

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].

Middle East Peace Process

1. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has raised concerns regarding the proposed Israeli plans for an additional 3,000 settlement homes in East Jerusalem with his EU colleagues; if the EU has any plans to confront this issue; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55001/12]

2. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has raised concerns regarding Israeli plans for an additional 3,000 settlement homes in East Jerusalem with the Israeli Government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55002/12]

3. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in view of accelerated illegal settlement development by Israel in the East Jerusalem area if he will once again raise the issue of banning imports from illegal Israeli settlements with his EU colleagues; if he will consider the issue on a unilateral level; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55003/12]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 3, inclusive, together.

In my statement of 3 December I made clear the Government's concern and strong criticism of the announcement by Israel of 3,000 additional settlement units in East Jerusalem, as well as plans to proceed with settlement expansion in the critical E1 area, which would complete the isolation of Arab East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. High Representative Ashton, on behalf of the EU, has also expressed her deep concern at the Israeli government's announcement in a statement issued on 2 December. It is negative and highly damaging to any prospect of peace for Israel to announce this measure in response to an action at the United Nations which, while unwelcome to Israel, was an entirely legitimate political move, and one which was supported by the overwhelming majority of the nations of the world. The acceleration in the overall pace of settlement expansion is also deeply troubling with these settlement measures only the latest in a succession of major settlement announcements which have clearly been in planning for some time.

It is also deeply troubling that, at a moment when the Palestinians were signalling that their success at the UN would permit them to re-enter direct negotiations with Israel, that the response of the Israeli Government should be such an action which directly threatens that

prospect. It must be reiterated that not only is the entire settlement enterprise contrary to international law, but that the continued expansion of settlements is simply incompatible with the achievement of a comprehensive peace. It is very difficult therefore to do other than conclude that the Israeli Government is not genuinely committed to a negotiated peace deal, unless it moves at once to rescind these decisions.

Following agreement on a concerted response at EU level, the Israeli Ambassador was invited in to my Department on 4 December and asked to convey to his Government our deep concern and disappointment at these decisions, and our view that they must be reversed. I understand that a number of EU partners have acted similarly. I expect to be further discussing this matter, and other recent developments, with my colleagues at the Foreign Affairs Council on Monday, 10 December. In relation to settlement products, I have recently written to the Deputy and to all Deputies setting out in detail my views on this issue.

Tax Code

4. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance the saving to the Exchequer that would accrue from including child benefit as taxable income. [54999/12]

9. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance the saving to the Exchequer that would accrue from including child benefit as taxable income; if the Revenue Commissioners have the capabilities to do if so directed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54932/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 4 and 9 together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the yield from taxing Child Benefit is fully dependent on resolving a number of significant and complex policy and legal issues before the question of implementing a charge to taxation on this payment can be considered. These policy issues include clearly determining who is the owner of the Child Benefit payment, whether by taxing the payment, there follows an entitlement to the PAYE tax credit, how the payment is treated for tax purposes in the hands of jointly assessed couples and legal issues surrounding the tax treatment of married couples and co-habiting couples. I understand that the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare, established by the Minister for Social Protection, has considered these and other issues in relation to Child Benefit in the context of a report on child and family income supports which is being considered by the Minister.

In view of the considerable legal and policy issues involved, it is extremely difficult to estimate the likely yield as a result of taxing Child Benefit. I am advised that the estimated full year yield, based on projected 2013 incomes, could be of the order of €395 million on a 2012 basis, if the Child Benefit were fully taxable as the income of the assessable person in joint assessment cases, and that no new tax threshold, exemption, allowance or personal reliefs would be introduced to offset some of the tax.

Regarding the implementation of any decisions the Government might make, I am further informed that, were the legal and policy issues resolved and legislated for, there are very well established data exchange arrangements in place between Revenue and the Department of Social Protection that could be extended to facilitate the taxation of Child Benefit once there is a suitable lead-in time and resources to facilitate the ICT changes required by both the Department of Social Protection and Revenue.

Tax Code

5. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance the different rates of tobacco duty for cigarettes and rolling tobacco; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54824/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Following yesterday's Budget changes, the rate of tobacco products tax applicable to cigarettes is €237.69 per thousand together with an amount equal to 8.83 per cent of the price at which the cigarettes are sold by retail, or €271.91 per thousand cigarettes, whichever is the greater. The tobacco products tax on roll-your-own tobacco is €248.608 per kilogram. Details of the tobacco products tax rates applicable to all tobacco products are available on www.revenue.ie. The price and tax component of cigarettes in Ireland are amongst the highest in the EU. Following the Budget increase, the price of 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category is €9.30. The total tax (VAT inclusive) on this product is €7.31. The Budget increase amounts to an increase in tax of 10 cents (VAT inclusive) on a pack of 20 cigarettes in the most popular price category. The increase on roll-your own tobacco amounts to an increase in tax, inclusive of VAT, of approximately 60 cent per 25g pack.

Banks Recapitalisation

6. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if it is possible to identify the current holders of the remaining Irish Bank Resolution Corporation bonds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54862/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The bank has no means of establishing the underlying ownership of these securities which are freely tradable once issued. These securities are publicly traded and dealt through market participants and settled by clearing house systems. An issuer does not have any access to the records of the clearing house. At maturity, the bank will instruct its paying agent to transfer the funds due to the clearing house who will then distribute the funds to the holders of the securities as per their records. Even where the bank is presented with lists purporting to represent names of bondholders, I am informed there is no way for the bank or anyone else to verify such lists. In the circumstances the Deputy will appreciate that there is no way to identify, with certainty, the names of the remaining bondholders.

Credit Unions Regulation

7. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the steps that need to be taken for a new single payments platform for credit unions to receive regulatory approval; if any application has been made for such approval; the date on which the application was submitted; when the decision on the application will be made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54886/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank of Ireland has responsibility for the approval of an application to operate a single payments platform. If an entity wishes to establish a single payments platform for credit unions, this activity may require authorisation under the European Communities (Payment Services) Regulations 2009 (PSRs) as it may constitute a "payment service" within the meaning of the PSRs. The Central Bank advises me that due to the confidentiality provisions set out in Section 33AK of the Central Bank Act 1942 it is not in a position to confirm whether any such application has been received to date.

An entity seeking authorisation as a payment institution pursuant to the PSRs would be required to submit an application for authorisation to the Central Bank in accordance with Regulation 10 of the PSRs. Regulation 11 sets out the capital requirements. Regulation 21 provides that within three months of the receipt of an application (or, if the application is incomplete, of all the information required for the decision), the Central Bank will inform the applicant concerned whether the authorisation has been granted or refused.

Public Procurement Contracts Tenders

8. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Finance the percentage of Government contracts that are awarded to non-Irish companies; the percentage of these that go to EU companies; and if he will provide details as to the percentage of contracts awarded by other EU Governments outside of those countries to EU based companies in order that we can compare Ireland's performance in this regard. [54897/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In response to the Deputy's question my Department does not keep a central record of the nationality of companies that are awarded contracts to provide goods or services to my Department. My Department awards contracts to companies based on the procurement guidelines outlined on the Government e-tender website managed by the Office of Public Works National Procurement Service. The relevant website address is as follows: http://www.etenders.gov.ie/about_us_main_en-GB.

Question No. 9 answered with Question No. 4.

Tax Yield

10. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the total payments to the Exchequer resulting from the carbon tax in each of the years since its introduction to date; if he will provide a breakdown of the energy sources, that is oil, gas and so on, from which tax revenues have been collected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54933/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the total payments to the Exchequer resulting from the introduction of Carbon Tax are shown in the tables.

Carbon Tax	2010	2011	2012 (10 Mths)
	€m	€m	€m
Auto Diesel	98.41	97.53	107.17
Petrol	65.09	60.11	62.37
Aviation Gasoline	0.04	0.04	0.04
Kerosene	16.99	40.52	28.54
MGO	27.03	48.95	44.16
Fuel Oil	1.57	2.33	1.86
LPG (other)	2.59	5.43	4.94
Auto LPG	0.04	0.20	0.20
Natural Gas	11.32	43.13	37.47
Total	223.08	298.23	286.75

Value Added Tax	2010	2011	2012 (10 Mths)
(Estimated)	€m	€m	€m
Auto Diesel	2.07	2.05	2.46
Petrol	13.67	12.62	14.35
Aviation Gasoline	0.01	0.01	0.01
Kerosene	2.29	5.47	3.85
MGO	3.65	6.61	5.96
Fuel Oil	-	-	-
LPG (other)	0.35	0.73	0.67
Auto LPG	0.01	0.05	0.05
Natural Gas	0.92	3.49	3.04
Total	22.96	31.03	30.38

Please note that the VAT receipts are estimated, as the VAT returns do not require the yield from a particular sector or sub-sector of trade to be identified and the actual VAT yield for each category cannot therefore be determined.

EU Directives

11. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the proposals to revise the existing energy taxation directive; if he expects that the negotiations on this directive will be completed during Ireland's Presidency of the European Union; in view of the existing carbon tax regime here, if the principle of subsidiarity will be applied to Ireland if any mandatory carbon tax regime is introduced across the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54935/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The taxation of energy products is to a certain extent harmonized at EU level. Directive 2003/96/EC known as the Energy Tax Directive (ETD) refers. The current ETD provides for minimum excise rates of taxation for energy products based on the volume of a product released for consumption. Member States must respect the minimum rates and not tax products below those rates, but are free to set higher rates for individual fuels as they see fit. The current Irish national rates are generally above the EU minimum rates. The aim of the Commission's proposal is to revise the ETD to bring it in line with wider EU climate change and energy policy to which all Members States have signed up. Ireland broadly supports the principle of the proposal and welcomes the introduction of a carbon tax element into the EU minimum rates; it will serve to lessen competitiveness concerns arising from Ireland being a lead country in the area of carbon taxes. Discussions are ongoing and Ireland will endeavour to progress the negotiations during its Presidency.

Budget Submissions

12. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a submission (details supplied) from the Retired Civil and Public Servants' Association. [54953/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have received a copy of the submission to which the Deputy refers. As with other pre-Budget submissions it was circulated to the

relevant officials in my Department so that its contents could be considered in the context of the Budget and the forthcoming Finance Bill.

Customs and Excise Controls

13. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the normal procedure in cases similar to the seizure of goods and accessories in the possession of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55053/12]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that on 29 November 2012 the person concerned was stopped by a Revenue Customs Officer in the Customs Blue Channel at Dublin Airport. The person had arrived in Dublin on a flight from Istanbul having started her journey in China. As a traveller from a non-EU country, the person should not have attempted to exit the baggage hall by way of the Blue Channel. This is reserved for intra-EU travellers who have no declaration to make. Travellers from outside the EU must use the Red (Goods to declare) or Green (No Goods to Declare) Customs Channel, as appropriate, and there are notices on display in the area indicating this requirement. On examining the person's baggage, the Revenue Customs Officer discovered 25 well known branded handbags, 14 designer branded belts and 16 make-up sets. The officer suspected that the goods in question were counterfeit and detained them under section 7 of the Customs & Excise (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1988.

On 1 December 2012, having received confirmation from the relevant right holders (brand owners) that the goods are counterfeit, the Revenue Customs Officer seized the goods under the Customs Acts as they are prohibited from import into the EU. Furthermore, the person concerned has committed a Customs offence by attempting to import the goods. The normal procedure in such cases is for a report of the offence to be prepared and forwarded to its Investigations and Prosecutions Division for consideration of prosecution, and this is now happening. Without prejudice to any further action that may be taken, I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the re-exportation of counterfeit goods is not an option under current legislation, and it is likely the goods will be destroyed when the outcome of the case is finally determined.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

14. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on the Student Universal Support Ireland grant application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54837/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy is currently being assessed and that SUSI will be in contact with him directly in the coming days.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

15. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision on their Student Universal Support Ireland application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54839/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department

have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the application of the student referred to by the Deputy is currently being assessed and that SUSI will be in contact with him directly in the coming days.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

16. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in Dublin 1 was excluded by the special education needs unit of his Department for special education needs resource support this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54853/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The facility to which the Deputy refers in his question provides a two-year pre-school programme which caters for 3-5 year old children. The Pre-School project referred to is not a designated Special School, but a stand-alone project in receipt of an individual resourcing mechanism which is separate to the resourcing arrangements which apply to mainstream and Special schools, including supports which are provided to mainstream and Special schools to support pupils with special educational needs.

I wish to advise the Deputy that the Pre-School referred to him in his question is in receipt of significant supports from my Department. In 2012 my Department has provided support to the value of approximately €740,000 to this School. The provision includes staffing of an Administrative Principal, 6 teachers and 5 child care workers catering for 95 children, a pupil to adult ratio of approximately 8:1. In addition to the teaching and child care provision, the project receives an annual grant from my Department to fund non-teaching pay costs which provides for the employment of a cook, cleaner and a caretaker. My Department also provides funding towards the non-pay or running costs of the project. Finally, I wish to clarify that the funding awarded to the Pre-school is based on budget proposals submitted by the Pre-school each year. The funding awarded by my Department for 2012 matches the proposals submitted.

