details supplied) in County Donegal to a 24-hour Garda station. [32831/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda Commissioner that there are no plans, at this time, to make Carndonagh Garda Station to a 24 hour Garda Station.

I am further informed by the Commissioner that the Carndonagh Station is in the Buncrana District and the Garda strengths in each of those stations are 4 and 53, respectively. The opening hours of each of those Garda Station are:

Station	Monday-Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Carndonagh	09:00 — 15:00	10:00 — 13:00	Closed
Buncrana	24 hours	24 hours	24 hours

367. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the annual cost to the Garda of operating two Garda stations (details supplied) in County Donegal excluding staffing costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32832/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Road Traffic Offences

368. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total number of speeding fines issued in County Donegal to date in 2011; the breakdown of fines by Garda district; the way the level of fines compares with the year 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32833/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): In the time available it has not been possible to obtain the details requested by the Deputy. I will be in contact with the Deputy when the information is to hand.

Garda Transport

369. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a squad car (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32839/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The allocation of Garda resources, including transport, is a matter for the Garda Commissioner to decide in accordance with his identified operational requirements and priorities. At Divisional level, responsibility for the efficient deployment of all Garda vehicles is a matter for the Divisional Officer.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the current allocation of Garda vehicles within the Carlow/Kilkenny Division makes the best use of available resources. The situation with regard to the station referred to by the Deputy is being kept under on-going review. Currently the area is being serviced by mobile patrols operated within the Carlow/Kilkenny Division. I am also informed by the Garda authorities that there are currently 34 cars attached to this Division.

370. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a replacement squad car for Sneem Garda station, County Kerry, in view of the fact that its squad car was written off in a recent car accident; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32840/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The allocation of Garda resources, including transport, is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. In that context the efficient deployment of Garda vehicles within each Garda Division is a matter for the Divisional Officer in the light of operational requirements.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the situation with regard to Sneem Garda station is being kept under on-going review. Currently the area is being serviced by mobile patrols operated by Caherciveen District personnel and the Divisional Traffic Corps.

371. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a dedicated squad car to Waterville Garda station, County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32841/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The allocation of Garda resources, including transport, is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. The efficient deployment of Garda vehicles within each Garda Division is a matter for the Divisional Officer in the context of operational requirements.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that the current allocation of Garda vehicles within the Kerry Garda Division makes the best use of available resources. The situation with regard to Waterville Station is being kept under on-going review. Currently the area is being serviced by mobile patrols operated by Caherciveen District personnel and the Divisional Traffic Corps.

Departmental Bodies

372. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32855/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The number of State bodies under the aegis of my Department is 23, while there are no State companies.

In accordance with the Programme for Government my Department has reviewed the configuration of State bodies in the Justice and Equality sector.

The formal integration of the Family Mediation Service with the Legal Aid Board took place on 2 November 2011.

Work is underway to rationalise the various structures in the immigration area. Under the Immigration, Residence and Protection (IRP) Bill 2010 the functions currently carried out by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) will be subsumed into the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of the Department. Also under the Bill, the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) will be replaced by the Protection Review Tribunal (PRT), which will be statutorily independent and will deal with appeals against a refusal to grant refugee status or subsidiary protection under the EU Qualification Directive.

Legislation is also being prepared within this Department to allow for the amalgamation of the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission to form a new Integrated Human Rights and Equality Commission. The objective is to have the new Body in place by February 2012.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

The Government is also considering the merger of the functions of the Equality Tribunal with bodies in the employment rights area under the aegis of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

Garda Court Duties

373. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the progress that has been made on the issue of reforming the prosecution and judicial case management systems in order to reduce the number of gardaí unnecessarily detained in the courts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32865/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will appreciate that a significant amount of Garda time has to be devoted to court duties. In that context specific measures have been put in place by the Garda authorities, and in legislation (including the Courts and Court Officers Act 2009), to minimise the extent to which Garda members have to attend in court. Following a recent detailed review of the procedures involved, the Garda Commissioner is making arrangements to implement a comprehensive set of measures to reduce the amount of time Garda members spend in court. These measures include the expansion of the court presenter system to all parts of the country and overall they are designed to ensure that Garda personnel are not unnecessarily tied up in court but rather are available for policing duties.

These measures are, of course, subject to the overall requirements of justice and judicial supervision. In addition, following on a number of reviews, the Chief Justice has recently agreed to my proposal to establish two Working Groups, which include judges from the relevant jurisdictions, to look at the operations of the Circuit and District courts with a view to identifying additional efficiencies to benefit the justice sector and how best these could be implemented in light of current financial circumstances.

Garda Reserve

374. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current number of individuals in the Garda Reserve; the geographical locations, by county, of members of the Garda Reserve; his view on the role of the Garda Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32866/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the personnel strength of the Garda Reserve on 30 September, 2011, the latest date for which figures are readily available, was 816. Members of An Garda Síochána are assigned on a Divisional basis and not on a county basis. The personnel strength of the Garda Reserve by Division is as set out in the table hereunder:

Division	Strength
DMR South Central	48
DMR North Central	32
DMR North	74
DMR East	17
DMR South	41
DMR West	49
Waterford	27
Wexford	24

Division	Strength
Tipperary	29
Kilkenny/Carlow	27
Cork City	48
Cork North	19
Cork West	19
Kerry	15
Limerick	37
Donegal	23
Cavan/Monaghan	18
Sligo/Leitrim	18
Louth	32
Clare	17
Mayo	26
Galway	56
Roscommon/Longford	13
Westmeath	20
Meath	27
Kildare	25
Laois/Offaly	18
Wicklow	17
Total	816

The Deputy will be aware that the Commissioner, in consultation with his senior management team, is responsible for the detailed allocation of resources, including personnel, throughout the organisation, and I have no function in the matter. The target strength of the Garda Reserve remains at 10% of the full time Force and I would like to assure the House that the Government and the Garda Commissioner are fully committed to the Garda Reserve.

Official Engagements

375. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of visits he has made to all prisons since taking up office; if he will provide the details and breakdown of these visits; if he will provide the details of any planned visits in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33043/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that one of the first things I did on becoming Minister was to visit the Mountjoy Prison campus. While there, I conducted a full tour of the prison including the landings, workshops, school and medical facilities. In addition, I also visited the Dóchas Centre and St. Patrick's Institution. I can further advise the Deputy that I visited Cork Prison in May 2011.

I may, depending on my schedule, make further prison visits this year and early next year.

Garda Collection Permits

376. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will consider granting an organisation (details supplied) Garda collection permits for each of their independent branches; his views on the Garda Síochána's reason for limiting collection permits due to the current fiscal climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33148/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report on the matter from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this report is to hand.

Garda Investigations

377. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the Anglo Irish Bank investigation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33163/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I attach the highest priority to the full investigation of white collar crime and bringing the perpetrators of such crime to justice. I have already expressed my unhappiness at the protracted nature of the investigations underway. This is not a criticism of the investigators and prosecutors, who face tough challenges as a result of the complexities of the matters being investigated. At the same time, I am anxious to ensure that I do not say anything which might jeopardise any prosecutions.

Within eight weeks of taking up office, I moved urgently to draft, and seek Government approval to the introduction of, additional legislation. This new legislation, the Criminal Justice Act 2011, was enacted on 2 August. The Act is an important step in delivering on the Government's commitment to tackle white collar crime. Its main purpose is to address delays in the prosecution and investigation of complex white collar crime by improving certain important procedural matters and strengthening Garda investigative powers. The Act's provisions are based on the experiences of those involved in investigations and prosecutions of white collar crime, and in particular on the experiences of those involved in current investigations into bank fraud and financial irregularities. It provides new procedures and powers which will speed up both current and future investigations, including investigations into offences in the areas of banking and finance, company law, money laundering, fraud and corruption.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment that rogue bankers and all those that misappropriate or embezzle funds are properly pursued for their crimes and that the full rigours of the law will apply to them. I am determined to see this commitment fulfilled.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the investigations into Anglo Irish Bank by An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) are ongoing, with a full investigation team employed at the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation. This team continues to conduct necessary follow up enquiries in respect of investigations, as well as investigations into separate complaints received regarding other alleged malpractices.

All members of An Garda Síochána allocated to such investigations have previous experience in the investigation of fraud related offences, and the investigations are augmented by experienced investigators from ODCE. There is close cooperation and ongoing liaison between An Garda Síochána and ODCE, with members of An Garda Síochána seconded to ODCE.

I am informed that two comprehensive investigation files were submitted by the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation to the Law Officers in December, 2010. In addition, supplementary investigation files were submitted in May and October. The files remain under consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and directions are awaited. It is anticipated that a further supplementary investigation file will shortly be submitted to the DPP.

Garda management is satisfied there is sufficient personnel and technical expertise available to assist in the various aspects of the ongoing investigations.

I note that the DPP is quoted in the media today as saying: "The new law is very significant and has remedied [people refusing to cooperate with investigations]. They are cooperating

now.” He is also quoted as saying that real progress was now being made and that good quality evidence was being produced. The law referred to is the Criminal Justice Act 2011, enacted on 2 August. I am pleased to note that it is clearly assisting An Garda Síochána in overcoming obstacles that have arisen in its investigations of such offences.

Garda Checkpoints

378. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm the number of Garda checkpoints that were in operation on the following bank holiday weekends this year: Friday 29 April to Monday 2 May, Friday 3 June to Monday 6 June, Friday 29 July to Monday 1 August and Friday 28 October to Monday 31 October separately; the number of checkpoints operating in each county on each weekend in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33164/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): All members of An Garda Síochána are tasked with the enforcement of relevant legislation, including the Road Traffic and Road Transport Acts. As part of this enforcement policy, members of An Garda Síochána set up checkpoints, including mandatory alcohol testing (MAT) checkpoints.

The information readily available relates to MAT checkpoints, which are authorised in writing by a District Officer or Inspector, are checkpoints to conduct mandatory breath testing. The objective of MAT checkpoints is to increase compliance by road users, detect incidents of drink driving, reduce road traffic fatalities and deter incidents of alcohol impaired driving by systematically selecting drivers to assess their level of alcohol impairment.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that to compile the information on a county basis would require a disproportionate use of Garda resources. The following table shows the numbers of MAT checkpoints over bank holiday weekends in 2011 broken down by Garda Division.

Number of Mandatory Alcohol Testing Checkpoints on Bank Holiday Weekends in 2011*

Garda Division	29 April - 2 May	3 June - 6 June	29 July - 1 August	28 October - 31 October
DMR East	11	5	13	5
DMR North Central	3	14	5	6
DMR North	17	27	19	17
DMR South Central	13	11	13	9
DMR South	19	16	12	8
DMR West	13	25	18	24
Kildare	33	19	20	19
Laois/Offaly	26	35	22	29
Meath	58	58	29	37
Westmeath	25	27	21	23
Wicklow	46	45	19	16
Cavan/Monaghan	36	27	55	58
Donegal	53	41	29	58
Louth	21	54	28	36
Sligo/Leitrim	48	32	58	43
Kilkenny/Carlow	43	82	84	55
Tipperary	114	101	107	100
Waterford	40	37	18	32

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

Garda Division	29 April - 2 May	3 June - 6 June	29 July - 1 August	28 October - 31 October
Wexford	54	48	58	65
Cork City	23	46	42	26
Cork North	58	73	54	55
Cork West	86	72	83	38
Kerry	26	24	33	31
Limerick	43	72	47	44
Clare	48	63	54	48
Galway	88	94	51	36
Mayo	46	55	28	29
Roscommon/Longford	24	40	38	21

*Information provided is operational and liable to change and is valid to 2 November, 2011.

Certification of Documents

379. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 379 of 27 September and 369 of 18 October 2011, the reason he will not certify a copy of a passport held by him to progress an application for a driving licence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33245/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As I have previously advised the Deputy, my Department will, on request, provide an applicant, or their legal representative, with a photo-copy of any documentation held on file to attest to that applicant's identity and nationality. However, my Department cannot certify such documentation as being authentic as it cannot be certain of its provenance. This is stated without prejudice to the documentation referred to by the Deputy.

The Deputy will appreciate that, in the context of an application for a Driver's Licence, the onus is on the applicant to convince the relevant licensing authority as to their identity and nationality and my Department has no role, directly or indirectly, in such matters.

Departmental Funding

380. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if State funding has ever been given to any of the following organisations (details supplied); and if so, the amount for each of the years 2000 to 2009. [33259/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Data in relation to such funding are not readily available prior to 2005. Since 2005 no State funding has been provided by this Department to the said organisations.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

381. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the steps he will take to alleviate the delays in administration of cases by the Garda Vetting Unit when the waiting time is approximately 20 weeks and growing. [33266/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that the current average processing time for Garda vetting applications at the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) is 9 weeks. This is a significant improvement on the average processing time of 12 weeks at the end of last year. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this

into their recruitment and selection process. This processing time can, nevertheless, be affected by seasonal fluctuations or the necessity to seek further information on particular applications which may result in the processing time exceeding 9 weeks.

I am very conscious of the need to keep the time required to obtain a vetting to the minimum possible. Since taking office I have taken a number of initiatives with a view to achieving this objective. The sanction of the Department of Finance was obtained to retain the services of 10 temporary employees working in the GCVU. Sanction was also obtained to engage an additional 10 temporary employees and these have recently commenced work in the GCVU. A further initiative to provide internships through the National Internship Scheme, “Job Bridge”, under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection, is also currently under way.

All of this should have a further positive impact on processing times.

Garda Transport

382. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent on purchasing replacement and additional Garda mountain bikes for the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the average cost of purchasing one bike; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33302/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Garda Powers

383. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if gardaí have the powers to seize a vehicle if the vehicle is not registered to a person, if the vehicle has not got either front or rear registration plate displayed, or if the vehicle is being driven by a provisional driver unsupervised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33303/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Road traffic law is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

I am informed by the Garda authorities of the following circumstances in which they have the power to seize vehicles.

Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act 1994, as amended, provides for the detention, removal, storage and subsequent release or disposal of a mechanically propelled vehicle. In summary, the provisions of section 41 relate to a vehicle which is in use in a public place and which is uninsured, untaxed, does not have a test or roadworthiness certificate or the driver refuses or fails to produce a driving licence and a Garda is of the opinion that the person is, by reason of his or her age, ineligible to hold a driving licence, whether or not the driver is the registered owner of the vehicle.

A Garda also has the authority to seize or detain a vehicle if he or she has reasonable cause to believe the vehicle is stolen, for which a prosecution can be initiated against the person for an offence contrary to section 112 of the Road Traffic Act 1961.

I am also informed that offences in respect of a vehicle not displaying either front or rear registration plates are dealt with under the Roads Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) (Amendment) Regulations 1992 and section 139 of the Finance Act 1992. A learner driver driving unaccompanied is committing an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1961 and the Road Traffic (Licensing of Learner Drivers) Regulations 2007.

Fireworks Seizures

384. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of fireworks seized by gardaí to date in 2011; the monetary value of the fireworks seized; the number of persons arrested and charged for possession of fireworks to date; the number of successful convictions secured to date; if he will provide same for 2008, 2009 and 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33304/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The table sets out the estimated value of fireworks seized for the years 2008 to 2011 (to date):

Year	No. of Seizures	Estimated value
2011 (to 3 Nov.)	170	€11,670
2010	169	€43,350
2009	169	€29,424
2008	91	€40,446

Following the submission in 2004 of a report and recommendations by an expert group on crime statistics, it was decided that the compilation and publication of crime statistics should be taken over by the Central Statistics Office, as the national statistical agency, from An Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána Act 2005 consequently makes provision for this and the CSO has established a dedicated unit for this purpose. Following the setting up of the necessary technical systems and auditing of the data from which the statistics are compiled, the CSO is now compiling, publishing and responding to queries regarding recorded crime statistics.

I have, accordingly, requested the CSO to provide statistics in relation to arrests, charges and convictions directly to the Deputy.

Criminal Prosecutions

385. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases prosecuted for driving with no insurance, driving without a driving licence, driving under the influence of alcohol that have been brought in front of Swords and Balbriggan District Courts, County Dublin from 1 January 2010 to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33305/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware that, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service and I have no role in the matter. Section 4(3) of the 1998 Act provides that the Courts Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision of statistics.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that the information sought by the Deputy is as set out in the table:

1 January, 2010 to 4 November, 2011

Offence	Balbriggan	Swords
Driving with no insurance	306	612
Driving with no licence	1	20
Driving under the influence of alcohol	156	221

Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal

386. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will ensure that all payments are made under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal when the tribunal has found in favour of claimants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33312/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that under the terms of the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal is entirely independent in the matter of individual applications under the Scheme. In this regard, I am sure the Deputy will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me as Minister for Justice and Equality to have any involvement with the applications received.