Schools Building Projects Status

17. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a building project in respect of a school (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [54854/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is at an advanced stage of architectural planning. The Board of Management of the school has recently been authorised to progress the project to commence stage 2(b) which includes applications for planning permission, Fire Safety Certification, Disability Access Certification. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include the project referred to by the Deputy in the five year construction programme. Schools which have not been included in the five year construction programme, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years. The project referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in that context.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

18. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a Student Universal Support Ireland grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in view of new information supplied. [54858/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy, his student grant application was unsuccessful and that he appealed the decision to the appeals officer in SUSI on 30th November 2012. SUSI aims to issue determinations as promptly as possible and within the specified timeframes defined in the Student Support Act, 2011. Where an individual applicant has had an appeal turned down, in writing, by SUSI, and remains of the view that SUSI has not interpreted the scheme correctly in his/her case, an appeal form outlining the position may be submitted by the applicant to the independent Student Grants Appeals Board.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

19. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if applications for student grants to Student Universal Support Ireland will be granted without delay in view of the fact that students need to sit exams and cannot do so until they have received their grant and paid their fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54868/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): SUSI has indicated that it is on target to progress all applications received to date with the necessary supporting documentation between now and the end of the year. The Higher Education Authority (HEA), on foot of a request from my Department, has written to all higher education institutions requesting them to show flexibility and consideration, as most have done in the past, to students who may be awaiting a decision on their grant application and/or payment of grants. The HEA has requested institutions not withdraw facilities such as library or exam access, given that these students are awaiting decision on their grant applications. The situation is being kept under review. In addition SUSI is working closely with the Irish Universities Association (IUA) and the Institutes of Technology Ireland (IOTI) in this regard.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

20. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application for a student grant has been processed in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54870/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with Student Universal Support Ireland that in the case of the student referred to by the Deputy a grant has been awarded and an award letter issued on 24th October, 2012.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

21. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a resource teacher has not been allocated to a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if his attention has been drawn to the hardship, distress and upset being caused to the affected children and their families; if he will provide a timeframe for when this post will be filled; if he will

prioritise this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54871/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The NCSE has notified all schools of their allocation of resource hours for low incidence special needs for the 2012/13 school year. The arrangements for how schools access these resource hours in teaching posts are set out in the Department Staffing Circular 0007/2012 which is available on the website. Under these arrangements a network of over 2,500 full-time resource posts has been put in place in close to 1,700 base schools throughout the country. The list of these schools and the criteria used to select them is set out in the published circular.

These resource posts are allocated on a permanent basis and the teachers in them will undertake NCSE approved (low incidence) resource hours in the base schools or in neighbouring schools. Schools that are unable to access these hours will be allocated mainly temporary part-time posts. It is also open to schools to make an application for a full-time temporary resource post. The school referred to has been allocated 11.90 resource (low incidence) hours by the NCSE. The school has made arrangements through the network of base posts in place for these hours to be covered by two permanent resource teachers in neighbouring schools that have spare capacity in their posts.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

22. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when an application for an education grant will be processed and the person (details supplied) in County Clare notified of the outcome; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54880/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have confirmed with SUSI, the new centralised grant awarding authority, that on the 2nd December, 2012 a request for further documentation was issued to the student referred to by the Deputy. When the requested documentation is returned the student will be notified directly of the outcome.

Schools Building Projects Status

23. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding funding in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54884/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy is currently at an advanced stage of architectural planning. Due to competing demands on my Department's capital budget, imposed by the need to prioritise the limited funding available for the provision of additional school accommodation to meet increasing demographic requirements, it was not possible to include this project in the five year construction programme announced earlier this year. Schools which have not been included in the five year construction programme, including the one referred to by the Deputy, but which were announced for initial inclusion in the building programme will continue to be progressed to final planning stages in anticipation of the possibility of further funds being available to my Department in future years. The project referred to by the Deputy remains available to be considered for progression in that context.

Special Educational Needs Services Provision

24. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of engagement that the National Council for Special Education has with members of the deaf community here as part of the recent review of issues relating to deaf education; if the membership of the high level review includes deaf people; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54890/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I understand that the Deputy is referring to the Policy Advice on the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland, which was published by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) earlier this year. This paper was developed by the NCSE following consideration of all of the issues involved and including consultations with members of the deaf community. The policy advice provides a comprehensive blueprint for the future development of deaf and hearing impaired educational services. I have referred the Deputy's specific query about the level of engagement with members of the deaf community by the NCSE during the conduct of this review to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

Site Acquisitions

25. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline the criteria used for the donation of a school site from Ballymun Regeneration Limited, Dublin, to his Department; and the rationale for the development. [54891/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I can confirm to the Deputy that Ballymun Regeneration Ltd., operating under the aegis of Dublin City Council, has agreed, in principle, to lease for 500 years, the site in question to my Department for educational purposes to facilitate the development of permanent accommodation for the existing Gaelscoil. This new accommodation will replace the school's existing pre-fabricated accommodation and will also provide additional accommodation to meet demographic need in the area.

Student Grant Scheme Reform

26. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills in view of the selection panel criteria the reason Student Universal Support Ireland was specifically chosen; the cost saving the State has incurred to date by centralising the student grant award and payments function through SUSI; and the persons who were on the independent selection panel and the way they were chosen. [54892/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): On the basis of the review carried out by the independent selection panel at the initial stage of the Expressions of Interest process, four of the ten proposals received were short-listed for oral presentation. Following oral presentation these proposals were assigned a ranking depending on their relative strengths under each of the evaluation criteria leading to the preferred proposal. Based on the marks awarded by the panel City of Dublin VEC's proposal was the preferred proposal and the selection panel made a recommendation to the Minister for Education and Skills to establish Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) as a unit of City of Dublin VEC.

Initially, during the transition period, which migrates the administration from the local authorities and VECs to SUSI, costs are estimated to exceed savings for years one and two, as the 66 grant awarding authorities are processing renewal grant applications, as well as SUSI processing all new grant applications. However, it is estimated that for future years there will be a saving on the overall cost of grants administration.

The composition of the independent selection panel was as follows: 1. Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chair) - Chief Executive of the Irish Payment Services Organisation (former Chief Executive of the Eastern Health Board, chair of the Local Government Efficiency Review Group and a member of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes); 2. Mr. Jim Duffy - Former Assistant Secretary at the Department of Finance with responsibility for the Centre for Management and Organisation Development (CMOD); 3. Mr. Gerry Kearney - Former Secretary General of the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with significant experience with programme management and also former Assistant Secretary of the Revenue Commissioners. The members of the selection panel were chosen with reference to their relevant knowledge, their significant experience and expertise in the various elements that would be involved in the administration of student grants.

School Accommodation

27. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied); if there is any mechanism that the person can follow or investigate in seeking to resolve their problem; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54978/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): As the Deputy is aware the prefab replacement initiative that I announced earlier this year is in the main to replace rented prefabs. Once these prefabs are no longer required by schools they are returned to the rental companies as the rented prefabs are their property. The following schools in Co. Kildare are currently in the process of replacing their rented prefabs: Scoil Na Mainistreach De La Salle, Kildare Town; St Peters BNS, Monasterevin; Two Mile House NS Straffan NS; St Laurences NS, Sallins; St Brigids Primary School, Kildare Town; St Mochua's NS, Rathcoffey.

The first four schools listed earlier are also replacing old purchased prefabs as part of the initiative and I suggest that the person referred to by the Deputy may wish to contact these schools directly in relation to their plans for the old purchased prefabs. The person in question may also wish to contact rental prefab suppliers to see if they would be willing to donate one of the rented prefabs once removed.

Student Grant Scheme Application Numbers

28. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of student grants broken down on a county basis approved to date by the higher education grant Student Universal Support Ireland system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55004/12]

29. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students broken down on a county basis that have been approved for a student grant by Student Universal Support Ireland and who have begun to receive their payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55005/12]

30. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students grants broken down on a county basis that have yet to be approved by the higher education grant Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55006/12]

31. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of grants broken down on a county basis that have been refused by Student Universal Support

Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55007/12]

33. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of appeals broken down on a county basis received to date by Student Universal Support Ireland for student grants; the length of time it is taking to assess and make a decision on an appeal in each county; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55009/12]

35. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the current waiting time for an application to the higher education grant Student Universal Support Ireland system to be processed; the current waiting time for the processing of appeals to same broken down on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55011/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 to 31, inclusive, 33 and 35 together.

The first table below provides a breakdown on a county basis of the status of the student grant applications received by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). The data provided is at a point in time on 5th December 2012. It gives the position for student grant applications for attendance at both further and higher education. This data has been provided to my Department by SUSI. The second table below provides a breakdown on a county basis of the number of appeals received to date by SUSI.

The waiting time for processing a student grant application by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) varies, depending on a number of factors including the volume of applications received at any given time, the complexity of the grant applicants circumstances, and time taken by the applicant to submit all the required documentary evidence to enable a final decision to be made on an application. Every effort is made to ensure that students get decisions on their grant applications as soon as possible. Currently, SUSI has some 272 applications on hand which are awaiting provisional assessment - these are applications received after the closing date. The number of applications being processed has been increasing incrementally in recent weeks. SUSI has indicated that it is on target to progress all applications received to date with the necessary supporting documentation between now and the end of the year.

Appeals received by SUSI are dealt with in date order, and the waiting time for decisions on appeals can vary depending on the complexity of the grant applicants circumstances which are under appeal. SUSI aims to issue determinations on appeals as promptly as possible and within the specified timeframes defined in the Student Support Act, 2011. The county from which an appeal originates is not a factor which impacts on the waiting time for appeals.

SUSI Applications - Processing Position by County

County	Total Applications	Awarded	Cancelled/ Re-fused	Appealed To SuSi	Awaiting Provisional Assessment (New applications after closing date)	With SUSI Awaiting Review (Documents received)	Reviewed and Supporting Documents requested	Maintenance Payments
Carlow	964	300	156	15	8	36	449	110
Cavan	1322	384	216	31	6	84	601	190
Clare	1775	539	266	40	5	97	828	235
Cork	6859	1815	1274	115	24	332	3299	730
Donegal	2877	981	423	69	16	150	1238	407
Dublin	13999	3348	2898	209	59	487	6998	1273

County	Total Applications	Awarded	Cancelled/ Re-fused	Appealed To SuSi	Awaiting Provisional Assessment (New applications after closing date)	With SUSI Awaiting Review (Documents received)	Reviewed and Supporting Documents requested	Maintenance Payments
Galway	4403	1230	705	103	14	202	2149	472
Kerry	2477	725	403	48	12	131	1158	306
Kildare	2699	752	568	59	10	111	1199	295
Kilkenny	1390	422	237	24	8	66	633	140
Laois	1050	321	167	22	2	60	478	143
Leitrim	637	180	98	13	1	56	289	73
Limerick	2844	819	459	55	14	131	1366	316
Longford	754	222	119	12	5	43	353	87
Louth	2149	645	353	55	12	78	1006	256
Mayo	2471	734	386	47	13	146	1145	283
Meath	2413	731	452	46	5	95	1084	307
Monaghan	1103	336	177	28	2	77	483	145
Offaly	1232	420	217	26	3	50	516	173
Roscommon	1170	346	192	30	5	69	528	147
Sligo	1212	320	212	20	5	51	604	101
Tipperary	2639	800	457	62	4	103	1213	330
Waterford	1911	596	377	36	10	69	823	193
Westmeath	1669	534	294	42	6	82	711	241
Wexford	2340	780	404	46	11	119	980	338
Wicklow	1935	553	390	42	11	82	857	254
Outside of Ireland	533	94	138	13	1	11	276	25
Total	66827	18927 *	12038 **	1308 ***	272	3018	31264 #	7570 ##

*This figure includes some 2,650 provisionally awarded awaiting final course acceptance forms. The figure does not include grants awarded but currently under appeal status.

**This figure does not include grants cancelled or refused that are currently under appeal status.

***This figure includes grant applications currently under appeal status and also a number where recent decisions have been made.

#This figure includes some 25,807 applications for which SUSI is awaiting documentation and some 5,457 on hand with SUSI which are being checked to ensure all documentation submitted is complete.

##This figure includes a number of students who will be paid their student grants on the 7th December, 2012. This figure does not include some 3,193 students awarded a "fees only" grant (either the student contribution or fees) - these payments are being made directly to the relevant institution.

Appeals received to date by SUSI

County	Appealed to SUSI
Carlow	21
Cavan	43
Clare	53
Cork	165
Donegal	92
Dublin	299
Galway	149
Kerry	70
Kildare	86
Kilkenny	34
Laois	32
Leitrim	17
Limerick	74
Longford	16
Louth	73
Mayo	62
Meath	66
Monaghan	37
Offaly	40
Roscommon	38
Sligo	34
Tipperary	91
Waterford	49
Westmeath	60
Wexford	71
Wicklow	67
Outside of Ireland	16
Total	1855

Departmental Agencies Issues

32. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students' grants applications that have been processed by Student Universal Support Ireland for the past three months broken down on a daily basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55008/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The table provides a breakdown of the number of student grant applications processed by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), on a weekly basis since September. It is broken down into new application assessment, which is the first step in assessing an application received, and pack assessment which includes the supporting documentation subsequently received. This information has been provided to my Department by SUSI.

Number of Student Grant Applications Processed by SUSI - September to December

Week	*New Application Assessment	**Pack Assessment	Total
02/09 - 09/09	5,470	458	5,928
10/09 - 16/09	3,300	1,287	4,587
17/09 - 23/09	3,098	1,667	4,765
24/09 - 30/09	817	1,892	2,709
01/10 - 07/10	409	2,195	2,604
08/10 - 14/10	180	2,571	2,751
15/10 - 21/10	342	3,552	3,894
22/10 - 28/10	178	4,050	4,228
29/10 - 04/11	85	3,182	3,267
05/11 - 11/11	392	3,764	4,156
12/11 - 18/11	1,625	3,900	5,525
19/11 - 25/11	1,695	3,850	5,545
26/11 - 02/12	1,675	5,991	7,666
Total	19,266	38,359	57,625

*New application Assessment = Assessment of new applications received.

** Pack Assessment = Assessment of applications where documentation has been received.

Question No. 33 answered with Question No. 28.

Departmental Agencies Issues

34. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of staff currently working on clearing the backlog of student grant applications in Student Universal Support Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55010/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In total, there is now 96 staff working in Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI), 33 of which are permanent and 63 of which are temporary. To date 149 temporary staff have been approved in the outsourced company, engaged by SUSI, to support the processing of student grants. There are currently 143 of these staff in place. 6 persons who recently left are being replaced. In addition, officials in my Department have been providing assistance to SUSI on an on-going basis.

Question No. 35 answered with Question No. 28.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

36. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if back-to-education allowance recipients are entitled to third level grants in respect of the student contribution and the criteria they need to fulfil to be eligible. [55022/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) and associated payments is determined and administered by the Department of Social Protection. Students who qualify for the BTEA, may be considered for support for the student contribution under the student grant scheme provided they satisfy the

conditions of the relevant Student Grant Scheme and Student Support Regulations including those relating to approved course, residence, means, nationality and previous academic attainment. Students should apply to Student Universal Support Ireland to have their eligibility for a grant towards the student contribution assessed.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

37. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an education grant is available in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55052/12]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Under the terms of the student grant scheme, grant assistance is awarded to students who meet the prescribed conditions of funding including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. The decision on eligibility for new student grant applications from the 2012/13 academic year is a matter for the new centralised grant awarding authority, SUSI (Student Universal Support Ireland). The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual's application form and supporting documentation, it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student should qualify for a grant. The student should apply to SUSI to have their eligibility assessed.

Legislative Programme

38. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the Construction Contracts Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54431/12]

39. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding the Construction Contracts Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54851/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 38 and 39 together.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce new legislation to protect small building subcontractors that have been denied payments from bigger companies. In this regard, my colleague Minister of State Brian Hayes is working with Senator Feargal Quinn to develop the Senator's private member's Construction Contracts Bill into a robust piece of legislation. The Bill has passed Second Stage in the Dáil. During the Second Stage reading of the Bill, Minister Hayes signalled to the House his intention to bring proposals to Government on Committee Stage amendments dealing with issues that would include:

Thresholds: In order to ensure that the legislation applies to the majority of Construction Contracts the scope of the legislation will be broadened by reducing or removing the current monetary thresholds contained in the Bill.

Adjudication: This issue of making adjudication awards binding for both the public and private sectors is a complex issue. It is important to strike the right balance between giving this legislation the necessary enforcement provisions, whilst ensuring that the application of the legislation is equitable and the taxpayer is safeguarded.

When these and a number of other issues have been examined, Minister Hayes will bring

proposals to Government in advance of Committee Stage early in the New Year. This is an important piece of legislation aimed at creating a more level playing field between contractor and subcontractor in the construction sector. Therefore it is essential that these complex issues are properly assessed so as to avoid imposing unnecessary regulatory or cost burdens on parties in dispute, the State or others.

Public Procurement Contracts Tenders

40. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding local authorities and work contracts; when a local authority is in a position where they could actually carry out the works themselves, if his Department will allow that local authority to tender for the work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54988/12]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Local Authorities are subject to national procurement rules in the same manner as any other public body. The question of governance in the local authority sector to ensure, *inter alia*, that proper value-for-money safeguards and other procedural rules are being duly observed in the area of procurement is proper to my colleague, the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government.

Work Permit Applications

41. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding work permits. [54849/12]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The High Court Judgement of 31st August raised serious issues in relation to employees who have unwittingly entered into illegal contracts of employment by virtue of not having an employment permit. When I received the judgement, I quickly stated my aim was to ensure that an employer should not benefit from using an illegal contract of employment where he or she was a willing party to its creation. I repeated this assurance personally to the person concerned when I met him and a delegation from the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and SIPTU. The Deputy will note that the Government did not oppose Senator Quinn's Private Member's Bill as it concurs with our objectives - to ensure that outcome of the High Court case will not arise again.

The issue raised by the High Court judgement is one which has important policy and legal implications in the area of Employment Permits and also in terms of Employment Rights. The question that arises for policy makers is to what extent such workers should be dissuaded from working illegally in Ireland by virtue of there being a statutory offence to do so, versus, to what extent should certain employment rights protect vulnerable migrants who find themselves unwittingly in such employment positions. My Department has received preliminary legal advice from the Office of the Attorney General counselling that the judgement raises matters that are particularly complex. These matters are currently receiving priority attention with a view to identifying the best way in which the legislation may be amended.

It is my firm intention to amend the Employment Permits legislation in a precise manner so as to ensure that an employer may not benefit from the illegality of the contract of employment where they are found culpable in not ensuring a valid employment permit was in place for the employee concerned. To this end, I hope to be in a position to propose the necessary provisions in a new Employment Permits Bill, currently being drafted and which is anticipated to be introduced in the first quarter of next year. I believe that this would be the most appropriate method

of dealing with such a technically specific matter. Decisions on the legal options will be made in light of further legal advice and in consultation with other Government departments. I can assure the Deputy that my Bill is a Government priority and I would expect a speedy passage through the Oireachtas after its introduction.

Finally, I wish to stress that the judgement relates only to the consideration of the enforceability, or otherwise, of an employee's rights. It does not mean that unscrupulous employers can employ unauthorised third country nationals without running the risk of significant legal consequences. I would emphasise that an employer who engages in this type of activity is open to prosecution under the Employment Permits legislation and could be found guilty of an offence and liable on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €250,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years or both. Both An Garda Síochána and the National Employment Rights Authority actively pursue breaches under the legislation and welcome information concerning possible breaches.

Employment Support Services

42. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding training or work in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [54856/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned agreed a Personal Progression Plan with her case officer on 11th October 2012 in which many work and training opportunities were presented to her. It was agreed that she would update her case officer on a regular basis on her efforts to find employment. At a further meeting with her case officer on 18th October 2012 she stated that she did not have time to explore her training options at present due to family difficulties, but that she had arranged a meeting in November 2012 with the employment facilitators Jobcare. She was contacted by her case officer on 4th December 2012 for an update and a further appointment has been arranged for her to meet to discuss progress and options in relation to employment or training.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Applications

43. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly may expect a decision on an application for domiciliary care allowance. [54832/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received from the person concerned on the 9th November 2012. The application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors who considered that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on the 30th November 2012 advising of the decision. Additional information has been supplied and the case is currently being reviewed. The person concerned will be notified in writing when the review is completed.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

44. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an invalidity pension will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54843/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Of-

Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 29th November 2012, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

45. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress made in respect of an appeal for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54845/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer on 27th November 2012, who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

Back to Education Allowance Payments

46. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 133 of 29 November 2012, if she will state the correct level of back-to-education allowance payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54848/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The weekly rate of back to education allowance payable to the person concerned is €247.60. This consists of a personal rate of €188.00 plus €59.60 qualified child allowance. A fuel allowance of €20.00 per week is also in payment.

Question No. 47 withdrawn.

Family Income Supplement Application Numbers

48. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there has been a change of practise in processing applications for family income supplement (details supplied); if a person who applied pre October could cancel that application and apply again and will it be processed straight away but would then lose any back money that they would have received with the original claim. [54863/12]

49. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for Social Protection the length of time it takes to process an application for family income support and the length of time it will take to clear the current backlog. [54864/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 48 and 49 together.

The Department is committed to providing a quality service to all its customers. An in-depth business process improvement (BPI) project has recently been completed for the FIS scheme.

This project focused on optimising output, improving customer service and the elimination of backlogs. Part of the project was a detailed examination of workloads and a full assessment of existing capacity within the area and what capacity is needed in order to process the volumes of claims, both new and renewal, being received on a weekly basis.

The outcome of this review is a detailed plan outlining the process required to manage both the continuous weekly intake and backlog claims clearance. This plan sees the current weekly new claim and renewal intake processed by one team, while the backlog is ring-fenced and a focused team assigned to this work with a clear plan for its elimination. Clearly, claims received before November are not parked and are getting full and focused priority.

This team including additional temporary resources has been identified and is already assigned and working on the backlog claims. In order to reduce the time it will take to eliminate the backlog, some claims are being processed outside of Longford Social Welfare Services Office. This team is fully focussed on the elimination of the backlog of claims in the shortest possible timeframe, concentrating in the first instance on those claims which were previously in payment but where payment has expired and continuing on to first-time new claims within those categories, those waiting the longest will be processed first.

While it is not possible to clear all claims in the backlog before Christmas, every effort will be made to pay as many eligible claims as possible in that timeframe. It is expected that the backlog will be fully eliminated by the end of March 2013. Claims which are approved by the backlog team will be backdated to the date of claim or the date of expiry of the previous claim, as appropriate, and all arrears due will be paid. It is not advisable for an applicant to choose to withdraw their application before it is decided upon and re-apply from a current date because the consequence of this is that they will lose entitlement for the period between the first and the second applications.

Disability Allowance Eligibility

50. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on the anomalous situation whereby a recipient of disability allowance can continue to receive a dependent allowance for a dependent who has exceeded the age of 22 years, by virtue of the fact they are in full time education on the date of their 22nd birthday, however if the dependents birthday happens to fall on a date when the educational facility is in recess that this entitlement does not exist despite the dependent being deemed to still be in full time education as illustrated by a case (details supplied) in County Cork; if she will review this situation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54877/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An increase for a qualified child is typically payable in respect of each qualified child aged up to 18 years of age. The social welfare system provides additionally that an increase for a qualified child (IQC) may continue to be paid where the child is aged between 18 and 22 years while the child is in full-time education. In order to avoid a situation where such payments would cease in the course of an academic year, the welfare system provides, exceptionally, that where a student reaches age 22 during an academic year, the IQC is continued in payment for the duration of that academic year, provided s/he remains in full-time education till then. There are no plans at this time to change these arrangements. The person concerned was paid an increase in respect of his son, who reached 22 years old in August 2012, until 24 October 2012.

Supplementary Welfare Allowance Applications

51. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons receiving supplementary allowance on 1 November 2012; the number of appeals with the social welfare appeals office on same; the number of applications not finalised by her Department on the same date for each of the social welfare schemes; and the average waiting times for each. [54894/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The total number of persons in receipt of Supplementary Welfare Allowance on 1 November 2012 was 33,090. I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that the number of appeals on hands for each scheme on 1st November 2012, along with the average processing time for each scheme for cases dealt with on a summary basis and by oral hearing is as set out in table 1. The number of Supplementary Welfare Allowance appeals not finalised on that date was 2,226. The total number of applications pending on each of the Department's schemes on 1 November 2012 is detailed in Table 2.