I can inform the Deputy, as he will be aware, that paragraph 18 of the Scheme of Compensation for Personal Injuries Criminally Inflicted provides that compensation is paid by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal out of funds made available to it by the Oireachtas.

During the current financial year, €4.056m was provided to the Tribunal for the payment of compensation and a provision of €4.256m was made available for the payment of compensation during each of the two previous financial years, i.e. 2009 and 2010.

I understand from the Tribunal that the Scheme continues to operate as normal.

Visa Applications

387. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason a holiday visa application was refused in respect of a person (details supplied); if he will have this decision reviewed with a view to granting the holiday visa; if he will state exactly the documentation the applicant must provide in order to ensure a successful application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33367/11]

388. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if it is his policy to refuse a holiday visa to applicants from non-EU countries for reason of not having a compliant travel history, even in cases when the applicant has not travelled outside his or her own country before. [33368/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 387 and 388 together.

The person referred to by the Deputy created a 'C type' i.e. short-stay visa application (online) on 3 August, 2010. Following full consideration by a Visa Officer this application was refused on 9 September, 2010 for the following reasons:

1. The Visa Officer had concerns surrounding the authenticity of documentation regarding employment submitted in support of the application. On contacting the applicant's employer by telephone, contradictory information was given as to whether the person concerned actually worked for the company and, if so, what was her period of leave;
2. The Visa Officer had concerns surrounding the immigration history of applicant. It was noted that the applicant had demonstrated no previous compliant travel history;
3. It was the opinion of the Visa Officer that the applicant had insufficient obligations to return to the home country in circumstances where a visa was to be granted.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

The person concerned appealed this decision on 12 October, 2010. Following full consideration by a Visa Appeals Officer, the applicant failed to address the original concerns raised. The original decision to refuse the visa was upheld on 13 October, 2010.

It is of course open to the person concerned to submit a fresh visa application at any time. If doing so, the applicant would be strongly advised to be in a position to address the above mentioned concerns.

The Deputy may wish to note that the unique visa transaction number referred to by him would appear to be incorrect as it refers to a visa applicant from a different country.

Guidelines on the visa application process are available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (www.inis.gov.ie).

Regarding the Deputy's question relating to travel history policy, I can advise that each visa application is considered on its individual merits. Factors taken into account when processing a visa application include all of the applicant-specific information available to the Visa Officer as well as more general in-country factors such as immigration trends and the socio-economic circumstances pertaining in the visa applicant's country of residence. A visa is merely a form of pre-entry clearance to travel to Ireland and is essentially the first line of defence in upholding the immigration system of our State. Processing a visa application involves a risk evaluation, where all pertinent circumstances of the applicant are considered in the round. The onus is on the visa applicant at all times to demonstrate to the Visa Officer that the risks involved are minimal and that a visa is merited. In considering a 'Visit Visa' type application, a key consideration by a Visa Officer is whether or not an individual will abide by and observe the conditions of a visa where granted.

The immigration or travel history of all applicants is also a factor in any evaluation. A cautious approach is adopted by visa officers when processing visa applications where no travel history is demonstrated. In such circumstances, the Visa Officer will normally look for other factors in the visa application which demonstrate a commitment to return home at the end of the visit. It is possible for an applicant to be refused a visa based solely on a lack of immigration or travel history, but such refusals are very rare. It is much more likely that the visa refusal will also be based on a variety of other reasons as happened in the individual case to which the Deputy refers.

Ministerial Appointments

389. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33950/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that it has not been possible to provide the information required in the time available. The information is currently being collated and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is to hand.

390. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses

claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33964/11]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that I have not appointed any former Government office holder to any position since taking up office in March of this year.

Departmental Staff

391. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Defence if unestablished civil servants working in the maintenance section of the Department of Defence have to pay the pension services levy for public servants in view of their small public service pension entitlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33166/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I presume that the Deputy is referring to the civilian employees of the Department involved in the maintenance of military installations. In line with the relevant provisions of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009, the employees in question are subject to the deduction from remuneration set out in section 2 of that Act.

Army Barracks

392. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Defence the constitution of each Army barracks, Army head office and any subsidiary Army units or serving personnel under the stated headings (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32830/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): It was not possible to provide the detailed information sought by the Deputy in the time available. My Department is currently seeking to compile the relevant data and I will provide the information directly to the Deputy once it comes to hand.

Departmental Bodies

393. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Defence the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32848/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The bodies under the aegis of my Department are the Civil Defence Board, the Army Pensions Board and the Board of Coiste an Asgard. In July, the Government approved a proposal to begin drafting legislation to transfer the functions of the Civil Defence Board back into the Department of Defence. The Heads of the Civil Defence (Repeal) Bill were subsequently agreed by Government in August. The Bill is currently being drafted and it is anticipated that it will be published in early 2012.

If enacted, the Bill will repeal the Civil Defence Act, 2002, dissolve the Civil Defence Board and transfer its functions, property rights, liabilities and other responsibilities to the Department of Defence. Such changes will not have any impact on Civil Defence operations nationally and Civil Defence will continue to operate from Roscrea as a Branch of the Department.

No reforms or mergers have been made in relation to the Army Pensions Board since March 2011.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

Coiste an Asgard was the company set up to manage the National Sail Training Scheme. In September 2008, the company’s sail training vessel ‘Asgard II’ sank in the Bay of Biscay. In December 2009, the previous Government announced that the National Sail Training Scheme was to be discontinued and the funding for 2010 was cancelled.

The Company has been inactive since and there are no crew or staff left on the payroll. The winding-up process is well advanced and it is anticipated that the company will be in a position to close by the end of this year, following a final audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Defence Forces Equipment

394. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 372 of 2 November, the base for each of the three field ambulances in the Western Brigade; the number of standard ambulances available to the Defence Forces; the location of each; his plans to purchase additional standard vehicles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33397/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The three field ambulances in the Western Brigade are located as follows:

- Finner Camp, County Donegal 1 x Ambulance
- Custume Barracks, Athlone, Co. Westmeath 2 x Ambulances

In addition to the fleet of eleven field ambulances, eleven standard ambulances are currently in service with the Defence Forces.

The standard ambulances are located in the following Barracks/Bases:

Location	Standard Ambulances
St. Bricins Hospital, Dublin	2
Defence Forces Training Centre, Curragh Camp, County Kildare	2
12th Infantry Battalion, Sarsfield Barracks, Limerick	1
3rd Infantry Battalion, Stephens Barracks, Kilkenny	1
Training Installation, Kilworth Camp, County Cork	1
Medical Company, Collins Barracks, Cork	1
Medical Company, Custume Barracks, Athlone, County Westmeath	1
Air Corps, Baldonnell, County Dublin	1
Naval Base, Haulbowline, County Cork	1
Total	11

There are no plans at this time to purchase any additional standard ambulances.

Defence Forces Recruitment

395. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Defence when the current Army recruitment panel based in County Cork will be exhausted or will the current panel continue into the future. [33480/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy will be aware of the restrictions on recruitment to the public service generally arising from the necessity to restore balance to the public finances. In the context of this challenge, the Government intends to maintain the operational efficiency of the Defence Forces to the greatest extent possible. I am advised by

the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at the 30 September, 2011, the latest date for which details are available, was 9,458 which is the lowest number since the early 1970s. This is against the approved Employment Control Framework for the Permanent Defence Force of 10,000 as recommended in the McCarthy Report (Bord Snip).

Under the National Recovery Plan the strength of the Permanent Defence Force is scheduled to fall to approximately 9,600 by 2014. Targeted recruitment was carried out in 2010 and is continuing in 2011 because the strength of the Permanent Defence Force is below the reduction prescribed by 2014.

The recruitment of 40 recruits to the Southern Brigade is currently underway. Following completion of the selection process of these recruits there will be 503 candidates remaining on the Southern Brigade panel. Given the particular circumstances of the Defence Forces it is my intention that targeted recruitment will continue within the resource envelope allocated to Defence for 2012. At this time no decision has been made as to whether this panel will continue into the future.

I have on a number of occasions placed on the record in Dáil Éireann my view that personnel in the Defence Forces should be maintained at 9,500 to ensure that the Defence Forces have the capabilities to meet both their international (UN/EU) and domestic obligations.

Ministerial Appointments

396. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Defence if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33944/11]

397. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Defence the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33958/11]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 396 and 397 together.

I can confirm that no former Government office holder has been appointed to any agency under the aegis of the Department.

Departmental Expenditure

398. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the level of funding provided by him in 2011 to meet costs arising out of the pork dioxin contamination problem and the anticipated level of expenditure for this crisis in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32741/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A sum of €4.5m has been provided by my Department in 2011 to cover the cost of claims arising from pigmeat contamination incident. At this stage, I do not anticipate that there will be any expenditure under this heading in 2012.

399. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the level of expenditure by him in 2011 under the farm waste management scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32742/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Farm Waste Management Scheme over the period January-October 2011 have amounted to €32.4 million.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme

400. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers whose REP scheme 3 plans have expired in 2011; the saving to him in respect of these farmers for 2012; his plans to extend the agri-environment options scheme to these farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32743/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Over 23,000 REPS 3 participants will complete their contract in 2011. The majority of these participants received their final annual payment at the end of 2010. Payments under the scheme to these farmers on a full year basis would be of the order of €140m.

The overall level of funding available to the Department in the 2012 Budget will be determined by the Government in the context of the prevailing economic and budgetary situation while having regard to the outcome of the Comprehensive Expenditure Review and the discussions on the 2012 Estimates process. A decision on the future of the Agri Environment Options Scheme will be made following the outcome of this process and I will make an announcement on the situation in due course.

Farm Incomes

401. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the data available to him regarding the financial circumstances of those receiving grant aid under suckler cow schemes, disadvantaged area and single farm payments including information on the numbers in receipt of a means tested social welfare payment; the number of farmers who are entirely dependent on agriculture for their household income; the number of farmers who themselves have off-farm income; the number of farmers whose spouses have off-farm income; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32744/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Eligibility for grant aid under Departmental schemes and EU Schemes administered by this Department is based on criteria such as animal numbers, acreage farmed or location, Single Payment entitlements held, or land classified as disadvantaged, etc, and as a consequence specific financial information on applicants is not recorded. However, the following broad information is available from the Teagasc 2010 National Farm Survey:

- 23% of all Households were in receipt of a pension, either to the farm holder or spouse (2009)
- 49% of farms were recorded as not having off-farm income accruing either to the farm holder or spouse (2010)
- 36% of farmers had off-farm income (2009)
- 34.8% of farmers' spouses had off farm income (2009)

One of the main supports for low income farmers is the Farm Assist Scheme, run by the Department of Social Protection. According to the records of that Department, at 28 October there were 11,239 recipients on the scheme.

Grant Payments

402. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding single farm payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32751/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2011, following processing of which an over-claim was identified on one of the land declared. The person named was written to on 28 October in this regard and, immediately on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

Departmental Funding

403. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on funding for a voluntary organisation (details supplied) in County Mayo. [32754/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application for *ex-gratia* funding has been received from the organisation in question. Provision of *ex-gratia* assistance this year is subject to the availability of funds and the application will be considered in this context and having regard to competing claims for financial assistance submitted by other animal welfare bodies.

Grant Payments

404. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive payment under the grassland sheep scheme 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32756/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Grassland Sheep Scheme was received from the person named on the 14 May 2010. This application was fully processed and payment under the Grassland Sheep Scheme issued on 1 February 2011, based, in accordance with the provisions of the Scheme, on the original Sheep Census return received by my Department on 11 January 2010, which indicated that the person named had twenty breeding ewes in his flock.

The person named has since appealed to my Department stating that incorrect details were entered on the Sheep Census return. This appeal was received after it was found at inspection that the sheep census return was correct. The appeal was subsequently rejected.

405. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan has been requested to submit a map that was already submitted with the single farm payment application last May; the reason for the delay in finalising this application in view of the fact that they have submitted the map a second time; when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32767/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2011, following processing of which an over-claim was identified in respect of a land parcel declared by the person named. This necessitated correspondence in order to clarify the mapping position and, having been satisfactorily resolved, the 50% advance payment issued to the person named on 3 November.

406. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not received their single farm payment or area based payment; when same will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32771/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 16th May 2011.

This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility/Cross Compliance Inspection.

This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing and priority is given to applications who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

407. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [32789/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 13 May 2011. While the person named replied to a query in relation to an over-claim, which had been identified following processing of the application, the matter is not yet resolved and is still being investigated. However, immediately the matter is resolved, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

Animal Identification Scheme

408. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason that horses who were not issued with a passport at birth have their passports marked not fit for human consumption; if he will review this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32807/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Commission Regulation 504/2008, which came into force on 1 July 2009, requires that equine animals be identified with an equine identification document (passport) and a microchip. The Regulation is implemented in Irish law by S.I. No. 357 of 2011 — European Communities (Equine) Regulations 2011. This S.I. provides that if an equine animal has not been identified within six months of the date of its birth, or by the 31 December in the year of its birth, whichever date occurs later, then the equine animal cannot be admitted to the food chain. There are no plans to review this requirement at present.

Grant Payments

409. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on the appeal for single farm payment from the national reserve in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32811/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named submitted an application under Category B which caters for farmers who commenced farming after 15 May 2009. In addition, applicants under this category are also required to meet certain criteria with regard to income limits and farming qualifications. An application from the person named was deemed ineligible as he commenced farming prior to the 15th May, 2009.

The person named appealed this decision and his case has been forwarded to the Independent Single Payments Appeals Committee who will carry out a full review of the case. The Independent Single Payments Appeals Committee will correspond directly with the person named following the outcome of their review.

Organic Farming

410. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32835/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Following the initial processing of the Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) application submitted by the person named discrepancies were discovered regarding the status of land parcels listed on the application form. A letter has issued to the person named requesting that these discrepancies be rectified. Once resolved, the application of the person named will be processed for payment without further delay.

Departmental Bodies

411. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32844/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The State bodies that come within the aegis of my Department are:

- Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB)
- Bord Bia
- Bord Iascaigh Mhara
- Bord na gCon
- Coillte Teoranta
- Horse Racing Ireland
- Irish National Stud

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- National Milk Agency
- Marine Institute
- Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA)
- Teagasc
- Veterinary Council of Ireland

The changes implemented by three of these agencies are outlined below:

Board Iascaigh Mhara

In response to the McCarthy Report, which identified a €7.3m saving to the State through the abolition of BIM in its current form, the Agency finalised a documented proposal “Transforming an Bord Iascaigh Mhara and Delivering on the Potential of Irish Seafood”. This plan documented a number of cost saving measures to match the €7.3m outlined in the McCarthy report without the negative impact on the seafood sector. These initiatives included organisational change, a reduction in contractors, consultancies and overheads and a reduction in staff levels. In line with these actions BIM’s budget has reduced from €40.8m in 2009 to €16.7m in 2011.

BIM has also delivered on the Governments plans for the rationalisation through the transfer of its seafood marketing and promotion functions to Bord Bia. This has ensured the strengthening of seafood marketing as part of a more cohesive overall food marketing effort, while allowing BIM to focus all its energies in developing the seafood industry in line with the Cawley Strategy — Steering A New Course.

Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

The Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board formerly employed a Technical Advisor whose contract expired on 04 August 2008 and was not renewed. The administrative function of the ALAB Board has been subsumed into the Agriculture Appeals Office, allowing a former full-time secretary to be redeployed within the Department.

Teagasc is implementing a major ‘Change Programme’ 2009-2013 to achieve greater efficiencies in all aspects of their business and address the need for significant resource rationalization. A continued emphasis is placed on the potential to achieve greater efficiencies in the delivery of programmes, services and activities. The main achievements to date include the closure of 23 local advisory offices, some 300 staff reductions, annual payroll savings of €16m and exchequer grant in aid savings of €8m. A voluntary early retirement/redundancy programme (VER) was introduced in September to achieve additional staff savings in non-essential support areas such as administration, support staff etc by year end. A comprehensive Staffing and Efficiency Plan has also been prepared to prioritise the allocation of resources, ensure staff are deployed in areas of greatest service need and minimise the impact on front-line services.

At present, there are no plans to merge or abolish the other agencies listed.

Grant Payments

412. **Deputy Patrick O’Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

when a single farm payment will be paid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32882/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 3 May 2011, following processing of which an over-claim was identified on one of the land declared. The person named was recently written to in this regard and, immediately on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

On-farm Investment Schemes

413. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider a grant application under force majeure in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32883/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the terms of the current EU provisions which govern my Department's on-farm investment schemes, recognition of the principle of *force majeure* is strictly limited to actual beneficiaries under the schemes concerned and, even in those cases, the options are restricted. I am not, therefore, in a position to consider an application of the principle of *force majeure* in relation to failure to make an application under an on-farm investment scheme. The possibility of re-opening the scheme will be decided shortly in the context of the comprehensive review of expenditure which has been carried out in my Department and in the process of finalising the 2012 Estimate.

Consultancy Contracts

414. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he has retained the services of an external contract company to carry out checking on applications and or mapping for the purposes of assessing changes, amendments and payments to the single farm payment scheme; if he will provide details of the company concerned; if he has provided a timeframe for any outside agency and or company to have deliberations completed and reports filed with his Department; if he will consider advancing the first instalment of the payment to farmers in order that they will be in a position to meet outstanding debts that they are trying to manage in the knowledge that any discrepancy and or issue that is identified within his Department will be recouped in the second payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32888/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The services of an external contractor are employed by my Department, on an ongoing basis, subject to the governing EU rules concerning tendering for contracts, to carry out digitising of maps submitted to my Department in support of various schemes, principally the Single Farm Payment scheme. No outside body has been engaged to carry out checking on applications or maps, for the purposes of assessing changes or amendments and payments to the Single Farm Payment. The services of an outside consultancy, KPMG, was, however, engaged to conduct a review of internal processing arrangements, including workflows and their report is currently under consideration.

Payments under the Single Payment Scheme are governed by EU regulations, principally regulations 73/2009, 1120/2009 and 1122/2009. It is not possible under these regulations to make payments to any cases that are not fully processed and clear. That said, however, payments of the 50% advance of the SFP are continuing apace, with payments runs being made twice weekly. Since these payments started on 17 October, over €537 million has issued to 108,000

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applicants. Every effort continues to be made to maximise the numbers of payments being made and, in this regard, I would again urge any farmer who has been written to regarding an issue which is delaying payment, to respond without delay. I can also confirm that arrangements are well advanced to allow balancing payments commence issuing on target, as and from 1 December.

Grant Payments

415. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive a disadvantaged area payment and agri-environmental options scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32931/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2010.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks a discrepancy was discovered in respect of one parcel listed on the application of the person named. Officials in my Department have been in direct contact with the person named and the matter is being addressed with a view to issuing payment as quickly as possible.

416. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive a disadvantaged area payment and agri-environmental options scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32932/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 September 2010.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks a discrepancy was discovered in respect of one parcel listed on the application of the person named. Officials in my Department have been in direct contact with the person named and the matter is being addressed with a view to issuing payment as quickly as possible.

417. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive a disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32933/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 13 May 2011, following processing of which an overlap was identified in respect of a land parcel declared by the person named. The person named has been written to regarding the matter and, on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to appropriate payments issuing at an early date thereafter.

418. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon will receive payment; the reason for delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32939/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 27 April 2011, processing of which was recently completed thereby allowing payment under the above Schemes to issue to the person named on 27 October and 3 November, respectively, the payment under the Single Payment Scheme being net of the annual Land Purchase Annuity.

419. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33009/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS) with effect from 1 September 2010. 75% payment in respect of Year 1 totalling €528.04 issued to the person named on 19th October 2011. Payment of the remaining 25% will issue shortly.

Payments in respect of year 2 are expected to commence in December.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme

420. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of the amount a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim is being required to pay in relation to the area based compensation scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33020/11]

464. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Leitrim has been requested to repay a purported overpayment under the 2008 disadvantaged area scheme, when in fact the person contends that it was an underpayment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33361/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 420 and 464 together.

Under the 2010 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, the person named received a seventy-five percent advance payment based on those parcels cleared at the time of payment. Subsequently, following digitising of all remaining parcels on the holding, the claimed forage area of the person named increased, thereby requiring a higher stocking density rate. The person named was informed of this in writing and requested to submit any additional information they may have in relation to additional stock on the holding. In the absence of evidence of further qualifying animals, the application of the person named was confirmed not to have met the required minimum stocking density requirement, as a result of which an overpayment of €1,010.74 was levied. This sum was recouped as follows: €288.16 (2010 SPS, 24 March 2011), €722.58 (REPS, 11 July 2011).

In relation to the overpayment under the 2008 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, this arose following a review of eligible areas as submitted by the person named, on foot of which ineligible areas were identified. The ineligible area in question was measured as 0.57 hectares, the annual monetary value of the this being €54.72 under DAS, for both years 2008 and 2009, with further annual penalties of €17.68 (2008) and €18.60 (2009) under the Single Payment Scheme.

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All sums were recouped from the 50% advance of the 2011 Single Payment, which issued to person named on 17 October.

Seirbhísí Farantóireachta

421. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara an bhfuil sé i gceist feabhas a chur ar na foscadáin ag na pontúin i Ros an Mhíl, Contae na Gaillimhe; agus an bhfuil sé i gceist na suíocháin atá sna foscadáin atá ann cheana féin a ardú mar go bhfuil siad ró-íseal; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33137/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Is ar iarratas ón Roinn Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta a cuireadh foscadh ar fáil ag Lárionad Chuan Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl do phaisinéirí a bheadh ag dul go hÁrainn agus ag teacht as agus is í an Roinn sin atá ag maoiniú 75% de chostas iomlán an tionscadail.

Tá ardú curtha le gairid ag na conraitheoirí, atá freagrach as an bhfoscadh do phaisinéirí a shuiteáil, ar airde na suíochán mar fhreagra ar ábhar imní a d'ardaigh mo Roinnse.

Glacaim leis go soiléiríonn sé seo an cás.

422. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara an bhfuil sé i gceist táillí páirceála a ghearradh ar oileánaigh ag an gclós páirceála de chuid na Roinne i Ros an Mhíl, Contae na Gaillimhe, ó tharla nár gearradh táillí go dtí seo ar oileánaigh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [33139/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Tá mo Roinn freagrach as na sé Lárionad Chuan Iascaigh a bhainistiú agus a fhorbairt, lena n-áirítear Lárionad Chuan Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl.

Is féidir liom a dheimhniú go ndearna mo Roinn infheistíocht le déanaí in uasghrádú na háise carrchlóis ag Lárionad Chuan Iascaigh Ros an Mhíl agus tá sé soiléir go bhfuil freagracht ar mo Roinn an toradh is mó is féidir a fháil ar an infheistíocht sin. Tá an bealach iomchuí chun úsáid na háise sin a bhainistiú á mheas faoi láthair.

Departmental Expenditure

423. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the cost of running the Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service in 2009 and 2010; if he will provide a breakdown of that cost to include staff salaries and wages, temporary veterinary inspectors and travel and subsistence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33143/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Slaughterhouses and meat processing plants operate under the supervision of the Veterinary Public Health Inspection Service (VPHIS) of my Department, in accordance with the terms of EU Food Hygiene Regulations. These plants are supervised by veterinary inspectors employed by the Department, assisted in their duties by technical staff (agricultural officers) and by temporary veterinary inspectors (TVIs) drawn from private practice on a rota basis.

The cost of the meat inspection service has been reduced in recent years. The figures as calculated for 2009 and 2010 are set out below:

Year	2009 €m	2010 €m
Salaries: veterinary inspectors	7.1	4.5

Year	2009 €m	2010 €m
Salaries: technical staff	11.4	8.3
TVIs	18.8	18.3
Travel and subsistence	0.7	0.7
Total	38.0	31.8

Part of the cost is recovered from industry through fees for official controls, charged under the terms of Regulation (EC) 882 of 2004. The amount recovered in 2009 was €13.9m (37% of the total cost); and the amount in 2010 was €15.5m (49% of total cost).

Departmental Schemes

424. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding entitlements in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33153/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the 2010 Grassland Sheep Scheme, farmers were required to:

- maintain ewes;
- complete the Sheep Census return by 9 April 2010; and
- submit the SPS application form by the closing date of 17th May 2010.

While an application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Grassland Sheep Scheme was received from the person named on 21 May 2010, following validation, it was found that the person named had not submitted the Sheep Census by the closing date, as required. Therefore, no payment is due under the Grassland Sheep Scheme to the person named.

Persons who hold or keep sheep on a registered holding must maintain records of the individual animal identification number attached to the animals. They must also keep a written record of the movement of animals onto or off the registered holding. To facilitate the recording of these details, Flock Registers are issued to all sheep flock owners. I have arranged for an official of my Department to contact the person named in this regard.

425. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an application for funding of Ainmhithe Animal Rescue, Thornberry Cottage, Rathreagh, Kincon, Ballina, County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33155/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application for ex-gratia funding has been received from the organisation in question. Provision of ex-gratia assistance this year is subject to the availability of funds and the application will be considered in this context and having regard to competing claims for financial assistance submitted by other animal welfare bodies.

Harbours and Piers

426. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if an application has been received from Galway County Council for funding for the upgrading of

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Coolacloy Pier in Knigstown, Clifden; if it has, when a decision will be made on this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33168/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The pier at Coolacloy, Kingston is owned by Galway County Council and the responsibility for its repair and maintenance lies with the Local Authority in the first instance.

Earlier this year, however, my Department invited coastal Local Authorities to submit applications in respect of priority harbour development projects for inclusion in its 2011 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme. My Department received an application from Galway County Council for funding for a total of 3 projects, of which Coolacloy pier was identified as the 3rd project in order of priority.

Having regard to its prioritisation and the fact that the required planning permission was not in place, the project was not selected for funding by the Evaluation Committee.

Any application for funding in future years by Galway County Council will be given consideration subject to available exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Agri-environment Options Scheme

427. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown for both agri-environment option scheme 1 and 2 farmers by county. [33172/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The total number of current valid applications for AEOS I and II by county are as set out in the table:

Counties	AEOS I Number	AEOS II Number
Carlow	106	38
Cavan	257	219
Clare	399	404
Cork	573	434
Donegal	720	957
Dublin	19	7
Galway	903	878
Kerry	396	422
Kildare	85	45
Kilkenny	299	143
Laois	195	91
Leitrim	418	243
Limerick	307	228
Longford	123	99
Louth	69	39
Mayo	1012	955
Meath	197	97
Monaghan	254	135
Offaly	155	107
Roscommon	438	389
Sligo	324	220
Tipperary	443	292
Waterford	158	65

Counties	AEOS I Number	AEOS II Number
Westmeath	257	147
Wexford	222	104
Wicklow	116	74
Total	8,445	6,832

Grant Payments

428. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers that have been paid agri-environment options scheme 1 payments to date; the amount paid; and for those that are paid when the remaining 25% payment will be made. [33173/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A total of 4,605 applications have been fully processed. 75% of the 2010 entitlement under AEOS I amounting to €3,095,086.88 has issued to date. I expect that payments in respect of the remaining 25% will commence shortly.

429. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when agri-environment options scheme 2 payments will be made; the amount of the 2011 REP scheme AEOS book of estimates that have been made to date; and if he will provide a breakdown of REPS 3, REPS 4 and AEOS 1. [33174/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. Participants were accepted into the AEOS 2 scheme with effect from 1 September 2011 and I expect that payments in respect of year 1 will commence in the first quarter of 2012. In relation to REPS and AEOS schemes the following is a breakdown of the total spend to-date and the amount paid in 2011:

REPS 3:

Total to-date: €1.514 billion

Paid in 2011: €27 million

REPS 4:

Total to-date: €382 million

Paid in 2011: €96 million

AEOS 1:

Total to Date: €3 million

Paid in 2011: €3 million

Farm Inspections

430. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of inspections that will take place this year for single farm payment, REP scheme, agri-environment options scheme and disadvantaged areas. [33175/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the context of delivering the Single Payment Scheme, Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, REPS and AEOS

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schemes my Department is required to carry out inspections on a number of farms covering such issues as eligibility, compliance with EU regulations under headings such as environment, food safety, animal welfare and plant health.

A minimum of 5% of Single Payment Scheme applicants are required to be inspected under the eligibility rule. These checks are carried out to verify that the actual area claimed in the Single Payment Scheme application form corresponds to the area held by the farmer and to ensure there are no overlapping claims, or duplicate claims. Up to two-thirds of these inspections are carried out without a farm visit and using the technique of “remote sensing”. The rate of on-farm inspection required for cross-compliance is 1% of those farmers to whom the Statutory Management Requirements or GAEC apply. Under the relevant regulations 3% of producers must be inspected under the Bovine Animal Identification and Registration Requirements together with 3% of sheep producers covering 5% of the National flock.

In 2010, in an effort to minimise duplication of farm inspections, my Department agreed to carry out some 1,600 farm inspections under the GAP regulations on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. This arrangement was retained for 2011. Of the 30,000 farmers still active in REPS my Department carried out approximately 2,500 inspections in 2011. Under AEOS I approximately 850 inspections were carried out during 2011. The AEOS inspections cover both 2010 and 2011 in respect of the 8,445 valid AEOS participants.

These inspections are, as far as is possible integrated in order to minimise the number of farm visits. For 2011 it is estimated that some 13,500 inspections will be carried out of which some 3,000 are carried out without a farm visit using remote sensing. Some 130,000 farmers apply annually for the Single Farm Payment Scheme, over 100,000 of these also apply for the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, REPS and AEOS. The total value of these schemes to Irish Farmers is worth €1.8billion.

Departmental Expenditure

431. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of the allocated TAMS funding that has been spent to date in 2011. [33176/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) over the period January-October 2011 have amounted to €0.46 million.

Departmental Schemes

432. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will confirm the €150 per hectare payment for agri-environment option scheme Natura payments. [33177/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): When AEOS was launched last year, the intention had been to increase the rate for designated land from the €75 per hectare which was originally announced to €150 per hectare and my Department had been in discussion with the Commission with a view to obtaining approval for this proposal. However, given the current financial constraints and the overall funding limits which have been introduced in the National Recovery Plan and in order to ensure that as many applicants as possible can be accepted into the scheme, I have decided that the rate for designated land will be €75 per hectare.

Commonage Division

433. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress made on commonage framework plans; and when farmers will be notified. [33178/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is working in close co-operation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, which has responsibility for the commonage framework plans, on a review of the existing plans. I understand that a review of the situation in 4 counties will be completed by the end of 2011 (Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Donegal). I understand that the review of the remaining counties will be completed by the end of February 2012.

Grant Payments

434. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of farm improvement scheme grants that have been made in 2011. [33179/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments under the Farm Improvement Scheme over the period January-October 2011 have amounted to €2.6 million.

435. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers and the amount paid under the disadvantaged areas scheme in each of the following areas: mountain areas, severely handicapped and less severely handicapped areas. [33180/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The position regarding payments made to date under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, by land category, is as outlined in the tabular statement.

Category	Numbers Paid*	Value of payments
Mountain	26,974	€60,682,727
More Severely handicapped	51,234	€100,911,814
Less Severely handicapped	19,137	€33,486,466
Total	88,603	€195,081,008

* Applicants can have land in one or more categories

Payments continue to be made as individual cases are confirmed eligible for payment, with payment runs taking place twice per week.

Direct Payment Schemes

436. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the young farmers installation grant scheme will be reopened. [33181/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Young Farmers' Installation Scheme was closed to new applicants on 14 October 2008 and I have no plans to reopen the Scheme at this time. An allocation of almost €1 million has been provided in this year's Estimates to meet the remaining commitments under both the Young Farmers' Installation Scheme and the preceding equivalent schemes.

437. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide a breakdown of the single farm payment on a NUTS1 and NUTS2 basis. [33182/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While NUTS 1 equates to the National position, payment statistics are more readily available on a national/county basis, rather than a NUTS basis. The tabular statement shows the present payments position, on a county basis.

County	Applicants	Number Paid	Value €
Carlow	1,705	1,426	10,935,789.60
Cavan	5,109	4,095	15,764,702.60
Clare	6,379	5,669	23,155,370.10
Cork	13,517	10,596	69,016,989.80
Donegal	8,904	6,489	19,578,171.70
Dublin	657	497	3,205,467.63
Galway	12,710	10,452	36,374,957.40
Kerry	8,205	6,881	27,393,202.80
Kildare	2,141	1,706	13,564,349.60
Kilkenny	3,573	2,906	23,922,963.10
Laois	3,050	2,397	16,794,568.80
Leitrim	3,655	2,803	7,242,835.24
Limerick	5,424	4,496	23,369,615.80
Longford	2,511	2,164	9,469,734.96
Louth	1,556	1,175	7,543,814.52
Mayo	12,137	10,277	27,965,727.10
Meath	3,920	3,498	27,282,894.80
Monaghan	4,304	3,473	13,767,632.30
Offaly	3,203	2,631	16,016,077.80
Roscommon	6,016	4,733	17,328,037.40
Sligo	4,253	3,285	9,745,379.74
Tipperary	7,309	5,739	41,677,573.10
Waterford	2,570	2,127	17,449,588.30
Westmeath	3,127	2,478	14,049,132.60
Wexford	4,162	3,209	24,383,506.00
Wicklow	2,188	1,746	11,973,759.40

Rural Development

438. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when food projects will be allowed to be funded under the rural development plan 2007 — 2013. [33183/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Commission has advised this year that food projects being funded under Axis 3 of the rural development programme [RDP] are appropriate to Axis 1 and must be funded under that part of the programme. These projects are being funded through LEADER which falls within the remit of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine has responsibility for the overall RDP as the Managing Authority. A balance of funding the 3 Axes of the RDP must be maintained and the transfer

of funding for food projects to Axis 1 was not readily possible due to this requirement. Additional national funding is required to activate these projects under Axis 1 and this issue is under active review.