Table 1: Appeals on hand and processing times

Scheme	No. on hand at 1st November 2012	Average processing time (weeks) at 1st November 2012 Summary Decisions	Average processing time (weeks) at 1st November 2012 Oral Hearings
Adoptive Benefit	1	-	-
Bereavement Grant	47	28.5	-
Blind Pension	12	18.2	-
Carers Allowance	1,582	33.4	40.7
Carers Benefit	80	26.4	30.9
Child Benefit	426	34.3	54.9
Disability Allowance	4,016	33.6	40.0
Domiciliary Care	1,178	32.6	40.1
Deserted Wives Benefit	7	-	-
Deserted Wives Allowance	0	-	-
Farm Assist	151	13.7	67.2
Family Income Supplement	147	20.4	24.7
Homemakers	1	-	-
Illness Benefit	1,524	41.1	50.7
Invalidity Pension	4,211	38.0	46.6
Liable Relatives	44	32.2	-
Lone Parent	1	-	-
One Parent Family Payment	641	27.3	45.0
Maternity Benefit	19	-	-
State Pension (Contributory)	98	36.5	45.0
State Pension (Non-Cont)	141	25.8	42.4
State Pension (Transition)	30	47.9	33.8

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Scheme	No. on hand at 1st November 2012	Average processing time (weeks) at 1st November 2012 Summary Decisions	Average processing time (weeks) at 1st November 2012 Oral Hearings
Occupational Injury Benefit	33	32.2	82.4
Disablement Pension - OIBDIS	251	28.4	39.0
Incapacity Supplement	22	-	28.1
Guardian's Payment (Con)	21	21.7	41.3
Guardian's Payment (Non-con)	9	31.8	29.8
Pre-Retirement Allowance	1	-	-
Partial Capacity Benefit	41	-	-
Jobseeker's Allowance (Means)	1,636	24.8	31.4
Jobseeker's Allowance	1,413	26.7	31.6
Jobseeker's Benefit	622	25.7	27.2
JA/JB Fraud Control	4	-	-
Respite Care Grant	135	26.7	33.0
Insurability of Employment	81	-	101.7
Supplementary Welfare Allowance	2,226	19.2	25.1
Treatment Benefits	1	-	-
Survivor's Pension (Con)	19	-	-
Survivor's Pension (Non-con)	25	26.4	27.3
Widows Parent Grant	3	-	-

Table 2. Applications pending on Department of Social Protection schemes

SCHEME	CLAIMS PENDING 31/10/2012	AVERAGE WAITING TIME IN WEEKS
Jobseeker's Benefit	7,689	2
Jobseeker's Allowance	23,048	4
One-Parent Family Payment	3,668	16
State Pension Contributory (Dom)	1,901	7
State Pension Transition (Dom)	1,457	5

SCHEME	CLAIMS PENDING 31/10/2012	AVERAGE WAITING TIME IN WEEKS
Widow(er)'s Contributory Pension	308	2
State Pension Non-Contributory	1,561	13
Widow (ers) Non Contributory Pension	72	10
Household Benefits	3,470	3
Free Travel	63	1
Bereavement Grant	1,026	1
Domiciliary Care Allowance	344	5
SWA	5,346	1
Child Benefit (Domestic & FRA)	1,678	5
Child Benefit (EU Regulation)	2,098	35
Maternity Benefit	4,335	2
Family Income Supplement (New)	7,639	16
Family Income Supplement (Renew)	7,693	18
Carer's Allowance	9,517	23
Carer's Benefit	329	N/A
Disability Allowance	7338	N/A
Disablement	1,780	N/A
Invalidity Pension	4,561	40
Bereavement Grant	478	2
Illness Benefit	3,065	1
Interim Illness Benefit (OIB)	495	N/A
Respite Care Grant	730	N/A
One-Parent Family Payment - HQ	3889	15

Question No. 52 withdrawn.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

53. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an application for rent supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54960/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned made an application for rent supplement on the 23rd November 2012 and has been requested to provide further information in order to process her claim. A decision will be made on her application when the necessary information has been provided.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

54. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an application for rent supplement in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54961/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has not provided the necessary information required to assess his application in full. The landlord of the person concerned must also provide proof of ownership of the property in question. The Department has supplied the necessary documentation in order to facilitate the application process.

Deserted Wife's Benefit Eligibility

55. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will take into account the exceptional circumstances in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare in respect of her deserted wife's benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54962/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): All claims and benefits paid by the Department are subject to periodic reviews to establish continued entitlement. In this instance the person concerned was in receipt of Deserted Wife's Benefit. The customer was recently requested to supply documents to support her continued entitlement to the benefit. To date the documents requested have not been provided and as the deciding officer did not have the information necessary to establish continued entitlement, the payment was suspended. As soon as the relevant documentation has been received, the claim will be reviewed and a letter will issue to the customer advising them of the outcome.

Social Insurance Payments

56. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person who was working in the public sector and also had self employment income at the same time is entitled or obliged to pay self-employed PRSI on the self employed income; if these contributions may be used for State pension entitlement purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [54992/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Permanent and pensionable employees in the public service, other than those who were recruited after 6 April, 1995, are liable to pay social insurance contributions at modified PRSI rates. Subject to having the required number of PRSI contributions, employees who pay modified contributions may be entitled to the following payments:

- (a) widow's/widower's (contributory) pension and surviving civil partner's (contributory) pension;
- (b) guardians payment (contributory);
- (c) bereavement grant, and
- (d) carer's benefit.

Modified rate contributions are not reckonable for establishing entitlement to State pension (contributory). Currently modified rate contributors are exempt from PRSI in respect of self-employed earned income (from a profession or trade) and any other unearned income. This exemption has been abolished in Budget 2013. All such income will become liable to PRSI at the rate of 4%. There will be no entitlement to social insurance benefits based on the payment of this contribution.

Child Benefit Rates

57. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount that would be raised for the Exchequer by cutting the children's allowance by €10 per child. [54998/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A reduction in Child Benefit of €10 per child per month would save the Exchequer €142.5m (in a full year).

Child Benefit Rates

58. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason required saving to the Exchequer expenditure on child benefit cannot be achieved in a progressive manner rather than a crude cut; if it is possible to tax it instead; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55000/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Child benefit is a monthly payment made to families with children in respect of all qualified children up to the age of 16 years. The payment continues to be paid in respect of children up to their 18th birthday who are in full-time education, or who have a physical or mental disability. The estimated expenditure on child benefit for 2012 is around €2 billion and it is paid to around 600,000 families in respect of some 1.15 million children. Budget 2013 provides for a reduction in child benefit rates to €130 per child per month for the first, second and third child in a family and to €140 per child per month for the fourth and subsequent children. Although the gross savings is about €136 million in 2013, some of these savings have been redirected towards services for children including after school childcare, an area based child poverty initiative and school meals which have the potential to improve outcomes for children generally.

While child benefit is an important source of income for families, the social protection system also provides assistance to families with children through the payment of qualified child increases (QCIs) on primary social welfare payments and through the family income supplement (FIS) payment which both provide assistance which is linked with household income. Budget 2013 maintains both the QCI rate and the FIS income limit thresholds.

While issues relating to changes in taxation policy are a matter for my colleague, Michael Noonan T.D., Minister for Finance, the taxation of child benefit would only address one of the main child income support payments and would not address the other child income support payments to low income families, which includes QCIs and FIS. In this context the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare which I established last year was tasked with recommending cost-effective solutions as to how income employment disincentives can be improved and better poverty outcomes achieved. The Advisory Group's report on family and child income supports remains under my consideration and will assist in informing how reform in this area might be progressed.

Carer's Allowance Applications

59. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55021/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I confirm that the department re-

ceived an application for carer's allowance from the person in question on the 24th February 2012. The application is with a deciding officer for a decision. Once processed, the person concerned will be notified directly of the outcome.

Rent Supplement Scheme Applications

60. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the maximum rent on which rent allowance is payable in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55038/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following review a payment of seven hundred and forty seven euro and sixty cent per calendar month has been sanctioned. Arrears of one thousand, one hundred and forty seven euro and twenty cent issued this week.

Fuel Allowance Applications

61. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if free fuel allowance is available in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55039/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): In order to qualify for a fuel allowance a jobseeker's allowance recipient must, in addition to a number of other qualifying conditions, have been in receipt of jobseeker's allowance for over 390 days. The person concerned has been in receipt of jobseeker's allowance for 240 days and therefore does not at present qualify for a fuel allowance.

Back to Education Allowance Eligibility

62. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if back-to-education allowance is payable in lieu of unemployment assistance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55040/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): A back to education allowance application form must be completed in order to determine if a person has an entitlement to the allowance. According to the records of this Department, the person concerned has not applied for a back to education allowance.

Fuel Allowance Applications

63. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when free fuel allowance will be paid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [55041/12]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of invalidity pension since 15 September 2011. In order to qualify for the national fuel scheme, applicants must satisfy a means assessment and be living alone or only with persons who satisfy specific criteria. On 24 May 2012, in order to determine entitlement to free fuel allowance, the person in question was requested to furnish details regarding means and his household compo-

sition. While household composition has now been confirmed, to date no correspondence has been received from him regarding the means enquiry. According to my department's records, it appears that the claimant's son has earnings from employment which exceed the limit allowed for entitlement to fuel allowance. However, once full and up to date information as requested from the person in question is received, their entitlement will be assessed and decided upon and the person will be notified directly of the outcome.

Air Services Provision

64. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if funding will be provided to maintain the service that Aer Arann provides to the Aran islands; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54865/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): As the Deputy may be aware, the current contract for provision of an air service for the Aran Islands is in place until 31 August 2013. No decision has been made in relation to renewal of the contract. The issue will be examined in the context of the budget available to my Department for the provision of island transport services for future years.

Commemorative Events

65. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will consider the possibility of engaging with the Northern Ireland Executive to discuss the possibility of the National Famine Commemoration being held on an all Ireland basis; if he will consider the holding of the national ceremony in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Executive in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54844/12]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The National Famine Commemoration Committee was first established in 2008 following a Government decision to commemorate the Great Irish Famine with an annual national famine memorial day. I would like to emphasise that the National Famine Commemoration is, and will remain, an inclusive event, which recognises the significant impact of the famine on all communities on the island of Ireland. Indeed, in the context of the Deputy's Question, respected historians have pointed to the significant impact of the famine on Ulster as a whole. The main objective of the National Famine Commemoration Committee is to ensure that all victims of the Great Irish Famine are remembered in a dignified manner and, as Chair of this Committee, I will seek to ensure that this work continues.

The National Famine Commemoration Committee has agreed that the annual national commemoration should revolve between the four provinces of Ireland. The Deputy may be aware that the 2011 National Famine Commemoration was held in Ulster, in Clones, County Monaghan, at which President McAleese led the official representation. Attendance at the National Famine Commemoration is wide-ranging and in this regard, members of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland, as well as organisations and individuals both North and South of the border, were invited to attend. In the two weeks leading up to the national event, the local community devised a programme of events which took place across Monaghan and Fermanagh. In addition, schools, North and South, were invited to hold a minute's silence in honour of the victims of the famine.

Members of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly were also invited to attend the 2012 National Famine Commemoration in Drogheda, County Louth and, indeed, the Deputy First

Minister was among those who attended, together with a number of Northern Ireland Ministers. The 2015 National Famine Commemoration is due to take place in Ulster. I and the officials in my Department will be working with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of the Taoiseach and all relevant stakeholders, North and South, to ensure that this event will be a fitting tribute to those who perished in Ulster during the Great Famine.

Íocaíochtaí Deontas

66. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cé mhéad deontas a ceadaíodh do Chomhar Chuigéil ó 2007 go dáta, cé mhéad deontas díobh sin a íocadh amach, cén méid den airgead a ceadaíodh atá fós gan tarraingt, céard a chaithear a dhéanamh leis an airgead seo a fháil; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54958/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Seo a leanas sonraí na ndeontas atá ceadaithe do Chomhar Chuigéal Teo. faoi Scéimeanna Tacaíochta Gaeltachta mo Roinne ó 2007 go dáta:

Sonraí an deontais	Ceadaithe €	Íoctha €	Fuilleach €
Obair athchóirithe ar an gclós (2008)	30,582	20,182.06	10,399.94
Athchóiriú an chórais séarachais (2012)	18,222	0	18,222.00
Iomlán	48,804	20,182.06	28,621.94

Sa chaoi is go mbeifear in ann fuilleach an dá dheontais thuasluaite a chúiteamh, bheadh gá bailchríoch a bheith curtha leis an ngné a bhaineann leis an ngníomhas cúnaint agus muirir. Tuigtear dom go bhfuil an t-ábhar seo á leanúint suas leis na páirtithe cuí. Maidir leis an deontas i leith an chórais séarachais, ní foláir don iarratasóir na coinníollacha eile a cuireadh leis an deontas ag am a cheadaithe a chomhlíonadh. Tuigtear dom go bhfuil sé sin mínithe don chomharchumann.