Departmental Schemes

439. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in terms of the targeted agricultural modernisation scheme sow welfare grant, in view of the fact that the deadline for loose housing of sows is set for 31 December 2012 and there is much work on farm still to be carried out, if he will give an indication as to when the TAMs for sow welfare will reopen. [33184/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) were suspended for new applications on 8 June 2011 pending the outcome of the comprehensive review of expenditure by my Department. I am conscious of the pressures on pig producers and a decision on the re-opening of TAMS will be taken in the context of the outcome of the review and the preparations and finalisation of the 2012 Estimates process for the Department.

440. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide the following information in respect of the disadvantaged areas scheme on a county breakdown: the number of applicants, the number of applicants paid, the number of applicants awaiting payment, the amount of moneys paid and the amount of moneys outstanding. [33185/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are no delays in payments to farmers under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, payments having commenced, on target, on 22 September, with payments issuing to those farmers whose applications had been confirmed eligible for payment at that time. I can confirm that my Department has, in the interim, continued to pay individuals, as their cases became clear, with payment runs taking place twice a week. This is normal practice and will continue on an ongoing basis, as necessary. In this regard, while I am pleased to note that payments worth €191.7 million have issued to date, representing over 85% of applicants, I remain confident that the full budget for the Scheme will have been exhausted by year-end.

County Name	Applied	Paid	Gross Amount	Percentage Paid
Carlow	763	677	€1,479,346.59	88.73%
Cavan	4,826	4,098	€8,746,956.18	84.92%
Clare	6,159	5,610	€13,436,952.24	91.09%
Cork	7,085	6,073	€14,417,132.10	85.72%
Donegal	8,422	6,471	€14,876,115.75	76.83%
Dublin	144	105	€235,934.07	72.92%
Galway	12,177	10,538	€22,738,991.44	86.54%
Kerry	7,764	6,738	€16,451,697.06	86.79%
Kildare	525	463	€889,325.27	88.19%
Kilkenny	1,781	1,524	€3,439,225.19	85.57%
Laois	1,712	1,427	€2,943,887.67	83.35%
Leitrim	3,498	2,850	€6,268,479.16	81.48%
Limerick	2,951	2,652	€5,455,711.00	89.87%
Longford	2,395	2,151	€4,695,369.16	89.81%
Louth	781	609	€1,052,915.78	77.98%

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County Name	Applied	Paid	Gross Amount	Percentage Paid
Mayo	11,697	10,192	€21,598,271.13	87.13%
Meath	1,334	1,232	€2,381,972.85	92.35%
Monaghan	4,102	3,554	€6,973,286.20	86.64%
Offaly	2,433	2,132	€4,393,387.56	87.63%
Roscommon	5,702	4,730	€10,187,542.22	82.95%
Sligo	4,055	3,319	€7,103,837.67	81.85%
Tipperary	4,546	3,842	€8,463,186.92	84.51%
Waterford	1,456	1,296	€2,936,834.15	89.01%
Westmeath	2,643	2,252	€4,642,606.05	85.21%
Wexford	1,507	1,189	€2,341,784.92	78.90%
Wicklow	1,768	1,445	€3,590,532.32	81.73%
Totals	102,226	87,169	€191,741,280.65	85.27%

441. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide the following information in respect of the single farm payment scheme on a county breakdown: the number of applicants, the number of applicants paid, the number of applicants awaiting payment, the amount of moneys paid and the amount of moneys outstanding. [33186/11]

442. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide the following information in respect of the persons that are not paid on a county breakdown: the number of persons not paid as a result of inspections, digitising, transfers and queries. [33187/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 441 and 442 together.

There are no delays in payments to farmers under the Single Farm Payment Scheme, the 50% advance payments having commenced issuing, on schedule, on 17 October. While the earliest payment date under the governing EU rules is 1 December, earlier this year I successfully sought the approval of the Commissioner to have advance payments made as and from 17 October. This is the earliest possible legal date for making payments, it being the start of the new EU financial year.

Suggestions have been made that the necessity to re-digitise farmers' maps is leading to unnecessary delays, resulting in payments being made later than would otherwise be the case. I can assure the Deputy and all concerned of my commitment to allocating such resources as is necessary to ensure that the essential digitisation of applicants' maps onto the Department's Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS). I must emphasise, however, that any failings or shortcomings in LPIS would leave the Department open to the very real risk of significant fines. I am not prepared to take such a risk, nor will I compromise the value of direct payments to Irish farmers.

Furthermore, sight should not be lost of the fact that the changes which have been recorded onto LPIS in very significant numbers, both throughout last year and again this year, are necessitated by the need to have all ineligible areas mapped; simply put, the position on the ground in any given farm must be accurately reflected on LPIS. Insofar as inspections are concerned, there are specific requirements laid down in the governing EU Regulations. All

inspections are required to be initiated before any payments may commence and this priority was achieved in time to allow the advance payments begin issuing on 17 October.

All cases currently not yet paid the advance, be they inspection-related, or due to transfers, digitising or queries, are being actively pursued, with a view to payments issuing at the earliest possible date. To this end, payments are continuing to issue, on a twice-weekly basis, as individual cases are confirmed eligible. The tabular statement shows the present payments position, on a county basis.

County	Applicants	Number Paid	Value €
Carlow	1,705	1,426	10,935,789.60
Cavan	5,109	4,095	15,764,702.60
Clare	6,379	5,669	23,155,370.10
Cork	13,517	10,596	69,016,989.80
Donegal	8,904	6,489	19,578,171.70
Dublin	657	497	3,205,467.63
Galway	12,710	10,452	36,374,957.40
Kerry	8,205	6,881	27,393,202.80
Kildare	2,141	1,706	13,564,349.60
Kilkenny	3,573	2,906	23,922,963.10
Laois	3,050	2,397	16,794,568.80
Leitrim	3,655	2,803	7,242,835.24
Limerick	5,424	4,496	23,369,615.80
Longford	2,511	2,164	9,469,734.96
Louth	1,556	1,175	7,543,814.52
Mayo	12,137	10,277	27,965,727.10
Meath	3,920	3,498	27,282,894.80
Monaghan	4,304	3,473	13,767,632.30
Offaly	3,203	2,631	16,016,077.80
Roscommon	6,016	4,733	17,328,037.40
Sligo	4,253	3,285	9,745,379.74
Tipperary	7,309	5,739	41,677,573.10
Waterford	2,570	2,127	17,449,588.30
Westmeath	3,127	2,478	14,049,132.60
Wexford	4,162	3,209	24,383,506.00
Wicklow	2,188	1,746	11,973,759.40

Grant Payments

443. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view of the fact that there will be an additional 1% increase in modulation from the single farm payment in 2012, if he will confirm that there will be no other deductions to the single farm payment in 2012. [33188/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As part of the adoption of the Commission's proposals on the CAP Health Check, the rate of modulation deduction was increased from 5% over a 4-year period commencing in 2009. The rate of the modulation deduction, which applies to all amounts paid under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) in excess of €5,000, was increased as follows;

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Year	Rate of Modulation Deduction
2009	7%
2010	8%
2011	9%
2012	10%

In addition, an additional 4% modulation deduction applies to all payments in excess of €300,000. This additional modulation deduction applies to only four applicants in Ireland, whose SPS payment exceeds €300,000.

As part of the range of options being considered under the Comprehensive Expenditure Review and in preparation for the 2012 Estimates campaign, my Department submitted an application to the Commission in July to possibly avail of the Article 68 of Council Regulation (EC) No 73/2009 facility to fund the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme. The use of Article 68 mechanism would involve the imposition of linear reduction on Single Payment Scheme entitlements to provide the required funding for the Welfare Scheme. I can confirm that no definitive decision has been taken on whether to proceed to fund the Scheme through this mechanism. A decision on the matter will be taken in the context of finalising the 2012 Estimates for my Department.

Common Agricultural Policy

444. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the EU Commission analysis that the greening measure under the Common Agricultural Policy 2013 reform will cost farmers here €15 per hectare; and if he will outline his analysis of the costs of greening. [33189/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have examined the Impact Analysis prepared by the EU Commission of various alternative options for greening that were considered by the Commission prior to publication of the legal proposals. This analysis estimates the cost of greening for Ireland at between €23 and €25 per hectare, assuming an ecological set aside ranging between 5 and 10%. However, the options analysed do not match the actual proposal from the Commission.

The reality is that it is premature to attribute definitive costs to the greening proposals at this point. We need much more clarity concerning the detailed conditions attaching to the proposals before we can calculate any costs involved. This is why the Polish Presidency has organised a series of Working Groups to examine the technical details of the proposals. These are taking place over the coming months.

Direct Payment Schemes

445. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the action he is proposing to take to prevent the severe distortion to the land rental and sale market resulting from the EU Commission proposal to set 2014 as the new reference period for entitlements under the single farm payment. [33190/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have advised farmers on a number of occasions that they should not rush into investment or long-term leasing decisions on the basis of the current proposals for a reference year of 2014. The provisions surrounding establishment of entitlements are very complex and will require detailed

clarification. A great deal of negotiation also remains to be done in respect of this issue. I will continue to press for changes to the proposal to ensure that it does not have detrimental consequences for the land rental market. It is likely that they will be altered significantly during the course of the protracted negotiations that are ahead.

446. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm when the sheep grassland payments will be made in 2011; the number of applicants on a county basis; the number of eligible sheep; and the value of the payments in each county. [33191/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Processing of applications under the 2011 Grassland Sheep Scheme is currently in train, with a payment target date of 8 December 2011. As processing is still ongoing, the statistics sought by the Deputy are not yet available.

Grant Payments

447. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive their single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33218/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 11 May 2011, processing of which has recently been completed, thereby allowing payment to issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Afforestation Programme

448. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an application for afforestation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33221/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application by the person named is currently being considered within my Department and a decision will not be made until such time as the necessary enquiries are complete. A significant number of local objections to the proposed development have been received which must be considered as part of the evaluation of the application.

Grant Payments

449. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on his appeal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33246/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 11th of May 2011. This application was selected for a Cross Compliance inspection.

During the course of the inspection an issue was raised concerning the requirement to maintain lands in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition, specifically in relation to the prevention of encroachment of invasive species. Correspondence has been received from the person named on the matter and is being considered, formal notification of the outcome of the inspection will issue to the person named shortly. Should he be dissatisfied with the outcome

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of the inspection he retains the right to seek a review. He also retains the right to have the outcome of any such review appealed to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

450. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm payment and area aid payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33253/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 11th May 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection. This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing and priority is given to applications who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

451. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive their single payment scheme and disadvantaged area scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33256/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 8th April 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection. This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing and priority is given to applications who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

452. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when headage and single farm payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33257/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment/Disadvantage Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 9 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing the 50% advance of the Single Payment and full payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme to issue in the coming days.

453. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total amount of overpayment assessed against a person (details supplied) in County Galway for the period 2005 to 2010 under the single payment scheme and the disadvantage area scheme; the amount recouped by him to date; the balance now due; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33263/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As part of EU requirements my Department has been reviewing the areas claimed by applicants under the Single Payment scheme in the years 2005-2010 with a view to excluding ineligible areas. This review is in place to ensure that the area of land parcels claimed by applicants for payment under the Single Payment Scheme accurately reflects the eligible area for the purposes of such

payment and that any ineligible area (e.g. roads, farmyards, woods, scrub, etc.), have been excluded from the claimed area.

The individuals concerned were written to with regard to the reduction in eligible area/possible overpayments and were offered an opportunity to appeal the Departments findings. Maps and letters were issued to the applicants outlining the ineligible areas and stating the new Reference Areas. As a result of the review, overpayments arose for the scheme years 2005 to 2010 for the person named, as follows: under the Single Payment Scheme the sum amounted to €2,583.67 (of which €2,242.04 has been recovered, leaving a balance outstanding of €341.63), while under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme the sum amounted to €1,367.40, which has been fully recouped.

454. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; when payment will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33264/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 11 May 2011, following processing of which an over-claim was identified on one of the land parcels declared. The person named was written to on 4 November in this regard and, immediately on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

455. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a payment under the 2008 calf welfare scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33275/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered ten beef breed animals in 2008. The Scheme, commonly referred to as the Suckler Welfare Scheme, is in fact called the Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme. An integral component of this Scheme is the establishment of a comprehensive breeding database to assist suckler farmers identify the best breeding sires for their requirements and to this end the provision of a sire number for each calf is required. Sire details have not been received in respect of eight animals. The applicant should be able to obtain the necessary sire information from the company, who employed the person (now deceased) who carried out the artificial insemination. Receipts are not required.

456. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the agri-environment options scheme and single farm payment will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33284/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 21st April 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility/Cross Compliance Inspection. This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing and priority is given to applications who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

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The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1st September 2010. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. During these checks a discrepancy arose in relation to the area claimed on a number of the land parcels and applicant was asked to submit amendments to SPS Section in Portlaoise. To date these amendments have not been received in SPS Section. Officials in my Department have been in contact again with the person named with a view to getting claim sorted as quickly as possible.

I am well aware of the financial pressures on many farm families and of the importance of grant and scheme payments to their incomes and cash-flow. I have given the highest priority to the processing and payment of outstanding Agri-Environment Options Scheme payments and to the elimination of all unnecessary delays.

457. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their agri-environment options scheme payment; the amount of that payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33314/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1st September 2010. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. This application was also randomly selected for an on-farm inspection. During this inspection an issue arose in respect of the area claimed under Species Rich Grassland. This matter is currently being examined by my Department with a view to finalising the processing of the application as quickly as possible.

458. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the single farm payment for 2011 has not been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33315/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 1 April 2011, following processing of which dual claims were identified in respect of three land parcels declared by the person named. Following correspondence with my Department, the person named confirmed in writing, on 30 September, that he did not have the right to declare these parcels. The application was then processed as per the Terms and Conditions of the Single Payment Scheme, based on the governing EU Regulations, resulting in no payment being due to the person named as the dual claimed parcels exceeded 20% of his application.

459. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment; the amount of that payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33328/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 13 May 2011, following processing of which an over-claim was identified on one of the land parcels declared. The person named has been written to in this regard and, immediately on receipt of a satisfac-

tory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

460. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding payment for area aid single farm payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33346/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In order to receive payment under the Single Payment/Disadvantaged Area schemes it is a requirement for applicants to submit an application prior to the closing date, which for the 2011 scheme year was 16 May 2011. Records held by my Department indicate that a pre-printed 2011 SPS application form was sent to the person named on 29 March 2011. My Department has no record of receiving a 2011 Single Payment/Disadvantaged Area application from the person named. All Single Payment applications sent out by my Department contained a pre-addressed return envelope with a Swiftpost label attached for which the herd owner receives a receipt from the Post Office upon posting. If the person named can provide this proof of postage or provide an explanation as to why the application form does not appear to have been returned, my Department will review the case based on the information and documentation submitted.

461. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [33353/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 10th of May 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection. This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing and priority is given to applications who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

462. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for the delay in issuing a person (details supplied) in County Longford with their suckler cow grant payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33354/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named registered nineteen beef breed calves under the 2009 Suckler Welfare Scheme and seventeen calves under the 2010 Scheme. Payment has issued in respect of seven of the 2009 born animals but errors have been identified with the remaining twelve animals. A letter was recently issued to the applicant by my Department regarding these errors and the matter will be reviewed on receipt of a reply.

To date, weaning information has only been received in respect of two of the 2010 born animals. Payment cannot be considered until the dates of weaning have been received for the remaining animals and the procedures followed have been found to be in compliance with the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme.

463. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive their REP scheme payment 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33358/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in May 2008 and received payments for the first two years of the contract.

In addition, 75% of the year 3 payment issued on 23rd May 2011 for the amount of €6265.65 and the balancing payment of 25% issued on 26th May 2011 for the amount of €2088.55. The administration checks in respect of 2011 payments are currently being carried out and I expect that payments in respect of 2011 will commence later this month or in early December.

Question No. 464 answered with Question No. 420.

Ministerial Appointments

465. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33940/11]

466. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33954/11]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 465 and 466 together.

There are no former Government office holders in positions within the State agencies that come within the aegis of my Department. Mr. Jim O’Keeffe, former Minister of State participates in an informal group to discuss horse racing matters. He does not receive any fees or expenses in respect of this work.

Adoption Services

467. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reasons for the delays in adopted persons being granted access to their files regarding Bessborough Centre, Cork which are being held by the Health Service Executive in St. Stephen’s Hospital, Glanmire, Cork; if measures will be implemented to shorten the delays; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32925/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Following talks with the HSE, the Sacred Heart Order and officials from my Department, the HSE agreed to take responsibility for the adoption files of the Sacred Heart Adoption Society located in Bessborough, Blackrock, Co. Cork.

I have been advised by the Office of the National Director, Children & Family Services HSE that the files have now been transferred to the HSE in their entirety. The HSE inform me that a system has been put in place to manage queries from clients, i.e. children born in the Sacred Heart Homes (now adults) and birth mothers. Queries are being dealt with in the HSE Regional Adoption Department in order that enquirers can be offered a meeting with a social worker/counsellor to deal with requests as promptly as possible.

The HSE has already commenced responding to individual queries and encourages anyone seeking their personal data to communicate directly with the HSE South Adoption Unit, St Stephen's Hospital, Glanmire, Co.Cork (tel. 021 4858650).

Departmental Bodies

468. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the action she has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under her remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within her Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32846/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department was formally established on the 2nd of June 2011 and since then it has not established or abolished any State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State boards or other quangos.

It should be noted that following enactment of the Child Care Amendment Act 2011, which was guided through its final stages in the Oireachtas in July by myself, the Children's Act Advisory Board was subsequently dissolved by means of the commencement by the Minister of Health of Part 6 of the Child Amendment Act 2011.

The following State agencies come under the aegis of my Department: Family Support Agency, Adoption Authority of Ireland, Office of the Ombudsman for Children; and the National Education & Welfare Board.

Mental Health Services

469. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of cross-departmental meetings that have taken place between her and the Department of Education and Skills or the Department of Health specifically in respect of children's mental health policy; if there is a cross-departmental committee responsible for this area; if she will provide details on same; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32862/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): There have been no such meetings to date. I have had discussions with my colleague the Minister for Health on a range of policy issues which impact on both Departments including the issue of mental health. This is an important policy area for the Departments. My Department is presently considering the arrangements to be put in place.

Departmental Agencies

470. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the work programme for the taskforce charged with setting up the child and family support agency has been completed; when she expects the agency to be fully operational; the resources that will be allocated to the agency; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32863/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I established the Task Force on the Child and Family Support Agency in September 2011 under the chairmanship of Ms Maureen Lynott. The Task Force will advise my Department in regard to the necessary transition programme to establish a Child and Family Support Agency, and will base its work on best practice in child welfare, family support and public administration; consistent with the Government's public sector reform agenda.

In relation to the Agency it has been asked to:

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- Propose a vision and the principles to guide operations;
- Advise on the appropriate service responsibilities, and the delivery of same;
- Review existing financial, staffing and corporate resources; and propose a methodology for resource allocation;
- Propose an organisational design and operating child welfare and protection service model;
- Prepare a detailed implementation plan;
- Identify the main priorities and core relationships required;
- Oversee the implementation and monitor progress, pending establishment of the Agency.

As I already outlined, the Task Force will advise on the appropriate service responsibilities for the Agency during the course of its work from amongst those within the HSE that relate to children and family services, or from within the relevant operational responsibilities of my Department or its agencies. Resource allocation for the new Agency will largely be determined by the services for which it will have responsibility; in terms of both direct provision and commissioning. The Task Force has been asked to review the existing budgets, staffing and other corporate supports in respect of the services transferring. Further, the Task Force has been asked to assess and propose, within the resources available for the transferring services, a plan for resource and staffing configuration which takes full account of the overall corporate vision, indicators of need (geographically and by service) and the objectives of public sector reform and modernisation.

In relation to the work programme, the Task Force held its fifth plenary meeting last week. The final stages of a detailed work programme for the three sub-groups are still being finalised, and will be determined following some of the exploratory work currently underway. I look forward to receiving the report of the Task Force's work, which will inform preparations for the new Agency, including the drafting of legislation. It is my intention, working with my colleague the Minister for Health, to establish a dedicated Child and Family Programme within the HSE in 2012. This will provide for a dedicated management structure and budget for children and family services. Management of these services will be led by the National Director (Mr Gordon Jeyes) who already has a very close working relationship with me and my Department. A considerable change programme is already being implemented by the National Director within HSE Child and Family Services aimed at strengthening organisation capacity, business processes and systems. These developments are an integral part of preparations for the new stand alone Agency. I am anxious to advance the full establishment of the Agency as early a date as possible, subject to the work of the Task Force and necessary legislature provision. I would envisage tabling legislation before the House next year to provide for the Agency's establishment in 2013.

National Children's Strategy

471. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when the forthcoming national children's strategy will be published; if the priorities of this strategy will differ from its predecessor; the way the mental health needs of children will be addressed in the new strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [32864/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department is developing a new strategy for children and young people for publication in mid 2012. It will build on *Our Children — Their Lives*, Ireland's first children's strategy, which was published in 2000 and the goals, that children will have a voice in matters which affect them, that their lives will be better understood and that they will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development, will inform the new strategy.

The challenges facing children and young people today are very different to those that existed when the National Children's Strategy, *Our Children — Their Lives*, was published. The new strategy will take account of the new and emerging issues that impact on children's lives today. It is being developed in a holistic way to comprehend the continuum of the lifecycle from infancy, through early and middle childhood, to adolescence through to early adulthood in keeping with my Department's responsibilities for children and young people. It will have a specific focus on the aspects of growth and development that are unique to each time period and the policies and services that are required at each stage to secure good outcomes for children and young people.

Prevention and early intervention policies to promote all aspects of children's development including mental health well being will be central in the development of the strategy.

Government objectives in key policy areas for children and young people including those in relation to children and young people's mental health and well being, such as those set out in *A Vision for Change* and *Reach Out*, will be included in the policy framework for the new strategy.

The new strategy for children and young people will cover the period from 2012 to 2017. I intend that it will be the overarching framework under which policy and services for children and young people will be developed and implemented in the State.

Health Service Staff

472. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reasons for the failure to fill all existing child protection social worker posts. [32905/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): In line with the Programme for Government I am committed to delivering on the Ryan Report Implementation Plan. Earlier this year I personally took over the chair of the Ryan Report Implementation Group and I laid the Second Annual Progress Report before the Houses of the Oireachtas in July. While there are significant financial pressures on child and family services, my Department is nonetheless seeking to prioritise implementation of the Ryan Report recommendations both this year and in our planning for next year.

The Ryan Report Implementation Plan committed to the recruitment of an additional 270 social workers. 200 of these new posts were in place by the end of 2010. The HSE National Service Plan includes financial provision for the recruitment of a further 60 social workers this year. I have been assured by the HSE that it plans to have these additional staff in place by the end of the year. While the HSE introduced a recruitment pause across all categories of staff over the month of August due to its adverse financial position, the HSE has prioritised the filling of certain key development posts and decided to process the recruitment of these staff with a view to their taking up employment by year end. This includes the recruitment of the additional social workers. My Department will continue to closely monitor the position with regard to the recruitment of the additional personnel.

The additional social workers will be targeted at priority areas of the service having regard to an overall assessment of workload undertaken by the National Director and his team. The

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recruitment of the additional social workers is one element of a wider change agenda within the HSE, through which I believe we can deliver better outcomes for children and families. This reform agenda will lead to the establishment of a new Child and Family Support Agency which will provide a dedicated focus on child protection and support families in need.

This change agenda seeks to deliver the best outcomes for children and families through achieving:

- A service delivery model that will address a multi-agency approach to managing the child welfare and protection system;
- A nationwide consistency-of-approach in practice and implementation of Children First and child welfare and protection services generally;
- Use of standardised definitions, criteria and thresholds for reporting and referrals including prioritisation of cases;
- The recent launch of a Child Welfare and Protection Handbook for HSE staff and the commencement of training courses for staff, including joint-training with Gardaí;
- Greater reliance on real-time data on social work referrals and alternative care collated through HSE performance management indicators and the ongoing development of the National Child Care Information System;
- Improved resource allocation responsive to changing needs;
- Clearer management and budgetary accountability.

473. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied that optimal staff to case ratios are currently in place in the child protection system. [32906/11]

474. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the Health Service Executive is satisfied that optimal staff to case ratios are currently in place in the child protection system. [32907/11]

475. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the minimum ratio of filled social worker posts to cases that she is prepared to accept and allow. [32908/11]

476. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the minimum ratio of filled social worker posts to cases that the head of child protection services is prepared to accept and allow. [32909/11]

477. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of community care child protection, fostering team, team leaders and principal social worker posts in the Health Service Executive; the number currently filled; the number of vacancies as of January 2011; and the number of vacancies since the number of children in care passed 6,000 [32910/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 473 to 477, inclusive, together.

The Government is committed to fundamental reform and transformation of the delivery of our children and family services. A number of significant structural and legislative changes are key to effecting such reform. This includes the establishment of a new agency with dedicated responsibility for the delivery of child welfare and protection services, separate from the HSE.

The employment control framework for the HSE provides that the grade of social worker is exempted from the public sector moratorium on recruitment and filling of vacancies. The Ryan Report Implementation Plan committed to the recruitment of an additional 270 social workers. 200 of these new posts were in place by the end of 2010. The HSE National Service Plan includes financial provision for the recruitment of a further 60 social workers this year. I have been assured by the HSE that it plans to have these additional staff in place by the end of the year.

The additional social workers will be targeted at priority areas of the service having regard to an overall assessment of workload undertaken by the National Director and his team. The recruitment of the additional social workers is one element of a wider change agenda within the HSE, through which I believe we can deliver better outcomes for children and families. This reform agenda will lead to the establishment of a new Child and Family Support Agency which will provide a dedicated focus on child protection and support families in need.

In relation to the specific manpower related matters raised, as these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

478. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of community care child protection, fostering team, team leaders and principal social workers each year for the past five years on long-term sick leave and on maternity leave. [32911/11]

479. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of short-term sick leave taken by Health Service Executive community care child protection, fostering team, team leaders and principal social workers in the past five years. [32912/11]

480. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the amount of illness leave taken by social workers has increased along with the increase in the number of children in care; and if so, the proportion of same. [32913/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 478 to 480, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

Inter-Country Adoptions

481. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the countries that have ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption; the number of children that have been adopted from each of these countries for each of the past ten calendar years; if she will state the same for each of the countries that have not yet ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption; if she will confirm the countries with whom we have a bilateral agreement regarding inter country adoption; the countries that are currently under investigation by the Adoption Authority of Ireland with regard to creating a bilateral

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agreement; the expected timetable for these negotiations for each of these countries; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33200/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for matters relating to the formulation of adoption legislation, including Regulations, and public policy issues on adoption. The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) was established in November 2010. The Authority is an independent statutory body charged with implementing the Adoption Act, 2010. The Authority has responsibility for the direct operational implementation of legislation and Government policy.

The AAI have informed me that 88 Countries have ratified or acceded to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter country Adoption. Details of these countries are available on the HC website, www.hcch.net.

The Adoption Authority have informed me that the number of persons adopted into Ireland whose adoptions have been entered in the Register of Foreign Adoptions from 2001 to 2010 is as follows:

Hague	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Belarus	0	0	0	1	0	2	56	39	27	11
Brazil	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cambodia	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
China	9	10	19	31	33	52	60	56	51	16
Colombia	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
Kazakhstan	1	7	4	6	15	16	9	17	23	19
Kenya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Mexico	10	16	22	8	4	9	3	3	1	1
Peru	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Philippines	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Romania	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	8	13	48
South Africa	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Thailand	2	6	11	9	6	2	8	16	15	5
USA	7	4	4	5	2	2	0	1	0	0
	33	45	63	60	61	83	139	141	132	105
<i>Non-Hague</i>										
Bosnia & Herzegovina	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Ethiopia	75	21	26	17	14	13	16	7	2	0
Malawi	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Russia	80	100	117	160	143	131	189	139	107	45
Taiwan	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	3
Ukraine	2	2	9	8	11	27	12	14	12	0
Uzbekistan	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Vietnam	10	136	182	130	68	92	16	39	81	10
Zimbabwe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	168	262	334	317	237	264	236	200	204	58

The negotiation of bilateral agreements on intercountry adoption with non-contracting states is governed by Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010 which states that “the Authority with the prior consent of the Minister, may enter into discussions with any non contracting state concerning the possibility of the Government entering into a bilateral agreement with that State”. Ireland currently has no bilateral agreements with non — Hague countries.

The Adoption Authority have indicated that their first priority is to reach agreements on arrangements with other Hague countries. The Authority has confirmed that delegations will shortly travel to Mexico and the United States to discuss possible administrative agreements under the Hague Convention. The Authority has also commenced a review of the adoption laws of Lithuania, Panama, Kenya and Kazakhstan as prospective countries for adoption into Ireland.

Furthermore, my Department is currently in discussions with the AAI on the appropriateness and feasibility of exploratory discussions with the Russian authorities concerning the possibility of the Government entering into a bilateral agreement with that State.

482. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding negotiations of a bilateral agreement regarding inter-country adoption with Russia, Vietnam, and Ethiopia; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33201/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is responsible for matters relating to the formulation of adoption legislation, including Regulations, and public policy issues on adoption.

The Adoption Authority of Ireland (AAI) is an independent statutory body charged with implementing the Adoption Act, 2010. The Authority has responsibility for the direct operational implementation of legislation and Government policy.

Vietnam

Section 72 of the Adoption Act 2010 states that the “*the Authority may enter into administrative arrangements with any contracting state concerning the processing of applications*”. The establishment of such administrative arrangements will be a matter for the AAI. Preliminary discussions have taken place regarding official visits and exchange of information between Ireland and Vietnam with a view to putting in place such administrative arrangements following Vietnam’s ratification of the Hague Convention which is expected shortly.

Russia

The negotiation of bilateral agreements on inter country adoption with non-contracting states is governed by Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010 which states that “*the Authority with the prior consent of the Minister, may enter into discussions with any non contracting state concerning the possibility of the Government entering into a bilateral agreement with that State*. The situation in relation to Russia is complex. My Department is currently in discussion with the AAI on the appropriateness and feasibility of exploratory discussions with the Russian authorities concerning the possibility of the Government entering into a bilateral agreement with that State.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia, as it is not a signatory of Hague, is also covered by Section 73 of the Adoption Act 2010. As the Hague Convention is designed to ensure a minimum set of standards in intercountry adoption, the Adoption Authority have indicated that their current priority is to reach agreements on arrangements with other Hague countries.

Foster Care

483. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of potential foster parents who were vetted in County Kildare in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the length of time this vetting process takes; the way these figures compare with the national average; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33289/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

Ministerial Appointments

484. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33942/11]

485. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by her to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [33956/11]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 484 and 485 together.

There are no former Government office holders currently in positions for which I am responsible including State Agencies under the aegis of my Department.

Medical Cards

486. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33351/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

487. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Health the reason that home help hours have been reduced from eight hours per week to just two and three quarter hours per week in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32762/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

488. **Deputy Charles Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health when it is envisaged that the vacant position of a speech and language therapist will be appointed to the Midland Regional Hospital Portlaoise to replace the therapist who resigned; when a person (details supplied), in

County Laois might expect to be assessed for speech and language therapy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32768/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have referred this question to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Cards

489. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the reason a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9 was refused a medical card. [32780/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

490. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the assistance available to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [32781/11]

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

Hospital Waiting Lists

491. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange an early date for an operation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [32791/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

Medical Cards

492. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a medical card will be expedited and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [32792/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

493. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if both matters will be expedited. [32797/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

494. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 291 of 22 March 2011, the position regarding an application for a medical card now under appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if an early decision will be made in view of the fact that the card is urgently required by the applicant. [32798/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): My Department has again requested the Parliamentary Affairs Division of the Health Service Executive to arrange for a reply to issue to the Deputy on this matter.

495. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [32801/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

496. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an application for a medical card now under appeal will be reviewed and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [32803/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

497. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health if respite care will be provided in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32809/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Accident and Emergency Services

498. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health his future plans to improve the current conditions of the accident and emergency department at Tallaght hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32810/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Immediately following my appointment I set about establishing the Special Delivery Unit to unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. The SDU was established in June and quickly began work with the HSE to put in place a systematic approach to eliminate excessive waiting in emergency departments. The SDU is establishing an infrastructure based on information collection and analysis, hospital by hospital, so that we will know what is actually happening in real time. This will allow us to begin to embed performance management in the system to sustain shorter waiting times.

The SDU has identified the hospitals which account for the greatest number of trolley waits and which will benefit from intensive support between now and the end of the year. Liaison officers are working pro-actively to support these sites. I have also agreed that some additional funding may be provided, on a strictly once off basis, based on specific proposals from the hospitals to reduce waiting times. Adherence to the agreed criteria will be closely monitored by the SDU.