Údarás na Gaeltachta Funding

67. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den an Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén líon de na hiarfhostaithe atá amuigh ar pinsean ón Údarás atá 65 bliana d'aois nó os a cionn, cén líon atá idir 60 bliain d'aois agus faoi bhun 65 bliana d'aois agus cén líon atá faoi bhun 60 bliain d'aois agus cén méid airgid san iomlán a íocfar le gach grúpa acu seo i 2013 nó a íocadh i 2012, cad é líon na ndaoine i ngach grúpa atá ag fáil pinsin is mó na €50,000 sa mbliain; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [54959/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): Bunaithe ar eolas atá faghte ag mo Roinne ó Údarás na Gaeltachta, tá na sonraí atá iarrtha ag an Teachta leagtha amach sa tábla thíos.

-	Líon daoine	Iomlán pinsean €	Líon daoine le pinsin os cionn €50,000	Asbhaintí a bhaineann le pinsin na seirbhíse poiblí €	Pinsin tar éis asbhaintí€	Líon daoine le pinsin os cionn €50,000 tar éis asbhaintí
Faoi 60	25	379,299.16	0	11,032.56	368,266.60	0
Idir 60-64	26	836,561.75	7	44,079.24	792,482.51	5
Os cionn 65	85	2,679,118.93	19	137,596.41	2,541,522.52	16
-	136	3,894,979.84	26	192,708.21	3,702,271.63	21

Inland Fisheries Issues

68. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources his plans to restructure the services and personnel of the Inland Fishery Service based in Limerick; if there is a personnel structure envisaged for the service; if there is a time frame for any potential restructuring of the service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54825/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) is a National Body, formed in July 2010 from an amalgamation of the former Central Fisheries Board and the 7 Regional Fisheries Boards. The establishment of IFI has facilitated more efficient and effective management of the inland fisheries resource. In addition it has brought to bear a national perspective to formulating policy which is more streamlined, coherent and integrated while at the same time retaining a regional focus essential to operational efficiency in managing often distinct diverse water based resources.

IFI has developed a proposal in relation to the overall future structure of the inland fisheries service. This proposal was developed in line with the requirements of the Workforce Planning Framework document issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). This proposal has been reviewed by my Department and has recently been submitted to DPER for consideration. IFI has committed to enter into a detailed consultative process with staff representatives regarding the detail of the proposal, once approval is received from DPER to proceed with the restructuring programme.

Broadcasting Sector Regulation

69. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will list the State aid granted to community radio and television stations over the past five years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and to date in 2012; and the amounts granted in supports for each individual station. [54902/12]

70. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will include the amount of broadcasting time and other requirements in terms of production of local news and current affairs programmes by local community radio and television station; if he will set out the way those requirements have been fulfilled each year since 2008 by the community radio and television stations licensed by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and receiving grants or other financial supports from the State. [54903/12]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): I propose to take Questions Nos. 69 and 70 together.

The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) is assigned responsibility under Part 10 of the Broadcasting Act 2009 for the development, management and administration of the Broadcasting Funding Scheme. In line with the legislative provisions, the Scheme aims, inter alia, to develop local and community broadcasting. In operating the Scheme, the BAI introduces date-specific funding rounds for radio and television on an annual basis, the results of which are subsequently published on the BAI website.

The BAI is also responsible for the licensing of independent radio broadcasting services in Ireland, including the licensing of community broadcasters. An objective of the Authority, provided for under the Broadcasting Act 2009, is to stimulate the provision of high quality, diverse and innovative programming by community broadcasters. Part 6 of the 2009 Act sets out the licensing process for commercial, community, temporary and institutional radio services. Further information on this process is also available from the Authority. In this regard, I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the BAI and asked that they respond directly to him.

Security of the Elderly

71. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding panic button alarms in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54826/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The person referred to in the question has now been approved for a pendant alarm. The installation of the alarm will be arranged by the local community and voluntary group in due course.

Building Regulations Amendments

72. **Deputy Paschal Donohoe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has considered the submission made by the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists regarding the forthcoming Building Control (Amendment) Regulation 2012; if he has been able to address same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54872/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Over 500 submissions have been received by my Department following the public consultation process on the proposed Building Control Amendment Regulations 2012 undertaken earlier this year. All submissions received have been comprehensively considered and the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2012 are currently being finalised. My Department has met and corresponded with the executive of the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists in relation to concerns it raised in the context of the recent public consultation process which relate to the arrangements for the registration of architects and surveyors provided for under the Building Control Act 2007.

The Building Control Act 2007, among other things, provides at parts 3 and 5 respectively for the registration of persons entitled to use the title of Architect and Building Surveyor. A variety of routes to registration as either Architect or Building Surveyor are provided for, having regard to the academic qualifications, professional attainment and practical experience of prospective candidates for registration. Depending on their academic qualifications, professional attainments and practical experience members of CIAT can be considered for registration as architects and/or registration as Building Surveyors under the arrangements currently provided

for under the Act. I would encourage members of CIAT interested in signing the statutory certificates of compliance that will be introduced under the forthcoming Building Control regulations to explore and pursue the routes to registration which may be open to them having regard to their own professional background.

Private Rented Accommodation Standards

73. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government with the remaining provisions of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 being introduced on 1 February 2013, if landlords will be subject to a fine in examples (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54952/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Minimum standards for rental accommodation are prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008, made under section 18 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1992. Section 34 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1992 as amended by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, provides that any person who by act or omission, obstructs an authorised person in the lawful exercise of the powers, or contravenes a provision of, or a regulation made under, section 17, 18 or 20 of the 1992 Act, or fails to comply with an improvement notice, or re-lets a house in breach of a prohibition notice, is guilty of an offence and is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €5,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or both. If the obstruction, contravention, failure to comply or re-letting is continued after conviction the person is guilty of a further offence and is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €400.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations. Responsibility for enforcing the regulations rests with the relevant local authority, supported by a dedicated stream of funding allocated by my Department.

The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 provides the main regulatory framework for the private rented residential sector and for the operation of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB). The Act provides for minimum entitlements in relation to security of tenure based on four year tenancy cycles, known as a Part 4 tenancy. The Act also sets out the grounds for the termination of a Part 4 tenancy. However, the Act does not preclude a landlord giving rights to tenants in a tenancy agreement in addition to those provided for in the Act. Where additional security of tenure rights are given to a tenant in a tenancy agreement, the termination of those rights will depend on the terms of that agreement. The parties to a tenancy may refer any matter relating to the tenancy, in respect of which there is a dispute between them, to the PRTB for resolution.

Water and Sewerage Scheme Grants

74. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to increase the grants for group sewerage schemes; if there was any provision in budget 2013 to do so; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54993/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The rate of grant available for Group Sewerage Schemes is €2,031.58 per house or 75% of the cost of the scheme, whichever is the lesser. The National Rural Water Services Committee, which has a role in advising me on rural water policy, proposed that the rate of grant be

reviewed during 2012. As a result of a review carried out by my Department, I propose, in the first instance, to carry out a number of pilot schemes based on an increased grant level. My Department will ask local authorities to include in their requests for funding under the 2013 Rural Water Programme proposals for group sewerage schemes which might be viable if an increased grant was available. The selection of the pilot schemes and related funding arrangements will be completed as soon as possible after proposals have been received from local authorities in 2013.

Departmental Programmes

75. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money spent under the Clár programme by his Department in each county each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54994/12]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Traveller Accommodation

76. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the budget allocation for traveller accommodation allocated by his Department each year since 2007; the amount of this expended each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54995/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller accommodation programmes, designed to meet the accommodation needs of Travellers, rests with individual housing authorities. My Department's role is to ensure that there is an adequate legislative and financial system in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation. My Department provides 100% capital funding to housing authorities for Traveller-specific accommodation. Traveller families are also accommodated in local authority social housing dwellings, which are funded through the main local authority social housing programme. The capital allocations and amounts recouped in respect of Traveller-specific accommodation over the period 2007-2012 are set out in the following table.

YEAR	Allocation (€)	Amount Recouped (€)
2007	39,000,000	35,000,000
2008	40,000,000	35,000,000
2009	35,000,000	19,601,979
2010	35,000,000	16,108,693
2011	15,000,000	9,314,910
2012	6,000,000	*

*Outturn figures for 20 12 are not available at this time

Furthermore, in recognition of the particular difficulties being experienced by the Traveller community, my Department has provided specific accommodation-related supports to operate

in tandem with the capital programme. Funding has been provided in respect of:

- 90% of the salary and expenses of social workers employed by local authorities and voluntary bodies to work with Travellers
- a percentage of costs for the management and maintenance of halting sites, with a view to securing a high standard of up-keep on sites.

The amounts recouped to local authorities for these purposes since 2007 are set out in the following table.

YEAR	Allocation
2007	€7.11m
2008	€7.17m
2009	€7.17m
2010	€6.439m
2011	€7.001m
2012	€4m (allocation only)

Planning Issues

77. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding any recent audits of land zoned for housing and yet to be built on land that his Department has sought or had sight of; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55020/12]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Housing Land Availability Survey is an annual survey undertaken by my Department which seeks information from local authorities to inform the publication of the amount of zoned residential land in their areas that is currently serviced. The published data from the 2011 survey, which is available on my Department’s website www.environ.ie, indicates that there are currently 17,223 hectares of serviced residentially zoned land nationally. In addition, the background data from the 2011 survey indicates that there are currently 35,243 hectares of residentially zoned land nationally.

Residency Permits

78. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54838/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of his asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 28th July, 2011, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of him. He was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against him. In addition, he was notified of his entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the application for Subsidiary Protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision and the consequences of the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

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

Deportation Orders

79. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Riordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form the number of deportation orders signed under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 since its enactment; the numbers of those enforced and the number of those subsequently revoked under section 3 (11); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54881/12]

80. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Riordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide in tabular form the number of persons granted leave to remain on humanitarian grounds under section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 since its enactment; the number of such applications still pending; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54882/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 79 and 80 together.

I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service that in the period 1999 to 2012 (to end October) in accordance with the provisions of the Immigration Act 1999 a total of 20,163 deportation orders were signed, 6,275 persons were granted leave to remain, and 4,472 persons were removed from the State (this does not include persons who were refused leave to land at Irish ports of entry and subsequently removed from the State). The Deputy may not be aware that the making of a deportation order against a person requires him or her to leave the State. It is also believed that significant numbers of these persons have left the State. In the same period, a total of 150 deportation orders were revoked under section 3(11) of the Immigration Act (these figures relate to asylum cases only).

A breakdown of the annual figures for deportation orders signed, persons granted leave to remain and persons deported for each of the past five years was provided in my reply to PQ Number 540 of 27 November 2012, the relevant portions of which I have appended for the Deputy's information. I can further inform the Deputy that the number of deportation orders revoked in each year in the period 2008 to end October 2012 was 25, 14, 21, 15 and 18 respectively. The penultimate paragraph of my reply to PQ number 540 outlines the complexities of the process and accordingly why it is not possible to provide details of the status of the remaining caseload.

It should be noted that the leave to remain figures provided also include persons granted leave to remain made in accordance with the principles set out in the Judgement of the Euro-

pean Court of Justice in the Zambrano case but not those granted leave to remain under the 2005 Irish Born Child Administrative Scheme or other arrangements in place prior to that time. Finally, I might add that I recently approved an initiative to put in place a panel with legal expertise who will assist the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service in processing a cohort of repatriation cases thus speeding up the overall process and reducing the time spent by persons in the Direct Provision system. I would expect to see significant dividends from this initiative in the coming months.

Extract from PQ reply to PQ number 540 of 27th November 2012

I can inform the Deputy that in the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 (to end the October) a total of 3,185, 5,037, 4,326, 2,471 and 1,779 notifications of intention to deport were issued by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS). During the same period, 757, 1,077, 1034, 1334 and 1,234 deportation orders were signed and a total of 161, 338 343, 280 and 246 persons have been removed from the State together with 529, 539 461, 475 and 387 who have voluntarily returned to their country of origin. These figures do not include approximately 2,500 persons per annum who have been refused leave to land and are subsequently removed from the State.

As outlined in my response to PQ Numbers 962, 968 and 971 of 18th April last, a total of 1,052, 512, 232, 1957 and 951 were granted leave to remain in accordance with the provisions of the immigration acts. The increase in the figures in 2011 and in 2012 to date is mainly due to the impact of the Zambrano judgement which was delivered by the European Court of Justice on 8th March, 2011.

With regard to the numbers evading deportation, it is difficult to produce precise figures. Persons against whom a deportation order has issued may for short periods fail to report to their local immigration office but many subsequently do so. In addition, I am informed that a significant number of persons who are the subject of a Deportation Order will have left the jurisdiction.