In the case of Tallaght, the hospital has requested a range of supports and the SDU has agreed to a set of proposals which will cost over €300,000 between now and the end of this year. These supports include the opening of a ward for low acuity patients, accessing additional nursing home places and the deployment of an additional community Gerontologist to minimise avoidable re-admission.

Peaks and troughs are a feature of attendances at emergency departments. The SDU is working with hospitals to use the data on attendance patterns to plan for the variations which will inevitably occur. At my behest, the SDU is driving this approach to radically reduce the overcrowding in our emergency departments which has been tolerated for far too long.

Departmental Bodies

499. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32853/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Under the previous rationalisation of State Agencies programme which commenced in July 2008, my Department committed to an ambitious reduction in the number of health agencies which totalled 34 at that time. It was decided at the time not to introduce omnibus legislation dealing with rationalisation of agencies which meant that separate amending legislation was needed in the case of each agency. This has inevitably been a slow process.

The Children Acts Advisory Board was dissolved on 8th September 2011. To date eight agencies have been dissolved and legislation is at various stages of preparation to deal with a further five. We now have 20 agencies (excluding the HSE) which we are on track to reduce to 15. It should also be noted that 8 of our agencies are either completely or largely self funding.

My Department is currently preparing proposals concerning the organisational arrangements arising from the commitment in the Programme for Government that the HSE will cease to exist. However, the size of the HSE makes it an exceptional case and the organisational changes are being dealt with as part of the overall health reform programme.

Services for People with Disabilities

500. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health when he intends to put in place a personal budget model for persons with disabilities and their families; the progress that has been made on this to date; the timeline for the implementation of such a model; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32868/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The funding of disability services by the Department of Health is the subject of a detailed Value for Money

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and Policy Review as part of the Government's Value for Money Reviews for the period 2009 to 2011.

As part of the overall VFM review, a separate Expert Reference Group on Disability Policy was established to look specifically at existing disability policy and whether it needs to be changed to better meet the expectations and objectives of people with disabilities. As part of this review, a public consultation process on existing disability services was also undertaken which confirmed that people with disabilities and their families, more than anything else, are looking for more choice in the services they receive and more control over how they access them.

The report proposes a very significant reframing of disability services towards a model of individualised supports, underpinned by mainstreaming of all public services. On this basis, State funding would be allocated based on an independent assessment of individual needs. Following the needs assessments, individual support plans would then be drawn up and individualised budgets allocated from which the supports and services needed would be purchased.

A number of mechanisms are proposed to achieve this, including a broker system where the person has the choice and control but the broker administers the budget and commissions supports and services on their behalf, or direct payments where the person manages the budget and purchases the supports themselves. The Group's final report has already been the subject of both internal consultation within the Department of Health and external consultation with other Government Departments. More recently, it has been released for the public and interested parties to have their say on the future direction of disability policy in this country. The closing date for receipt of such submissions was last Friday, 4 November, though, of course, any late submissions on their way to the Department will also be accepted.

The VFM exercise is due to be completed by year end with the submissions from the public consultation on the Disability Review also to be collated and analysed in that timeframe. It is then my intention to look at both reports together and in conjunction with Minister Reilly ensure that proposals for the future of our disability services are brought to Government.

501. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health when the national standards for residential services for people with disabilities will be put on a statutory footing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32869/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) has prepared and published standards for this sector, which outline what is expected of a provider of services and what a person with a disability, his or her family, and the public can expect to receive from residential care services. They clearly set out what a quality safe residential service for people with disabilities should be and support the delivery of person-centred care in this sector.

As the Deputy will be aware, the current Programme for Government includes a specific commitment to put these standards on a statutory footing and ensure that the services are inspected by HIQA. As I announced on 16th June last, discussions have now begun between the Department of Health and HIQA to progress this commitment. Given the complex nature of residential service provision for people with disabilities — ranging from congregated settings to dispersed housing in the community — careful consideration is being given to designing the most appropriate regulatory model and this work is ongoing.

Other steps in the process will include:

- costing the regulatory model;

- conducting a regulatory impact analysis of same;
- preparation of a memorandum for Government;
- drafting of regulations;
- recruitment and training, as required, of inspectors for the new regulatory model.

A target date of January 2013 has been provisionally set for the commencement of the new mandatory scheme of registration and inspection of residential services for people with disabilities.

While the HIQA standards have yet to be put on a statutory footing, it is worth noting that compliance with the HIQA standards is already included in the Service Level Arrangements between the HSE and service providers in the disability sector. Service providers are required to have systems in place to assess quality and standards and to specify the actions being taken to maintain and monitor quality and service standards. I understand that some service providers have also commenced a review of their services in the context of the HIQA standards.

Care of the Elderly

502. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the status of the national positive ageing strategy; the status of an implementation plan for this strategy; the discussions and meetings he and his Department have had with other Departments to ensure a whole of government approach to this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32870/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Programme for Government published in March 2011 has committed to completing and implementing the National Positive Ageing Strategy so that older people are recognised, supported and enabled to live independent full lives.

However important health and social care issues are in later life, quality of life in later life, as at any stage of the lifecycle, has many other determinants such as income, housing and the built environment, transport, education and lifelong learning, employment and retirement and opportunities for participation and contribution to social and civic life.

In recognition that a wide range of policies, programmes and services impact directly on the lives of older people, development of the Strategy is being assisted by a Cross-Departmental Group (CDG), comprised of officials from 11 Government Departments, the Central Statistics Office and An Garda Síochána, and is chaired by the Director of the Office for Older People.

It is not the intention that the Strategy will propose new service developments, rather it will set the strategic direction for future policies, programmes and services for older people in Ireland.

The Strategy will require a consideration of the inter-related nature of many of the actions needed to enable older people to age positively in Ireland. This means that no single Department or agency can be expected to deliver the Strategy alone. In addition, in the short term, when implementation will require a reconfiguration of existing programmes and services, collaboration between Departments will be important.

The Strategy will set out a common framework for the development of operational plans by Government Departments. These operational plans will clearly set out each Department's objectives relating to older people. Mechanisms designed to monitor the implementation of measures contained in operational plans will also be developed in consultation with Departments.

[Deputy Kathleen Lynch.]

Work on developing the Strategy is on-going and taking place within the constraints posed by the present fiscal situation. This work will not be concluded before the end of the year.

503. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the details of the home care package scheme; the number of home help hours available under this scheme; the number of persons employed to deliver these home care packages; if he will provide a breakdown of these home help hours by county; the criteria for availing of home help and care packages; the efforts being undertaken by him to ensure that the eligibility criteria for home help is applied consistently; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32872/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Services

504. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the urgent care centre planned for St. Mary's Orthopaedic Hospital, Cork, as part of the hospital reconfiguration. [32889/11]

506. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his views that the plan for accident and emergency services no longer being provided in the South Infirmary Hospital, Cork, from April next is safe; his views that alternative services, resources and staff will be allocated to the Mercy and Cork University Maternity Hospitals to allow for the transfer of services. [32891/11]

507. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if negotiations have commenced with the staff in the South Infirmary Hospital, Cork, who will be required to manage the urgent care centre in the St. Mary's Orthopaedic Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32892/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 504, 506 and 507 together.

The HSE South is continuing to work on the reorganisation of services from St Mary's Orthopaedic Hospital to the South Infirmary Victoria Hospital.

I am satisfied that this initiatives will result in a more efficient and high quality service for the people of the Cork and Kerry region. There has been considerable engagement with staff and key stakeholders in relation to the transfer of services. I believe that this process has been crucial and will greatly facilitate the new developments that are to be implemented.

I have arranged for Deputy's questions to be sent to the HSE so that they can provide the details in relation to the staffing arrangements and the establishment of the urgent care centre in Cork.

505. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the location of the physiotherapy department in the South Infirmary Hospital, Cork, to cater for the transfer of orthopaedic surgery from St. Mary's Orthopaedic Hospital. [32890/11]

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

Questions Nos. 506 and 507 answered with Question No. 504.

Medical Cards

508. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 147 of 28 September 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [32894/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Expenditure Reviews

509. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health in the context of budgetary reviews for the coming year, those carrying out such a review, if he will ensure that the structure and integrity of the health service is not fundamentally damaged arising there from; if he will ensure that due cognisance is taken of the need to provide a broadly based and well balanced service throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32895/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department's Comprehensive Review of Expenditure is currently under consideration as part of the overall pre-Budget deliberations of the Government. A priority objective is to minimise, and avoid if possible, reductions in core health and personal care services and to respond to increased need. The nature and range of the savings measures taken in recent years means that it has become increasingly necessary to focus in the Review on improving the way services are organised and delivered. This is entirely appropriate and in keeping with the focus in the Programme for Government on reforming the way health services are funded and delivered to achieve greater productivity and more cost effective services, with improved outcomes for patients.

Departmental Bodies

510. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the persons, body or group with whom or with which responsibility rests for the evaluation of the general hospital network throughout the country; with whom this body or group has consulted to date; if this group has met with hospitals that have been downgraded in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32896/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government intends to publish a Framework for the Development of Smaller Hospitals, which will set out the way these hospitals provide services to patients and how they work within their regional hospital networks. A Joint HSE/Departmental group is currently working on the Framework's development. The Framework and its implementation is a priority of the Government.

In developing the Framework, the Government is clear that:

- there is an important future role for smaller hospitals, in which they will provide services for more patients, not fewer
- no acute hospital will close, and
- safety issues in all acute hospitals, big or small, must be fully addressed, by providing the right type of services in the right settings.

We also need to take into account the individual circumstances of each hospital, to recognise the need for regional solutions and, within the excellent context provided by the HSE's clinical programmes, to encourage local innovation in response to service issues that arise locally or

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regionally. The best solutions will vary between regions and within the overall context referred to there is no question of a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

We will arrange extensive consultation to ensure we develop an effective framework that takes account of local and regional needs. This process of consultation will begin shortly. I have already said that the reorganisation of our acute system must involve a two way transfer of services between the larger and smaller hospitals, and that as much of the less complex acute treatment should be provided as close to a patient’s community as possible. I expect that the model for reassignment of services will be a dynamic one, capable of adapting to the changing needs of patients and the health service, nationally, regionally and locally, and the evolving nature of medical treatment and technology.

Health Services

511. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which the relevant authorities within his Department or within the Health Service Executive have examined the need for the upgrading of health centres throughout the country in keeping with population demands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32897/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The HSE takes full account of population trends and demographics in planning new developments in primary care under its capital programme and in considering leasing of infrastructure for service developments. An accommodation assessment for primary care is currently being undertaken by the HSE and I expect to receive the report shortly.

The HSE undertakes regular reviews of the needs of health centres and essential maintenance is undertaken within available resources.

Community Care

512. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number of publically funded nursing homes and-or community hospitals on a county basis throughout the country; the extent to which budgetary restrictions are likely to affect the operation of such institutions; if due regard will be given to the particularly urgent need to ensure the maximisation of support for these institutions particularly in the present economic climate; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32898/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Service Properties

513. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number and location of buildings including hospitals, health centres or other institutions decommissioned, closed or downgraded by the Health Service Executive or him in the past 12 months; the number and location of new buildings commissioned or acquired during the same period; the extent to which full staffing commitments have been met in the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32899/11]

514. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number and location of new buildings acquired by the Health Service Executive or him in the past 12 months; the purpose for which such buildings are likely to be used; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32900/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 513 and 514 together.

Management of the health care infrastructure is a service issue. The questions have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Health Services

515. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which consideration has been given by him to upgrading facilities at Johnstownbridge Health Centre, County Kildare; the length of time spent at the facility by the relevant officers of his Department or the Health Service Executive during a recent visit; if he is satisfied that such a brief discussion is adequate to fully examine and assess the requirements of the area in view of its increased population; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32901/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

516. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the total number and location of beds available for older persons with a high dependency in County Kildare; the extent to which the full bed complement is likely to be maintained and increased in the short and medium term; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32902/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Accommodation

517. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of hospital beds at all levels in the health services throughout County Kildare in each of the past three years to date; the extent to which any bed losses have taken place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32903/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Health Services

518. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the level at which major policy decisions are taken affecting the health services throughout the country; if such changes are initiated by him or the Health Service Executive or a combination of both; if he will indicate in terms of seniority and responsibility the persons engaged in such discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32904/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Government's agenda of health reforms are set out in the Programme for Government. Broadly speaking, all major policy decisions relating to that agenda and to the health services generally are made by me. Policy formulation is a core function of my Department and many of my policy decisions are informed by advice and briefings I receive from senior officials in the various policy areas of the Department, and, where appropriate, following consultation with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and other relevant stakeholders. Since the HSE has statutory responsibility for the management and delivery of health and personal social services, its primary focus is on operational policy matters.

Medical Cards

519. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32918/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Tobacco Control Measures

520. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of recommendations in new research for the Irish Heart Foundation titled Tobacco Taxation, Smuggling and Smoking in Ireland, he will support the development of a comprehensive national tobacco control strategy combining tobacco tax policy, enhanced anti-smuggling measures and more effective quit smoking supports and services which the report says will reduce smoking rates, save lives and increase tax revenue on a significant scale; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32922/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The Office of the Revenue Commissioners has responsibilities in the area of detection of counterfeit and contraband tobacco products. Smuggling cigarettes into Ireland is illegal and penalties prescribed in this regard reflect the gravity of such acts; however, policy with respect to the consumption of cigarettes is largely oriented towards reducing smoking and predicated on the fact that one in every two smokers will die from a tobacco-related disease — a stark fact that is central to the HSE's health education QUIT campaign aimed at encouraging smokers to quit.

It seems appropriate to firstly reflect on the comprehensive range of tobacco control legislation that has been introduced in Ireland since 2002, particularly the successful implementation of the smoke-free initiative in 2004; the ban on the sale of packs of cigarettes of less than 20 in 2007; and the ban on in-store display and advertising and the introduction of the retail register in 2009. This comprehensive nature of our tobacco control legislation places Ireland in the top rank of countries internationally in this regard. Ultimately, the legislation further de-normalises smoking among children and will, I believe, reduce childhood initiation in the long term.

In addition to the HSE's QUIT campaign, other measures to encourage people to quit smoking include Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) — which are available to medical card holders — and Smoking Cessation Services within the Health Service Executive that offer services in different areas. Health Promotion Departments within the HSE also offer an extensive programme of training that includes developing skills for health care practitioners to support people wishing to stop smoking; they also provide support to schools around the issue of smoking and substance misuse, and support to workplaces on developing smoking policies.

The HSE funds the National Smokers Quitline which, in conjunction with the Irish Cancer Society, provides a smoking cessation advice and support service. This provides the public with access to a telephone support service from a trained smoking cessation counsellor.

Finally, there is a range of measures under consideration by the Tobacco Policy Review Group (TPRG) including price, enforcement of existing legislation and cessation services. The terms of reference of this review are, among others: (a) to examine Irish and international evidence and experience of effective measures and programmes to reduce smoking prevalence; and (b) to make policy proposals aimed at reducing smoking initiation and prevalence. I antici-

pate that the report of the TPRG will be completed in the coming months and that this will be brought to Government for decision.

Medical Cards

521. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32937/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Departmental Funding

522. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that funding for the Coolmine therapeutic community, Dublin, will be retained in 2012 in view of the fact that it is the only mother and child residential treatment centre here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32942/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): Funding in relation to 2012 for community based drugs initiatives, such as Coolmine Therapeutic Community, will be determined in the context of the Estimates process, taking into account the need to protect front line service provision.

Hospital Services

523. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to cutbacks in respect of the hospital transport system to Tallaght hospital and other Dublin hospitals. (details supplied) [32943/11]

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

Health Services

524. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when respite services at a facility (details supplied) will be restored; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32946/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Ambulance Service

525. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a breakdown of emergency call outs in south Wicklow since 2009; and the location from which the ambulance for each call out was dispatched. [33007/11]

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

Health Service Allowances

526. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 504 of 18 October 2011, when a reply will issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33012/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand that a response on this matter issued from the HSE to the Deputy on Monday 7th November 2011.

Medical Cards

527. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding applications for medical cards in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33016/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Official Engagements

528. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the number of visits he has made to all public hospitals since taking up office; if he will provide the details and breakdown of these visits and the details of any planned visits in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33042/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Details of visits made by me to public hospitals since my appointment as Minister for Health are detailed in the following table. Provisional visits to Kenmare and Dingle Community Hospitals on 25th and 26th November 2011 have also been arranged but have yet to be fully confirmed. It should be noted in my previous position as Fine Gael Health Spokesperson I visited many Hospitals. The Special Delivery Unit (SDU) established by my Department has visited most of the major Hospitals in the country and the SDU continues to liaise with me on plans for these Hospitals.

Hospital	Date	Purpose
Clonakilty Hospital, Cork	29.4.11	Official visit
South Tipperary General Hospital	6.5.11	Official Opening of University of Limerick Graduate Entry Medical School Education Centre
Mater Misericordiae Hospital	20.5.11	First National Mater Hospital Joint Cardiology & Cardiothoracic Nursing Conference
St. James Hospital	24.6.11	Official visit
Our Lady's Children's Hospital	27.6.11	Official Opening Paediatric Intensive Care Unit
Galway University Hospital A & E	30.6.11	Unofficial visit
Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital	22.7.11	Official Opening of New Theatre Facility
Cork University Hospital	25.7.11	Official Opening of National Haemophilia Centre
St James Hospital	27.7.11	Launch of new linen distribution system
Mater Misericordiae Hospital	16.9.11	Colorectal Cancer Conference
Connolly Hospital	3.10.11	Official Opening of Endoscopy Suite
Mater Misericordiae Hospital	14.10.11	Official launch of Maurice Neligan Congenital Heart Room
Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital	21.10.11	Official Opening of Colposcopy Unit

Medical Cards

529. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a decision on an application

for a medical card will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33105/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

530. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange an appointment for an operation to be brought forward in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33106/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF. As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

Medical Cards

531. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a decision on an application for a medical card will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33107/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

532. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a decision on an application for a medical card will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33108/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

533. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide detailed figures on the treatment services available from the Health Service Executive for persons with addiction problems, including alcohol and substance addictions; if he will provide a breakdown on those services on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33113/11]

534. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide detailed figures on the treatment services available from private practitioners and service providers for persons with addiction problems, including alcohol and substance addictions; if he will provide

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a breakdown on those services on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33114/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): I propose to take Questions Nos. 533 and 534 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is being collated by the HSE. I will arrange to have it forwarded to the Deputy shortly.

Ambulance Service

535. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will clarify the future status of the west Cork ambulance service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33119/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE has confirmed to me that no ambulance stations are closing in Cork and Kerry. In fact, the opposite is true, as stations move to on-duty status and away from on-call. This means our highly trained paramedic crews will be on site in their stations to respond to calls, rather than having to go to the station when called out. It also means that resources can be deployed dynamically across an area, based on need and demand patterns, rather than tied to any one specific location, producing more flexibility and responsiveness. This will lead to better response times for the people in Cork and Kerry and a better service. Paramedics will be present at all times, with an on-duty ambulance during the day and an on-duty rapid response vehicle at night. The dynamic delivery model means that an on-duty emergency ambulance will be available from what is systematically assessed to be the best available location within the region as required.

I note that ambulance staff sought the elimination of on-call working, that it has already been reduced from 44 hours to 16 hours per week, and that it will continue to decrease on a phased basis, as part of the improvement of services and response times in the region. There are ongoing discussions with staff on implementing the proposals. The HSE and Unions are committed to this process. The NAS proposals are phased. In phase 1, stations in East Cork which currently have night time on-call will have crews rostered on-duty 24/7, 365 days a year. The more rural stations (Castletownbere, Kenmare, Bantry, Caherciveen, and Skibbereen) will be in later phases. The service will be evaluated after each phase.

Current evidence suggests patient outcomes can be improved by better treatment and stabilisation at the scene, followed by ongoing treatment and transport to the most appropriate centre, even if that means longer transport times. On-duty service will enable a modern emergency response service, involving paramedics, advanced paramedics, community first responders and GP out of hour services working together to respond to emergency situations. This approach is consistent with international best practice and will ensure compliance with HIQA response times and quality standards. On-duty rostering is one of several service enhancements. Other developments include improved arrangements for control and dispatch, practitioner deployment and inter-hospital transfers. All of these will allow the National Ambulance Service to provide a better, safer, more comprehensive and more efficient emergency ambulance service to the people of Cork and Kerry.

Mental Health Services

536. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Health if he has taken on board the recommendations of the National Registry of Deliberate Self Harm Annual Report of 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33150/11]

537. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Health based on the recommendations of the National Registry of Deliberate Self Harm Annual Report of 2010, will there be an increase in aftercare programmes for persons who self harm. [33151/11]

538. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Health if it is proposed to increase the information available to the general public on the common symptoms of depression and signs of suicidal behaviour and where persons can access help for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33152/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 536 to 538, inclusive, together.

The Government's commitment to the development of our mental health services in line with *A Vision for Change* and *Reach Out* was clearly shown in the Programme for Government which provides that €35 million will be ring-fenced annually from within the overall health budget to develop community mental health services, ensure early access to more appropriate services for adults and children and implement *Reach Out*. This is currently being considered as part of the Estimates process for 2012 and future years.

Several initiatives are ongoing and in development that take account of the recommendations of the National Registry of Deliberate Self Harm Report of 2010. An additional €1 million was provided to the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) in 2011 to develop the number and range of training and awareness programmes as well as improving and standardising the response to deliberate self harm. The NOSP is working to progress a more unified and consistent response to self-harm presentations in Emergency Departments. A self harm awareness training programme is also being developed which will be rolled-out nationally over the coming years, beginning next year. The HSE Clinical Care national lead on mental health is working with key stakeholders to develop a uniform approach to self harm assessments in emergency departments so that all those who present will receive the most appropriate care and treatment. In addition, a pilot project is now underway in the Cork Hospital Group to train all appropriate clinical staff in self harm/suicide management and it is planned that in due course this will be rolled-out to other hospitals. The NOSP has also funded a number of community Suicide Community Assessment Nurses (SCAN) who work primarily with GPs to provide early intervention services to clients in suicidal crisis and thus avoid admission to hospital. A number of voluntary organisations also provide services to those who self harm.

A core function of the NOSP is the provision of evidence based information to the general population on suicide prevention and mental health promotion. The NOSP co-ordinates the development and dissemination of information resources through www.healthpromotion.ie. Information is available to the public regarding the symptoms of depression and signs of suicide through the website. The NOSP also coordinates two public health awareness campaigns on mental health — the *Your Mental Health Campaign* which is targeted at adults and the *Let Someone Know Campaign* which is targeted at young people.

Where there are symptoms of depression or suicidal behaviour, the most appropriate course is to advise the individual to seek help from their GP, who can then make a referral to other services such as the mental health or addiction services, if the suicidal behaviour is drug or alcohol related. In an emergency the individuals should be referred or taken to the nearest hospital emergency department for a medical assessment, treatment and if necessary referral to other services.

Oireachtas Committee Inquiry

539. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if, in view of the defeat of the

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proposed 30th amendment of the Constitution, he will now commit to undertaking an inquiry into the Michael Shine cases; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33165/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Earlier this year I indicated that the issues raised by the case of Michael Shine, former Consultant at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda would be the subject of an inquiry by an Oireachtas Committee. This decision followed consultation with the Attorney General, and was dependent on the powers that had been proposed under the 30th Amendment of the Constitution. The Government will now consider the overall implications of the referendum result. Now that it will not be possible to proceed as proposed, I will consider how best to deal with the issues raised in the Michael Shine case.

Health Services

540. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health in view of the reply to this Deputy's recent question in relation to the services available to a person (details supplied) if he will provide the details of the services offered; if these will be as beneficial as the services offered by the clinic in England of which the Health Service Executive is aware; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33167/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I have been informed by the HSE that a comprehensive treatment plan has been formulated in relation to the care of the person in question. However, as the person concerned is abroad, the treatment plan cannot be implemented. The HSE has arranged that contact will be made with the person on her return to Ireland. Owing to data protection and patient confidentiality requirements, the HSE is not in a position to release details regarding the care of this patient until such time as they receive consent from the person concerned to such release.

Health Service Staff

541. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Health the total reduction or increase in administrative staff in the Health Service Executive since the 9 of March 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33171/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Data on employment in the public health service is compiled on a monthly basis. The number of Management/Administrative staff at end February 2011 and end September 2011 is set out in the following table.

Number of Management/Administrative staff employed in the public health service

	28/02/2011	30/09/2011	Change between end Feb 2011 and end Sept 2011
General Administrative [III to VII]	14,516	14,350	-166
Management [VIII+]	1,061	1,055	-6
Other Administrative	665	653	-12
Total	16,242	16,058	-184

While I recognise that the public health service, as with all health systems, requires managers and administrators to run effectively, nonetheless, I am of the view that there is scope for a reduction in the number of management/administrative staff in the health sector. This is necessary to ensure that we have streamlined and effective structures and also to enable staffing resources to be focused to the maximum extent on front-line patient care. The Government is

committed in line with the Programme for Government to reducing numbers in the Civil/Public Service in the period to 2015, while protecting front-line services as far as possible.

Departmental Funding

542. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health if he will outline the cutbacks to the regional drugs task forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [30306/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): Over €9.7m has been made available by my Department to Regional Drugs Task Forces in 2011 for community based drugs initiatives. There were no cuts made to Regional Drugs Task Force funding by my Department during the year.

Medical Cards

543. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a decision on an application for a medical card will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Offaly. [33193/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

544. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite the issuing of a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [33198/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

National Lottery Funding

545. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 577 on 4 October 2011, when will a decision issue on this funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33212/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): This is one of a large number currently being assessed by my Department. The Deputy will be informed of the outcome of the application as soon as a decision has been made.

Hospital Services

546. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm when the speech and language therapist will resume service at the Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise, County Laois. [33214/11]

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

Medical Cards

547. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if a decision will be made on an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the reason for the delay in processing this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33217/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

548. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views that it is unacceptable that a medical card application which was received by the Primary Care Reimbursement Service took more than 30 days to decide that further information was required; his further views that the *medicalcard.ie* website states that the application has been unsuccessful despite the fact that this Deputy has been informed that additional information has been requested; if he will confirm the correct position regarding this application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33224/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

549. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health his views regarding the fact that the *medicalcard.ie* website has given incorrect information on a number of occasions which is causing confusion to applicants; if he will ensure that the website is updated to reflect the information that staff at the Primary Care Reimbursement Service are issuing; his further views regarding the length of time a medical card application should take; the steps he will take to ensure more efficient administration of medical card applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33226/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The Health Service Executive centralised the processing of all new applications and renewals of medical cards at the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) in Finglas, Dublin from 1 July 2011.

A new online application facility has now been provided at *www.medicalcard.ie* which enables people anywhere in the country to apply for, or to renew a medical card online. Applying online also gives applicants access to up-to-date information on the progress of their medical card renewal or application.

The Health Service Executive has stated that it is aware of the problem raised by the Deputy. The problem arises because following the initial assessment of a medical card application a decision is made to either grant or refuse the card. Depending on the decision made, this generates a “successful” or “unsuccessful” comment on the website. However, to ensure accurate decision making and as a quality control issue, each unsuccessful application is re-assessment by the PCRS Quality Assurance team. Only when this final check has been carried out is a letter issued stating whether the application has been successful or not.

The HSE has stated that it is working to address the issue raised by the Deputy to ensure that information provided to applicants online is accurate and clear.

The Executive has stated that there is no backlog of work in the central office and all complete medical card applications and reviews are being processed within 15 working days or less. Delays occur where applications are submitted without the supporting documentation necessary to complete the processing of the application.

Departmental Funding

550. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the amount of State funding given to each of the following organisations (details supplied) in each of the years 2000 to 2009. [33258/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The following table sets out the funding that was allocated to the Irish Patients' Association between 2000 and 2009. No funding was allocated to Patient Focus or Patients Together during this period. I have also asked the HSE to reply to you directly in respect of any funding it may have made to the respective organisations.

Funding allocated to Irish Patients' Association

Year	€
2001	25,395
2002	30,000
2005	79,000
2007	32,000
2009	3,000
Total	169,395

Medical Cards

551. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be granted to persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33265/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Disabled Drivers

552. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a disabled driver's primary certificate will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33267/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

553. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding respite services in St. Colman's Hospital, Rathdrum, County Wicklow; when this service will be reinstated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33270/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Hospital Waiting Lists

554. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the average waiting times for all procedures or treatments in Kerry General Hospital; and the measures he proposes to address same. [33278/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The management of waiting lists generally is a matter for the HSE and the individual hospitals concerned. I have, therefore, referred the Deputy's question to the Executive for direct reply.

Health Service Staff

555. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Health if he will direct the Health Service Executive to determine if a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan who is a relief social care worker in a special care facility supported by the Health Service Executive is an employee of the Health Service Executive or an employee of the special care facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33287/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I understand that a response on this matter issued from the HSE to the Deputy on Monday 7 November 2011.

General Practitioner Services

556. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive is satisfied that adequate general practitioner cover is available to meet the health needs of a rapidly growing population at a location (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33291/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

557. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the addiction services currently available in north Dublin; the number of persons attending each addiction services; the number of persons on the waiting list to each addiction service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33298/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The information requested by the Deputy is being collated by the HSE. I will arrange to have it forwarded to the Deputy shortly.

558. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if funding will be provided to reverse cuts in home help hours available to vulnerable members of society in County Kerry; if employment schemes such as JobBridge could be used to help increase hours available to recipients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33325/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

559. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be prioritised for wisdom teeth extraction due to severe pain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33334/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

National Lottery Funding

560. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding national lottery funding in respect of a centre (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33340/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): My Department has no record of an application from the Group referred to by the Deputy. If the organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding they should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures, along with the application form are set out on my Department's website — *www.doh.ie*

Medical Aids and Appliances

561. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will qualify for a hearing aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33342/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Medical Cards

562. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be renewed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33364/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Hospital Services

563. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the future of St James's Hospital, and in particular Hospital 5. [33372/11]

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

564. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if a no smoking policy is being implemented in St. James's Hospital; if this is being adhered to in the lobby area of the hospital; and if he will provide details of same. [33373/11]

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

565. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health his plans for the development of the Cu Chulainn, Old Convent site, in Falcarragh, County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33374/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As estate management is a service issue your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Cards

566. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health the current waiting time to process medical card applications; and if it has increased significantly since centralisation on 1 July. [33375/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall): The Health Service Executive centralised the processing of all new applications and renewals of medical cards at

[Deputy Róisín Shortall.]

the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) in Finglas, Dublin from 1st July 2011. The Executive has stated that there is no backlog of work in the central office and all complete medical card applications and reviews are being processed within 15 working days or less. Delays occur where applications are submitted without the supporting documentation necessary to complete the processing of the application.

Remembrance Days

567. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he would consider organising a national stillbirth remembrance day similar to that organised in Canada and the United States. [33376/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): It is my understanding that Remembrance days such as that proposed by the Deputy, are often organised by non governmental bodies. Stillbirth is the source of much concern and anguish to those who have lost babies or have been touched by such events. I would be happy to consider carefully any detailed proposal submitted related to this traumatic issue.

Health Service Staff

568. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money that has been paid to employment agencies to provide staff in the Health Services Executive south region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33381/11]

571. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money that has been paid to private employment agencies to provide staff to Kerry General Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33386/11]

572. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money that has been paid to private employment agencies to provide staff at Cork University Hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33387/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 568, 571 and 572 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

569. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33382/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is a system of financial support for individuals who require long-term nursing home care and applies to people entering public, private and voluntary nursing home care. Since the scheme commenced over 25,000 applications have been received and approximately 22,155 people are in receipt of financial support towards the cost of long-term nursing care at present. The total baseline funding for long-term residential care is €963 million. Applications are processed in accordance with the legislation and within the funding limits available to the scheme. Approvals are being issued to applicants in chronological order by date of

determination. This ensures equity nationally. The HSE is operating a national placement list to facilitate this. There are approximately 800 people awaiting funding approval at present. Currently funding is being released by the HSE on a weekly basis.

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme is due for formal review commencing in 2012. The review will look at the ongoing sustainability of the scheme, the relative costs of public versus private provision and the balance of funding between residential and community care.

Health Service Staff

570. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health in view of the figure of €169 million which was paid to private employment agencies by the Health Service Executive, his views that it is time to start re-employing and filling full-time positions which are available in the HSE; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33385/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Agency staff, including doctors, nurses, and healthcare assistants are used in the main as temporary cover for vacant posts that arise for a variety of reasons including sick leave, annual leave and maternity leave, and to ensure continuity of service provision.

The decision to use agency staff is made at local service level and the reliance on agency staff is one of the expenditure items being reviewed as part of local cost containment plans. The new contracts for the provision of agency services put in place by the HSE earlier this year have resulted in significant unit price savings being available to the service.

The Employment Control Framework (ECF) for the Health Sector requires reductions in employment levels in line with the Government's fiscal and budgetary strategy. Notwithstanding this, some exceptions can be made in order to address critical service risks. Where possible and in the context of the moratorium, part time and work-sharing staff are being offered the opportunity to increase the number of hours they work before agency staff are used.