The processing of cases at the repatriation stage is a complex one with obligations to adhere to both domestic and international law and to make decisions in accordance with the UN Convention on Human Rights. The process can be a lengthy one often punctuated with judicial reviews taken by the applicants at various stages including at deportation stage. Accordingly, not all cases fit neatly into particular categories. For example, in the case of families, one member of the family may have lodged a judicial review which in turn may mean that the remainder of the family may not be processed until its outcome is determined. In addition, some applicants may also be party to an application under EU Treaty Rights or through marriage to an Irish citizen or may have been granted leave to remain as a result of these applications. Therefore, it is not possible to provide figures in respect of the remainder of the case load without engaging in a very detailed exercise which could not be justified as it would divert resources from case processing.

Court Accommodation Provision

81. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the extent to which the Courts Service, as it embarks upon a detailed evaluation of the court venues at Achill, Ballyhaunis, Swinford and Westport, County Mayo, with a view to possible closures, has investigated the availability or otherwise of public transport to local persons in these rural areas which would impede on their ability to attend at a court venue outside their own locality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54887/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As I have previously informed the Deputy, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998 management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions, which include the provision of accommodation for court sittings. However, in order to be of further assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and have been informed that the Courts Service in undertaking the detailed assessment of all Mayo venues will take into account a whole range of criteria such as caseload, physical condition of the building and availability of cells. The Service has confirmed that one of the criteria which will be fully considered during the assessment phase will be proximity to an alternative venue which will include an assessment of the impact of the availability or otherwise of public transport to the alternative venue.

The Courts Service has again assured me that no decision in relation to the future of any County Mayo courthouse will be taken without prior consultation with local interested parties and court users. This consultation has already begun and the views received including expressed views on the availability or otherwise of public transport will be taken into account in the decision making process which will be a matter for the Courts Service Board.

Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission

82. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda Operation Advisor; the number of persons arrested and charged to date in 2012; the number of successful convictions obtained to date in 2012. [54947/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána is unaware of an operation titled Operation Advisor and the nature of it. The Deputy will appreciate that without further specific information, I cannot comment further at this time.

Garda Stations Closures

83. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will engage with the Garda Commissioner with a view to ensuring that Garda stations at Balitore, Ballmore Eustace, Castledermot, Robertstown and Carbury, County Kildare, are not closed; if he accepts that the rumoured closure of these stations has caused distress in the local communities; if he will further accept that his failure to provide an adequate fleet of Garda patrol cars gives rise to greater vulnerability of persons resident in small towns and rural villages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54972/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Policing Plan for 2013, which I laid before the House yesterday, outlines the Commissioner's proposal for the consolidation of the Garda station and District network. As part of this process in 2013, 100 Garda Stations will be closed in both rural and urban areas and includes the stations in Ballytore and Ballymore Eustace. The Policing Plan also sets out the changes in station opening hours and the amalgamation of 28 Garda Districts to 14 enlarged Garda Districts. These changes will enable An Garda Síochána to make best use of resources to deliver the optimum policing service to all communities.

I must stress that the principal aim of this process is to allow the more efficient deployment of personnel and the more effective delivery of policing services to the public across the country, including in the areas referred to by the Deputy. It is also the case that, even after the proposed closures, we will still have a very high number of police stations by comparable interna-

tional standards. The Deputy will be aware that I recently announced a significant investment in Garda transport, amounting to €3 million, which will provide for an additional 170 Garda vehicles. These vehicles will be commissioned in the coming weeks. In addition, a further provision of €5m will be made available for the purchase and fit-out of Garda vehicles in 2013. I am confident that this package of funding will considerably strengthen the overall effectiveness of the Force in delivering a policing service to all communities throughout the country.

Deportation Orders

84. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a deportation order in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry. [54977/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Following a comprehensive and thorough examination of their asylum applications in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996, (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement the family were informed that the Minister proposed to make Deportation Orders in respect of them. Their respective applications were also examined under Subsidiary Protection and this was found not to be an issue. Deportation Orders were signed on 16 November, 2012. The effect of Deportation Orders is that the persons concerned must leave the state and remain thereafter outside the State. The enforcement of Deportation Orders is an operational matter for the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

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

Citizenship Applications

85. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position to date and determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 15; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55043/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in October, 2010. The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

While good progress continues to be made in reducing the large volume of cases on hands, the nature of the naturalisation process is such that for a broad range of reasons some cases will take longer than others to process. It is a statutory requirement that, inter alia, applicants for naturalisation be of good character. In some instances that can be established relatively quickly and in other cases completing the necessary checks can take a considerable period of time. I can, however, inform the Deputy that enormous progress has been made in dealing with the backlog and steps are being taken to process all outstanding applications as quickly as possible. The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and

it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Residency Permits

86. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of eligibility for residency status or naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Meath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55044/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The persons concerned have been granted leave to remain in the State for the three year period ending 15th October, 2015 following the consideration of their respective cases under Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). These decisions were conveyed in writing to the persons concerned by individual letters dated 15th October, 2012. The children of the persons concerned were included as part of their mother's decision letter.

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

Residency Permits

87. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in the determination of residency status and issue of updated stamp 4 to facilitate employment requirements and to outline the entitlement to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55045/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I refer the Deputy to my detailed Reply to his earlier Parliamentary Question, No. 181 of Thursday, 4th October 2012 - copied beneath. The position is unchanged since then.

The person concerned has made an application for the renewal of his temporary permission to remain in the State. This application is under consideration at present and when a decision has been made, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the decision.

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

Citizenship Applications

88. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding determination of naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55046/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the first person referred to, who was naturalised in June 2011, on behalf of his son, the second person referred to by the Deputy, in July 2012. The application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision in due course.

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

Citizenship Applications

89. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the expected position regarding determination of eligibility of naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55047/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September 2011. The application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision in due course. As well as being a significant event in the life of its recipient, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation as provided for in law is also a major step for the State which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

Legal Aid Application Numbers

90. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason the legal aid file was closed in the separation proceedings in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55048/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that I have no function or responsibility in relation to the matter raised. Under the terms of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995, as passed by the Oireachtas, the Legal Aid Board is independent in

the operation of its functions and decisions on individual cases are a matter for the Board. Under Section 7(3) of the Act, I am precluded from exercising any power or control in relation to any particular case with which the Legal Aid Board is or may be concerned.

The Deputy might further wish to note that the solicitor/client relationship is protected by privilege in accordance with the terms of Section 32 of the Civil Legal Aid Act 1995 and therefore the Board does not provide information to third parties regarding a person who may or may not be a client of the Board. Finally, while I can advise the Deputy that a person who is refused legal aid has the right to appeal this decision to an Appeal Committee which is made up of non-executive members of the Board, again I have no role in this process.

Residency Permits

91. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in the matter of residency and determination of eligibility to naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55050/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) informs me that the first named person was originally granted permission to remain in the State based on her marriage to an Irish national on 31 August 2009 for an initial period of 12 months renewable with her local registration office. The INIS informs me that her permission expired on 15/08/2012 and that no application for renewal of this permission has been received to date from the person concerned on the basis of her marriage to an Irish national. I am advised that the person concerned can make an application for renewal of her residency in writing on the basis of marriage to an Irish national to the Spouse of Irish National Unit, (INIS), 13-14 Burgh Quay, Dublin 2.

Detailed information surrounding any possible entitlement to Irish Citizenship through the Naturalisation process in respect of the person concerned can be obtained from the INIS website at "www.inis.gov.ie. It remains open to the person concerned to make an application for Irish Citizenship under the Naturalisation process should they consider that they meet the requirements for same.

INIS informs me that the first named purported daughter has been in the State without the permission of the Minister. Consequently, in accordance with Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999, the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 26/11/2012, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why she should not have a Deportation Order made against her. To date, no representations have been received. INIS informs me that based on the details supplied by the Deputy, there is no record of any application in respect of the first named purported son.

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

Residency Permits

92. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position in the matter of residency and determination of eligibility to naturalisation in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55051/12]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant. Arising from the refusal of her asylum application, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 26th March, 2009, that the then Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. In addition, she was notified of her entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in accordance with the provisions of the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations 2006.

The person concerned submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the application for Subsidiary Protection is refused, the position in the State of the person concerned will then be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3 (6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before a final decision is made. Once a decision has been made, this decision, and the consequences of the decision, will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned. The husband of the person concerned had his permission to remain in the State renewed in October, 2010 for a further three years, valid to 14th June, 2013. This position still obtains.

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

Defence Forces Personnel

93. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of women at each rank above the rank of second lieutenant in the Defence Forces. [54945/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): As of 31 October 2012 there were 141 women serving above the rank of Second Lieutenant in the Defence Forces. Of these, 50 were Lieutenants, 57 were Captains, 32 were Commandants and 2 were Lieutenant Colonels. The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. Unlike many other national armed forces, the Defence Forces have no restrictions as regards the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties. All promotions and career courses are open to both genders on merit.

Departmental Correspondence

94. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Defence if he will respond to the requests of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 [54954/12]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): Departmental records show that all correspondence received on behalf of the person to whom the Deputy refers has been responded to. If the Deputy is aware of specific correspondence that person feels requires a further response, and he brings this to my attention, I will ensure that it is dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

Milk Quota Applications

95. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications received by his Department for the 2013-14 milk quota trading scheme; the volumes that were applied for; when is it expected that a decision will be made on the awards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54831/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Milk Quota Trading Scheme, which is the primary means of acquiring additional milk quota, is run in two stages annually for each Co-op collection area. On 14th November last I announced the results of the first stage of the scheme in respect of the 2013/2014 milk quota year. In that stage a total of 116.5 million litres of quota was sought by 1,831 applicants and a total of 28.7 million litres of milk quota was offered for sale by 211 applicants. Some 23.5 million litres, or 82% of the volume offered for sale, was successfully traded and of this, 15.5 million litres was sold on the Exchange at prices ranging from 9 to 25 cent per litre, with the remaining 8 million litres sold through the Priority Pool at the maximum price of 5 cent per litre. I announced the second stage of the 2013/2014 Milk Quota Trading Scheme earlier this week. The closing date for receipt of applications for this stage is 11th January 2013 and I expect to announce the results by the end of February.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

96. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a rural environment protection scheme 4 payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54842/12]

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 four years of their contract. REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. This process is nearing completion for 2012 REPS4 applications and I expect that payments will commence shortly.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

97. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a disadvantaged area scheme payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54846/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme has not yet issued as, at this stage, the holding concerned has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements for 2012. Immediately the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

98. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding single area payment for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54852/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Applications under the Single Payment Scheme were received from the person named in each of the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Payments were made in full for each of the years specified to the nominated bank account.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

99. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be paid a 2012 disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54874/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application has recently been finalised, payment will shortly issue to the nominated bank account.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

100. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will be paid a 2012 disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54875/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme has not yet issued as, at this stage, the holding concerned has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements for 2012. Immediately the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

101. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a disadvantaged area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54878/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application of the person named has now been finalised, payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

102. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding agri-environment options scheme payment due to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54934/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department has no record of having received an Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS) application from the person named for AEOS I or AEOS II. Accordingly, the question of an outstanding AEOS payment does not arise. The person named was a participant in the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) with a contract end date of 31 August 2011, so it would not have been possible to make a valid application under either AEOS 1 or AEOS 2.

Afforestation Programme

103. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a forestry application (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54936/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The application under the Afforestation Scheme for the above contract number was refused because of concerns that the development would cause sedimentation and pose a risk to the local drinking water supply. This decision was the subject of an appeal but the appeal was unsuccessful for the reasons set out in the original decision and in the absence of any measures to mitigate the impact on the water supply. An added factor is that the lands in question are within an area designated for the protection of the hen harrier where no applications for afforestation are being approved pending completion of ongoing discussions with the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

104. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will be paid a 2012 disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54939/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named has recently been advised of the success of a derogation application under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Following further validation, their application has been confirmed as satisfying the requirements of the 2012 Scheme and, therefore, payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

105. **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 an appeal on disadvantaged area aid payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54940/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While the person named was successful under the derogation process, the holding concerned does not satisfy the minimum stocking density requirement insofar as horses are being taken into account. Where horses are being considered for stocking density purposes, the Terms and Conditions governing the 2012 Scheme require that an applicant's holding must meet the definition of an equine breeding enterprise requirement. For these purposes, the person must be an equine breeder and have bred a foal, in 2011, from a mare registered on the applicant's holding, in either 2009, 2010 or 2011, which was registered in a Stud Book approved by the Department of

Agriculture, Food and the Marine, with pedigree recorded (sire and dam). While the applicant submitted evidence of a foal born in 2011, the Department has been unable to establish that this foal was registered, as required, in a recognised Stud Book. Should such evidence be provided, the case will immediately be further processed.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Applications

106. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a grant application (details supplied). [54941/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is understood that this enquiry concerns the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. Payment under this Scheme has not yet issued as, at this stage, the holding concerned has not yet satisfied the Scheme minimum stocking density requirements for 2012. Immediately the holding concerned is confirmed as having met these requirements, the case will be further processed with a view to payment at the earliest possible date thereafter.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

107. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) will receive a single farm payment and disadvantaged payment. [54942/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme application of the person named has now been finalised, payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account.