Questions Nos. 571 and 572 answered with Question No. 568.

Nursing Home Charges

573. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding nursing home charges (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33388/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The legislation underpinning the Nursing Homes Support Scheme requires all private nursing homes and voluntary nursing homes to negotiate and agree a price for the cost of care with the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF) should they wish to participate in the scheme. This is a necessary feature of the scheme due to the commitment by the State to meet the full balance of the cost of care over and above a person's contribution.

The NTPF has statutory responsibility for the negotiation of prices with private and voluntary nursing homes. The NTPF is independent in the performance of this function and, in carrying it out, it must ensure value for money for both the individual and the State. The NTPF negotiates with each nursing home individually and may examine the records and accounts of nursing homes as part of the process. This method of negotiation is necessary in order to ensure that the State obtains the best value for each individual in a nursing home and to comply with competition law.

[Deputy Kathleen Lynch.]

The Nursing Homes Support Scheme provides financial support towards the cost of long-term residential care. The services which fall within the scope of long-term residential care and which are covered by this cost are:

- nursing and personal care appropriate to the level of care needs of the person,
- basic aids and appliances necessary to assist a person with the activities of daily living,
- bed and board, and
- laundry service.

Individuals who avail of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme should not be charged any additional fee over and above the cost agreed with the NTPF, except where he or she chooses to obtain additional services over and above long-term residential care services, for example, hairdressing, social programmes or the delivery of daily newspapers.

Hospital Staff

574. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Health if he will meet with representatives of the nursing staff at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Limerick, to discuss how best to ensure the reduction of clinical risk due to overcrowding the hospital. [33399/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I met with a delegation of nurses from the Mid-Western Regional Hospital Limerick on 12 October, when they highlighted their concerns in relation to the provision of safe patient care in the hospital's Emergency Department.

Subsequently, agreement was reached at the Labour Relations Commission on the 18 October 2011 in relation to a number of steps to be taken over a four-week review period to resolve issues in the Emergency Department. As part of the agreement, nurses in that Department of the hospital who are members of the INMO and SIPTU agreed to suspend the industrial action they commenced in September in the form of periodic work stoppages. At the end of the review period, management will present a detailed set of proposals which will set out roster options to address the issues in dispute.

I am satisfied that the process in train is the best way of addressing the nurses' concerns.

Ministerial Appointments

575. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include positions taken, names of organisations, salaries or incomes derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including cars provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33948/11]

576. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33962/11]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 575 and 576 together.

Clarification on the details of the questions are being sought from the Deputy's office. When this is received the information requested will be forwarded to the Deputy.

Local Improvements Scheme

577. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of local improvement scheme applications approved on a county basis over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32884/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Section 81 of the Local Government Act 2001 provides the statutory basis for the Local Improvements Scheme (LIS) and the Local Improvements Scheme Memorandum, which issued in February 2002, sets out the terms and conditions for the payment of LIS grants. Under the Scheme, grants are provided to county councils for the construction and improvement of non-public roads.

The administration of the Local Improvements Scheme, is a matter for the relevant county council and applications under the scheme are submitted to, and decided by, the relevant county council. My Department has no function in the matter.

My Department's role is confined to the allocation of funds under the scheme to individual county councils. The allocations made to local authorities under this scheme of grants over the past five years are available in the Dáil Library. The information is contained within the annual Regional and Local Roads Allocations publication.

Proposed Legislation

578. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when legislation will be introduced for the standardised testing of motor homes as per Road Safety Authority guidelines; if this will be in line with national car test requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33391/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Legislation to provide for the roadworthiness testing of motor caravans in accordance with mandated EU standards is in preparation in my Department and will be finalised in the near future.

This legislation will be in line with National Car Test requirements but, due to the broad spectrum of types and sizes of this vehicle, type testing will be carried out at Commercial Vehicle Test Centres, i.e. Vehicle Testing Network (VTN) Test Centres.

Road Signage

579. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the National Roads Authority and all local authorities responsible for traffic lights to change the current sequencing whereby lights will flash amber before turning green thereby facilitating better traffic flow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32740/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Regulations governing the use of traffic signals specify the sequence in which red, amber and green signals must be displayed. Irish regulations do not provide for the use of amber in combination with red, immediately in advance of the green signal, to alert drivers to prepare for the green signal, as is done in the UK.

[Deputy Leo Varadkar.]

The change in regulations proposed by the Deputy would appear to have merit however any proposed change would need to be considered from a road safety perspective and from the point of view of traffic management. As an initial step towards assessing the value for this proposal I have written to the Gardaí, Road Safety Authority and National Transport Authority to seek their views on the potential merits and demerits of such changes. I will keep the Deputy abreast of developments in this area.

Local Improvements Scheme

580. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will name the seven local authorities which did not submit their revised restoration improvement three year programmes, restoration improvement schemes maps and restoration maintenance schemes forms to the National Roads Authority by 16 March 2011, in compliance with the contents of Circular RLR 2/2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32748/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The local authorities that did not submit all relevant documents requested in RLR 2/2011 by the stated deadline are:

Donegal County Council
Galway County Council
Kildare County Council
Limerick County Council
Longford County Council
Mayo County Council
Westmeath County Council.

Sports Capital Programme

581. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the assistance available to a club (details supplied) in County Wicklow for windows and insulation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32757/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Under the Sports Capital Programme an allocation of €30,000 was made to the organisation referred to by the Deputy in 2006 towards the costs of floodlighting, ball-stop netting and the redevelopment of toilet facilities. All of this funding has been drawn down.

No decision has been made on the timing of the next round of the Programme.

The club might consider contacting the Sustainability Energy Authority of Ireland who provide information and grants relating to energy efficiency.

Rail Network

582. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans regarding the Waterford to Limerick railway line; his views on reports that this line is to be closed along with other lines throughout the country; the amount that has been spent on works on the Waterford to Limerick line over the past five years; his plans to promote rail transport as an attractive public transport option in Munster; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32760/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issues raised are operational matters for Iarnród Éireann in the first instance. I should advise the Deputy that any proposals for rail service reductions or line closures require the approval of the National Transport Authority as it is responsible for ensuring best use of Public Service Obligation (PSO) subvention for rail and bus services provided by the CIE group. In this context, I can also advise the Deputy that as a matter of policy, I believe the focus should be on the achievement of cost savings and maximising patronage of the public transport system rather than simply cutting services.

Swimming Pool Projects

583. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a grant in respect of a club (details supplied) in Dublin 13; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32817/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): A total of €10.67m was recently allocated to 33 local authorities for 56 swimming pools for energy updating and enhanced disabled access. No application was received under the initiative for the pool in question.

584. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding a grant in respect of a club (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32819/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): A total of €10.67m was recently allocated to 33 local authorities for 56 swimming pools for energy updating and enhanced disabled access. No application was received under the initiative in respect of the pool referred to by the Deputy.

Road Network

585. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the N22 Killarney to Cork road; if he considers it a priority project when funding becomes available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32837/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

The capital investment review has examined capital expenditure proposals in order to establish a set of priority projects and programmes, taking into account the very serious financial constraints. The outcome of this review will be published later this week.

Departmental Bodies

586. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the action he has taken to date to fulfil the commitment in the programme for Government to make substantial cuts to the number of State bodies and companies; the number of such bodies and

[Deputy Simon Harris.]

companies under his remit; the number that have been reformed, merged or abolished since March of this year; the plan in place within his Department to fully deliver on this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32859/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Since my appointment as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on 9 March 2011, I have not established any State agencies, independent statutory bodies, State Boards or other bodies.

A full list of the agencies for which I have responsibility is outlined in my reply to Dáil Question 624 on 25 October 2011.

Dundalk Port Company was merged with Dublin Port Company on 12 July 2011. Tralee and Fenit Harbour Authority transferred to the control of Kerry County Council and the tenure of the Harbour Commissioners, accordingly, ceased with effect from 1 October 2011.

My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, is actively pursuing a policy of transferring the Regional Harbours operating under the outdated provisions of the Harbours Act 1946 to local control. Agreement has recently been reached to transfer Baltimore Harbour and Kinsale Harbour to the control of Cork County Council from 1 January 2012. The current intention is that the two remaining harbours are transferred to a more appropriate governance framework over the course of the next year.

A ports policy review is at an advanced stage and it is hoped to publish a revised document in the coming months. Port company restructuring is among the issues being considered as part of the policy review.

With regard to other future developments, I am working on a proposal to rationalise agencies and offices under my Department's remit. This includes the merger of the NRA and RPA into a single body, and the merger of the Air Accident Investigation Unit, the Marine Casualty Investigation Board and the Railway Safety Commission.

The Government is also considering options for further radical streamlining of State bodies and I expect that the Government will be in a position shortly to announce its plans in this regard.

National Asset Management Agency

587. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has had any discussions with the National Assets Management Agency regarding the possibility of capturing for the public good buildings under NAMA's remit which have no commercial potential and which might be suitable as local facilities for sports clubs and organisations; if any discussions have yielded a positive outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32875/11]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): Under the Sports Capital Programme the Department provides funding at local, regional and national level to sporting clubs and organisations, voluntary and community organisations and, in certain circumstances, local authorities and schools/colleges towards the provision of sporting facilities. The Programme does not provide funding towards the purchase of land or buildings.

My officials have had discussions with NAMA with regard to how NAMA properties can be made available to sporting organisations. From these discussions, I understand that NAMA

has already made arrangements with some sports groups to lease land controlled by NAMA and that NAMA tries to accommodate these requests where it is possible.

Departmental Agencies

588. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he intends to proceed with plans to make a number of positions on the governing board of the Irish Sports Council directly electable; the number of positions he envisages being filled in this manner; the person who will elect same; the timeframe for such reforms; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32876/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Programme for Government provides that a number of positions on the Sports Council's governing Board will be made directly electable. This matter is under consideration in my Department at present, and I would welcome any views the Deputy may have on the matter. There are currently no vacancies on the Board of the Irish Sports Council, with the next vacancy due to arise in 2013.

Grant Payments

589. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport when will the final instalment on a grant be paid in respect of a museum (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [32921/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

State Airports

590. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has received a recent submission from the chairperson of the Shannon Airport Authority in relation to the future governance of Shannon Airport; and he will provide this Deputy with a copy of same. [32927/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The submission from the Chairperson of the Shannon Airport Authority, together with the submissions from the Dublin and Cork Airport Authorities, on the question of establishing separate airports under the State Airports Act 2004, were sent to me in confidence. They contain commercially sensitive information and accordingly I do not propose to publish them.

It should be noted that I have appointed Booz and Company to provide me with wide ranging advice on all possible options for the future ownership and operation of the airports so that I can propose informed recommendations to Government.

I have asked the consultants to consult as widely as possible with stakeholders in Cork and Shannon on sustainable options for the two airports. Their mandate is to report back to me by the end of this month and I hope to bring proposals to Government as soon as possible thereafter.

Road Safety

591. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number

[Deputy Timmy Dooley.]

of cyclists killed and the number seriously injured on public roads in the past five years. [32940/11]

592. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of pedestrians killed or seriously injured where a bicycle was involved. [32941/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 591 and 592 together.

The subject matter of these questions is the responsibility of the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and I have referred them to the RSA for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

Pension Provisions

593. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the pension rights of the Dundalk Port company staff and pensioners have been secured. [33260/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As the Deputy is aware, all functions, staff, assets and liabilities (including pension liabilities) of Dundalk Port Company transferred to Dublin Port Company on 7 July 2011. Upon transfer, Dublin Port Company took on responsibility for the Dundalk Port's pension scheme and the pension rights of the members of the scheme.

Departmental Agencies

594. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of tourist offices that Fáilte Ireland operate in Dublin; the location of same; the number of employees per site; the amount of turnover per site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33299/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): This is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland and I have referred the Deputy's Question to them for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Tourism Promotion

595. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the additional steps being taken to attract additional visitors from the Great Britain and US markets; the budget allocated for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33300/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational one for Tourism Ireland Limited, in the first instance, as the body responsible for promoting the island of Ireland as a tourist destination overseas. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Tourism Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Transport

596. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of passengers carried by Bus Éireann and Dublin Bus for the years 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33301/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The issue raised is an operational matter for the bus companies concerned. I have referred the Deputy's question to the companies for direct reply. Please inform my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Road Network

597. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if there are plans for a service station on the M6 between Ballinasloe, County Galway and Galway City; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33313/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual national roads are matters for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. In particular, the allocation of funding in relation to the construction or maintenance of national road projects, including service area projects, is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act. In addition under section 54 of the Roads Act 1993, as amended by section 10 of the Roads Act 2007, the NRA has a specific responsibility in relation to agreements to build and operate motorway service areas.

Subject to planning permission, the private sector may also develop off-line service areas, and related facilities, without direct involvement by the NRA in their development.

As regards the M6 Galway to Ballinasloe road, I understand that the NRA's plan to build an on-line service area on the M6/N18 junction is now on hold and will not progress in the short to medium term.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Tourism Industry

598. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to a public tender process in relation to a project (details supplied) in County Kerry; if he will ensure a speedy and efficient transition in the interest of catering for and not jeopardising upcoming bookings at the centre; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33337/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Ferry Services

599. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his plans to ensure that we retain the Cork to Swansea, Wales, ferry service. [33349/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I share the disappointment that the Cork to Swansea ferry service has run into difficulties.

[Deputy Leo Varadkar.]

The market for ferry services in and out of Ireland is well served and is highly competitive. Ferry services must operate on a commercial basis and to do so they must have a sufficient customer base. It is a very dynamic market as demonstrated by the frequent changes in routes and operators. Market conditions have been very challenging in recent years, particularly with increases in fuel prices.

I understand that in 2010 the ferry service recorded an operating loss of €2.5 million over a ten month period, despite the increase in passenger numbers as a result of the volcanic ash crisis. Fastnet Line's announcement on 1 November 2011 that it was suspending its winter service is just one of many changes to routes and operators over the last year. The High Court has appointed Grant Thornton as an interim examiner to the company. I understand that a restructured business plan has been presented by the company as part of the examinership process and forecasts that the ferry service will resume in April 2012.

My Department has no function in, or finance for, the provision of or subsidisation of ferry services on this or any other route. We are bound by EU state aid rules and the limitations these impose. However, a range of other supports remains available from State agencies such as Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland to ferry services operators to promote tourism in Ireland, and the company may be able to avail of these.

Road Network

600. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will ensure that funds are allocated for 2012 to progress the development of the N4 project motorway to Longford town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33362/11]

601. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the cost of the preparation of plans for the N4 motorway to date; the details of the estimated costs of this route to completion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33363/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take Questions Nos. 600 and 601 together.

As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within is capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

The capital investment review has examined capital expenditure proposals in order to establish a set of priority projects and programmes, taking into account the very serious financial constraints. The outcome of this review will be published later this week.

602. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the future plans for a road (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33365/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within the capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

The capital investment review has examined capital expenditure proposals in order to establish a set of priority projects and programmes, taking into account the very serious financial constraints. The outcome of this review will be published later this week.

Public Transport

603. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is satisfied that the recent tendering process for painting and decorating works at Killarney railway station, County Kerry, was adequately advertised; if he will review this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33396/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport I have responsibility for policy and overall funding in relation to public transport. Matters relating to tendering processes for painting and decorating works are day-to-day operational issues for Iarnród Éireann and I have no function in such matters.

Noting this I have referred the Deputy's question to Iarnród Éireann for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Ministerial Appointments

604. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if former Government officeholders are currently in positions appointed by current or former Governments, the details of such appointments to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33953/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The only Government appointments made to bodies under my remit are to the board of CIÉ. There are no former Government office holders currently appointed to the CIÉ board.

605. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the details of any former Government officeholder appointed by him to any position; the details of such appointment to include position taken, name of organisation, salary or income derived or expenses claimed per annum, any other additional benefits including car provided, travel costs per annum, terms of office and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [33967/11]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Mr. Bernard Allen was appointed to the Board of the Irish Sports Council on 12 October 2011 and his term will run until 16 September 2014.

[Deputy Leo Varadkar.]

Mr. Allen has waived his entitlement to the fee of €5,985 per annum payable relating to membership of the Council. Mr. Allen will be paid travel and subsistence allowances at the rates specified in and subject to the conditions of civil service regulations for his attendance at Council meetings.

Given Mr. Allen was the Minister for Sport who oversaw the foundation and establishment of the Irish Sports Council, he can offer a unique contribution to the Board of the Irish Sports Council. Furthermore, as a former Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee he has considerable experience with regard to corporate governance. Mr. Allen responded to a public advertisement placed by my Department in the national press seeking expressions of interest in serving on state boards in April of this year.

I would like to thank Mr. Allen for agreeing to serve on the board of the ISC and acknowledge the fact that he agreed to serve without receiving a fee.