Forestry Grants

108. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding a forestry grant in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [54951/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): One of the requirements of the afforestation schemes administered by my Department is that the applicant must own, lease or be in joint management of the lands planted and provide documentary evidence of such title before payments can be released. In the case of the person named he has applied to the Property Registration Authority for registration of his title to this land under Section 49 of the Registration of Title Act, 1964. Once this title has been determined, his application for payment under my Departments FEPS scheme will be considered further.

Turbary Rights

109. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 941 of 25 January 2006 if a scheme for the allotment of turbary rights proceeded; if so, the reason the owner of bog (details supplied) was not contacted; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54955/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A Scheme was prepared for the bog in question but was not operated. Due to the fact that a number of technical issues arose the matter is still under consideration. The person named is not the owner of the bog. The position is that the fee simple of the bog is owned by a number of individuals and the turbary rights are in the name of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine as successor to the former Irish Land Commission.

Coastal Erosion

110. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will prohibit hydraulic dredging for shellfish in the Portrane area, County Dublin, in view of the concerns that the impact of this activity so close to the shore is a factor in recent coastal erosion. [54980/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I believe that the Deputy is most likely referring to hydraulic dredging for razor clams, which occurs in shallow waters off the east coast from Howth to Dundalk. This fishery has been in place since the early 1980s and occurs on muddy seabeds where dense beds of razor clams exist. I am informed that this fishery is unlikely to contribute to the serious coastal erosion in the Portrane area, which was identified in this House as long ago as 1950. The fishery occurs sporadically in very local areas of seabed only and no sediments are taken from the area.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Appeals

111. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54981/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The appeal of the person named was recently forwarded to the DAS Appeals Committee for consideration; immediately that Committee has adjudicated on this appeal, the person concerned will be notified of its decision, in writing.

Harbours and Piers Funding

112. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide funding in 2013 for remedial works to piers and harbours in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54983/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department administers the Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme on an annual basis. The Programme provides funding for the development of fishery harbours, aquaculture landing places and marine leisure and tourism facilities. I intend to seek applications, in priority order, from coastal Local Authorities for qualifying projects to be considered under the 2013 Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme. Any application submitted by Kerry County Council for funding under the 2013 Programme will be assessed based on the available exchequer funding and overall national priorities.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Application Numbers

113. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applications for a derogation under the disadvantaged areas scheme that have been examined to date; the number in which the derogation was granted and the number refused; the number of those who were refused a derogation that appealed this decision; the number subsequently granted a derogation and the number refused; if these applicants can now appeal to the permanent appeals mechanism within his Department and raise the issue with the Ombudsman with all the above information broken down between the different categories of disadvantaged payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54991/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The information requested by the Deputy is being compiled at present and will be forwarded to the Deputy shortly.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

114. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment of the agri environment option scheme will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55016/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1st September 2011. 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 query arose in relation to the claimed Natura area on a parcel. This problem is presently being addressed and I expect payment will issue shortly.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

115. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount that has been paid under the disadvantaged area scheme for each of the the years 2007 to 2011 to a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; the stocking densities for each of those years and the stocking density requirement for the 2012 application. [55017/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payment of €3,400.86 under the 2012 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme issued directly to the bank account of the person named on 29 November 2012. A stocking density of 0.09 livestock units per forage hectare was accepted, given the restrictions applicable to the holding. Details regarding the years 2007 to 2011, inclusive, are as follows:

Year	Maximum area paid on	Stocking Density	Payment
2011	34 hectares	0.09 (REPS restricted)	€3,400.86
2010	34 hectares	0.09 (REPS restricted)	€3,400.86
2009	34 hectares	0.10 (REPS restricted)	€3,400.86
2008	45 hectares	0.11 (REPS restricted)	€4,456.75
2007	45 hectares	0.11 (REPS restricted)	€4,456.75
			€19,116.08

Aquaculture Licences Applications

116. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason the environmental impact statement for the proposed salmon farm in Galway Bay was carried out by Bord Iascaigh Mhara the agency proposing the scheme and not by independent qualified consultants; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55023/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) has submitted an application to my Department for an Aquaculture and a Foreshore Licence for the cultivation of Finfish near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. The application and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being considered fully in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act as amended. As consideration of the application and EIS is ongoing by my Department in accordance with the statutory process it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the EIS pending a determination of the application.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

117. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will instruct Bord Iascaigh Mhara to provide the additional background material to the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed salmon farm in Galway Bay, as requested by a club (details supplied); the reason this material was not provided when requested several times previously; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55024/12]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM) has submitted an application to my Department for an Aquaculture and a Foreshore Licence for the cultivation of Finfish near Inis Oirr in Galway Bay. The application and its accompanying Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is currently being considered fully in accordance with the provisions of the 1997 Fisheries (Amendment) Act and the 1933 Foreshore Act as amended. The legislation provides for a period of statutory and general public consultation designed to afford stakeholders and the general public the opportunity to comment on the application. My Department's consideration of the application is in accordance with the statutory process and it would not be appropriate for my Department to instruct BIM as the Deputy has requested.

Foster Care Provision

118. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the rates that will apply for foster payments in 2013 [55013/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Decisions in relation to foster care rates for 2013 have not yet been taken. My Office is currently liaising with the Department of Finance regarding the rates of the Foster Care Allowance to apply.

Child and Family Support Agency Establishment

119. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if the Family Resource Centre National Forum will be represented at board level in the new Child and Family Support Agency. [54948/12]

120. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will ensure that the budget for the Family Resource Centre programme will be ring fenced and protected in her Department's budget and under the new Child and Family Support Agency. [54949/12]

121. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs If she will ensure that the ethos, culture and role of the Family Resource Centre network in the delivery of community-based universal services and early intervention services will be fully maintained when the Family Resource Centres move to the new Child and Family Support Agency. [54950/12]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 119 to 121, inclusive, together.

The Government has given approval to the drafting of a Bill to establish the Child and Family Support Agency. Work on the preparation of the legislation is proceeding as a priority and the intention is that the Agency will be established in early 2013. In order to inform the content of the legislation the Government has decided that upon establishment the Child and Family Support Agency will have responsibility for a range of services. This includes the full range of child welfare and protection services currently operated by the HSE including family support and alternative care services. It has also been decided that due to its particular relevance domestic, sexual and gender-based violence services will also be included within the Agency's responsibilities. The Government has further decided that the new Agency will assume responsibility for the functions of both the Family Support Agency and the National Educational Welfare Board. These two organisations currently operate under the aegis of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

It is my intention that the work of the new agency will include a particular focus on the provision of services that could help prevent problems arising for a family, that would identify problems and provide supports at an early stage and that would assist children and families in managing serious problems requiring specialised interventions beyond their own resources. Therefore, in addition to child welfare and protection services there will be an emphasis on prevention, early intervention, family support and therapeutic care interventions. I can assure the Deputy that the focus of the new Agency will build on the excellent work undertaken by the Family Support Agency over the last decade. The additional issues raised by the Deputy are being given consideration as part of the preparation of the legislation necessary to give effect to the establishment of the new agency.

Home Help Service Provision

122. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if further home help hours will be allocated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if he will expedite a response as a matter of urgency [54823/12]

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.

Tobacco Control Measures

123. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Health the reason tar levels are not prominently displayed on rolling tobacco; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[54827/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The 2001 Tobacco Products Directive (2001/37/EC) relates to the manufacture, presentation and sale of tobacco products in the EU. This directive sets out the provision that the tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide (TNCO) yields of cigarettes shall be printed on cigarette packs. While all tobacco products must include health warnings, the provision relating to the TNCO yields relates to cigarette packs only. The Tobacco Directive was transposed into Irish law by S.I. No. 425/2003 - European Communities (Manufacture, Presentation and Sale of Tobacco Products) Regulations 2003.

The European Commission has undertaken a public consultation in relation to this Directive in order to ascertain whether the existing Directive is adequately functioning in view of new international, scientific and market developments in the last decade. The display of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide levels is one of the issues being considered in the context of the revision of the Directive by the European Commission. It is anticipated that the Commission will publish a legislative proposal in relation to the revision of the Directive in the near future. Following the publication Ireland will play a significant role in progressing the revision of the Directive with other Member States during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union commencing in January, 2013.

Medical Card Applications

124. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Louth may expect a decision on an application for a medical card. [54833/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Hospital Waiting Lists

125. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Offaly may expect a decision on a hospital appointment [54834/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is the next priority for the Government. Building on work already undertaken by the HSE, the NTPF has now taken over the reporting of outpatient waiting time data. The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this will allow the SDU and NTPF to target their resources towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. A maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment by 30 November 2013.

In parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time. 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 hospital involved. In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Card Applications

126. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Health if he will approve and expedite a medical card application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54835/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Home Help Service Provision

127. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home help in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54840/12]

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

128. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 760 of 19 July 2012, if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny with a view to granting an early hospital appointment [54841/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Improving access to outpatient services is the next priority for the Government. Building on work already undertaken by the HSE, the NTPF has now taken over the reporting of outpatient waiting time data. The collation and analysis of outpatient waiting time data in a standardised format will reveal the distribution of long waiters across all hospitals. In the first instance, this will allow the SDU and NTPF to target their resources towards those patients who are waiting longest and ensure that they are seen and assessed. A maximum waiting time target has now been set of 12 months for a first time outpatient appointment by 30 November 2013.

In parallel with reducing the numbers of longest waiters, the SDU will also work with the HSE Clinical Programmes to reform the structure, organisation and delivery of outpatient services to ensure that the right patient is seen and assessed by the right health professional at the right time. 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 hospital involved. In relation to the specific query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Voluntary Sector Funding

129. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will support the Neurological Alliance of Ireland 2013 in order to protect the 700,000 people and their families [54847/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Neurological Alliance of Ireland (NAI) is a national umbrella organisation for voluntary groups,

professionals and interested parties representing the views and concerns of those whose lives are affected by neurological conditions. The majority of member groups of the NAI receive funding from the Health Service Executive (HSE). Funding is provided in respect of both operational expenses and service provision. Organisational expenses, funded by the HSE for individual organisations, may include the costs of Chief Executive Officers, administration staff, central office costs etc. In addition, organisations are funded to provide services to people with disabilities, including the provision of information and support to people with disabilities, the provision of information and expertise to health care professional working with individuals with particular conditions and, in some cases, the provision of residential, day, respite and all multidisciplinary supports. Total funding from the HSE to member organisations of the NAI is in excess of €200m per annum. The funding level to be provided to member groups of the NAI in 2013 will be decided following the outcome of the HSE service planning process for 2013.

Hospital Services

130. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider providing additional staff and resources and roll out the interim community intervention team pilot scheme to all of County Kerry and support early discharges from Kerry General Hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54867/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The funding pressures now being experienced in the health services mean that the acute sector must reduce its costs in order to deliver the agreed level of activity within the resources available to it. This means that we must concentrate on maximising efficiency and getting the best possible services for patients from the budgets available to us. In relation to the specific queries raised by the Deputy, as these are service issues they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Medical Aids and Appliances Applications

131. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Health if a hearing device will be provided to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54873/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Water Fluoridation

132. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health if a cost benefit analysis has been undertaken with regard to the fluoridation of water, and in the context of the banning of this practise in other countries, the reason it is continuing here [54893/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Water fluoridation is one of the most widely studied public health policy initiatives in the world. Studies indicate that the health benefits of water fluoridation outweigh its costs. To date there has been a significant reduction in the proportions of decayed, missing and filled teeth of people living in areas supplied by fluoridated drinking water in Ireland when compared to those in non-fluoridated areas. The cost of fluoridation was €3.86 million in 2011. While my Department has

not conducted a cost-benefit analysis on this policy, the Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, which monitors new and emerging issues on fluoride and its effects on health, advises that water fluoridation is the safest and most cost effective method of protecting the oral health of the population.

Other countries which have water fluoridation schemes include the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia and New Zealand. Water fluoridation is less common in Europe, where fluoridated salt is often available as an alternative, although some populations are supplied with naturally fluoridated public water.

Medical Card Applications

133. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54898/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The Health Service Executive has been asked to examine this matter and to reply to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Symphysiotomy Report

134. **Deputy Gerald Nash** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a time frame for the publication of the Walsh Report; the reasons for the excessive delay in publication; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54900/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As the Deputy is aware, Professor Oonagh Walsh, independent researcher was commissioned by the Chief Medical Officer in my Department to draft a report in relation to the practice of symphysiotomy in Ireland.

The Report was conducted in two stages. The first stage is an independent academic research report, which is based on an analysis of published medical reports and research. The draft report contains information about how frequently symphysiotomy was carried out in Ireland and compares rates with other countries. The researcher experienced unforeseen difficulties in accessing information sources and as a result, submitted the first stage of the report behind schedule in late January 2012. The researcher informed my Department that this was due primarily to the challenges with accessing historical data from a time when records on the procedure were not routinely kept. The second stage in the research process, involved a consultation process on the draft report involving patient groups, health professionals and in particular the women who have undergone symphysiotomy. The researcher is currently finalising the report based on the consultation and it is also planned to have a peer review process. It is hoped that the report will be published early in 2013.

Hospitals Funding

135. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Children's University Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54904/12]

136. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Coombe

Women and Infants University Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54905/12]

137. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the National Maternity Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54906/12]

138. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Our Lady's Children's Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54907/12]

139. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for St Vincent's University Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54908/12]

140. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Tallaght Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54909/12]

141. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Connolly Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54910/12]

142. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Beaumont Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54911/12]

143. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54912/12]

144. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Dublin at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54913/12]

145. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Cork University Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54914/12]

146. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Kerry General Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54915/12]

147. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Galway University Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54916/12]

148. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Letterkenny General Hospital in County Donegal at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54917/12]

149. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Limerick, at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54918/12]

150. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Midland

Regional Hospital, Mullingar, County Westmeath, at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54919/12]

151. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Midland Regional Hospital, Tullamore, County Offaly, at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54920/12]

152. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for the Midland Regional Hospital, Portlaoise, County Laois, at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54921/12]

153. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Waterford Regional Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54922/12]

154. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Naas General Hospital, County Kildare, at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54923/12]

155. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Cavan General Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54924/12]

156. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, County Meath at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54925/12]

157. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for Wexford General Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54926/12]

158. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for South Tipperary General Hospital at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54927/12]

159. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the budget deficit for St Luke's General Hospital, County Kilkenny at the end of November 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54928/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 135 to 159, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy has not yet been published by the Health Service Executive. However, I have asked the Health Service Executive to contact the Deputy directly with the information requested as soon as it becomes available.

Mental Health Services Provision

160. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health the number of vacancies in the community mental health teams at present; and the locations and grades where each vacancy occurs. [54946/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): Arising from the special allocation of €35m which was provided for Mental Health in Budget 2012, 414

posts have been approved to strengthen both Adult and Children's mental health services. To date 17 posts have been filled and over 270 offers of employment have already been accepted and appointments are proceeding. Most start dates are expected to commence this month. As the staffing of individual Community Mental Health Teams is a service matter, the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

161. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will include non CF bronchiectasis on the long term illness scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54974/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme. Under the Drug Payment Scheme, no individual or family pays more than €132 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines. In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of general practice consultation.

Vaccination Programme

162. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health when he will bring a proposal to Dáil Éireann setting out a package of supports for those who developed narcolepsy as a result of vaccination with Pandemrix; and the date on which he will re-establish contact with Sufferers of Unique Narcolepsy Disorder [54985/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I am committed to bringing a Memorandum to Government setting out the full response to the issue. My Department is considering all possible supports which may need to be put in place for those affected. Any such supports require my approval and the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. A further meeting with representatives from SOUND will be arranged when the matter has been concluded. The Health Service Executive continues to provide a range of supports and services to those affected by narcolepsy following pandemic vaccination. The Department of Education and Skills also provides appropriate educational supports at all levels of education.

Medical Card Eligibility

163. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health the income guidelines that will apply to medical card applicants in 2013 [55012/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE has produced national assessment guidelines to provide a clear framework to assist in the making of reasonable, consistent and equitable decisions when assessing an applicant for the General Medical Services scheme. These guidelines are publicly available and can be downloaded from the HSE's medical card website. Legislation will now be prepared to give effect to the changes

in the income guidelines for the over 70s which have been announced in Budget 2013.

Patient Safety Agency

164. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the Programme for Government commitment to establish a Patient Safety Authority incorporating the Health Information Quality Authority; if he will outline the basis on which the Patient Safety Agency will be established; its role, function and authority; the difference between it and the Patient Safety Authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55014/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In considering the options and possible organisational structures of the Patient Safety Agency (PSA) my Department has taken account of the international experience and the existing and emerging structures and organisations in the Irish system. A key issue highlighted by the international experience is that regulation and the broader quality improvement and patient safety agenda may not be best suited together within one agency and that regulation should maintain its independence and remain separate. I am persuaded by this aspect of the international experience and, therefore, our planning is on the basis that the Health Information and Quality Authority would maintain its role of health and social care regulator.

The role and inter-relationship of the PSA with the reforming health system needs to be carefully designed and developed. My Department is liaising with the Health Service Executive on the details surrounding the establishment of the PSA to ensure an identifiable and distinct leadership responsibility for patient safety and quality at national level having regard to the need for a robust quality and safety function within the new delivery structures of the Reform Programme. The functions eventually allocated to the PSA may include patient advocacy, development of leadership capacity in healthcare, development and delivery of patient safety training and education programmes and compilation and dissemination of learning from adverse events in the healthcare system. Our intention is to establish a Patient Safety Agency on an administrative basis in 2013. The optimum statutory framework for the PSA will be identified and developed in the light of experience over time.

Primary Care Centres Provision

165. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the development of the primary care centre in Longford town; if his attention has been drawn to any planning difficulties associated with sewage facilities, or any other facilities, some of which have been highlighted by residents of an estate (details supplied); if the site is fully compliant with all necessary building regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55015/12]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The new primary care centre for Longford Town is located at Ballyminion, Farranyoogan, Co Longford and is separate to the Glen Riada development. The primary care centre has been completed in accordance with the building regulations and the standards set out by the Local Authority by way of planning conditions. The centre has been fitted out in accordance with the with HSE specifications. As this primary care centre is delivered by means of the operational lease initiative, the landlord is responsible for maintaining the facility.

Home Help Service Provision

166. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding home help hours and the provision currently being made for those in need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55025/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The provision in relation to HSE community based supports for older people, including Home Care, was agreed under the HSE Service Plan 2012. The measures recently adopted by the Executive to address overall funding pressures intended that there would be a reduction of approximately €8 million expenditure on Home Help hours to the end of December (about 400,000 hours), and a reduction of some €1.2 million on Home Care Packages. However, in terms of implementation at local level, the HSE has made every effort to ensure that the impact of these reductions in care terms will be minimised for the most vulnerable individual recipients. Such decisions continue to be based on a review of individual need. As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy in the light of the most up-to-date position.

Public Procurement Tenders

167. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the extent to which Irish providers can supply goods and services to the Health Service Executive in respect of special footwear, clothing or other appliances which are sometimes provided by brokers in such a way as to disadvantage opportunities for the indigenous supplier by the provision of assorted packages, the combination of which may be lower priced and within which individual items are more costly than those available to indigenous suppliers; if in terms of procurement in the future, provision can be made whereby the use of loss leaders is prevented in procurement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55042/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): In the Health Service Executive (HSE), the overall strategic goals of procurement is to maximise the effectiveness of procurement in providing support for effective and efficient patient care. The HSE's procurement policy clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all practitioners involved in the procurement process. It is based on best practice and is designed to ensure a common approach for all HSE staff in the procurement of supplies, works and services. It also ensures a strong focus on the role of procurement in keeping with the code of practice for governance of state bodies. 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.

National Roads Authority Projects

168. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total funding to the National Roads Authority in 2012; the year on year reduction in funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54860/12]

169. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the discussions he has held with the National Roads Authority on their road repair programme; the funding for the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54861/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I propose to take

Questions Nos. 168 and 169 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 its allocated budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects, including road maintenance, is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Sections 17 & 19 of the Roads Act. My Department's funding allocation to the NRA for 2012 is €734.6 million, including €605 million for capital projects (€674m in 2011) and €42.26 million (€48.9m in 2011) for maintenance of national roads. The balance relates to contract payments to PPP companies and the cost of running the Authority.

In line with the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016 and the outcome of the comprehensive current spending review last year, the NRA's capital budget in 2013 will be €278m while the road maintenance budget next year will be €41.6m. I meet with the CEO and the Chairman of the NRA on a regular basis, while my Department has ongoing contacts with the NRA at all levels. The scale of the reductions in the allocations to the NRA obviously will present challenges over the course of 2013. Therefore, the key priority is the protection of the existing investment in road infrastructure as against major new expenditure on road design or building. This is a view shared by both myself and the NRA.

EU Funding

170. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent of EU financial aid that has been received for major or minor rail or bus services or installations in each of the past three years to date. [54943/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department acts as an Intermediate Body for the BMW Regional Authority Operational Programme (2007 – 2013). One railway infrastructure project, the Elimination of Speed Restrictions at Portarlinton, was approved for funding under the Programme in 2010. Total expenditure amounted to approximately €14.2m and the aid rate of 50% facilitated the drawdown of €7.1m in EU Funding.

The DART Underground project was identified as an eligible project under the Trans European Network-Transport (TEN-T) programme in 2008. TEN-T funding of €10m was approved towards geotechnical investigations and various surveys and studies during the initial design and planning stages. A final claim for this Project was recently submitted to the Trans-European Networks Agency. Once approved by the TEN-T Agency, the final claim will release drawdown of the full allocation of approximately €10m from the TEN-T Budget.

EU Funding

171. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the extent of EU funding received for the provision of road, air and sea port transport facilities or installations in each of the past three years to date. [54944/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): My Department has not received any direct EU funding for the provision of road, air and sea port transport facilities or installations in each of the past three years to date. However, under the 2007 – 2013

Border Midlands and Western Regional Authority Operational Programme of the European Regional Development Fund, two road projects qualified for funding. These are the M6 Athlone-Ballinasloe motorway and N52 Tullamore Bypass. As the funding for these projects was channelled through the National Roads Authority, I have referred your question to the Authority for direct response. If you do not hear from them within 10 days please contact my private office. EU funding for national road development may also have been provided during this period under EU programmes in respect of which other bodies in Ireland have the lead management role under EU Regulations. These programmes include the Cohesion Fund, the Interreg Programme and the Peace Programme.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

172. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline the names of the sports clubs and organisations in County Mayo which applied for the 2012 sports capital fund; the number of these organisations whose applications were deemed ineligible; the reasons these organisations applications were deemed ineligible; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54963/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring) (Deputy Michael Ring): The names of the sports clubs and organisations in County Mayo who applied under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme are published on my Department's website www.dttas.ie. A total of 106 local applications were received for County Mayo of which 59 were deemed invalid. My Department will be writing to all applicants in the coming weeks and the reasons why applications were deemed invalid will be outlined to the relevant applicants.

Some of the reasons why local applications from Mayo were deemed invalid include:

- Insufficient own funding or no evidence of own funding
- Work on project already commenced
- No evidence of freehold/leasehold/letter from landlord
- No quotations/estimates submitted
- No evidence of planning permission or application for same or letter from technical supervisor stating that planning permission is not needed.

Sports Capital Programme Applications

173. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason the respective unsuccessful applicants in County Kerry were not granted sports capital funding in the latest round of announcements; if he will provide a response in respect of each individual unsuccessful application, detailing the reason the application and unsuccessful, providing the cause of invalidation where relevant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54964/12]

174. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reasons just 10% of the allocation of sports capital funding in County Kerry went to applicants in the Kerry South Dáil constituency; if he will provide an explanation of the criteria used to arrive at a decision in respect of the applications from County Kerry; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [54965/12]

175. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the total number of applications for sports capital funding 2012 in the Kerry South Dáil constituency; the total amount applied for; the number of successful applicants; the total amount granted to south Kerry clubs; his views on whether this outcome is fair; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54966/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring): I propose to take Questions Nos. 173 to 175, inclusive, together.

My Department does not collate information on a Dáil constituency basis. However, I can confirm that 95 applications were received under the 2012 Sports Capital Programme from sports clubs and organisations in County Kerry seeking €8.9m in funding. A full list of all applications received is available on my Department's website www.dttas.ie. 19 applications from County Kerry were successful and were allocated funding totalling €742,057. Two of the applications from County Kerry were for regional projects and I intend to announce allocations to national and regional projects before the end of the year.

In relation to the criteria used to assess applications, I would refer the Deputy to my reply to question number 53816 of 4/12/12 tabled by Deputy Aengus Ó'Snodaigh. My Department will be writing to all applicants in the coming weeks and the reasons why applications were deemed invalid will be outlined to the relevant applicants. Some of the reasons why local applications from Kerry were deemed invalid include:

- Insufficient own funding or no evidence of own funding
- Work on project already commenced
- No evidence of freehold/leasehold/letter from landlord
- No quotations/estimates submitted
- No evidence of planning permission or application for same or letter from technical supervisor stating that planning permission is not needed

Driving Licence Issues

176. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the proposed new driving licences; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [54997/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): EU Directive 2006/126EC requires all Member States to introduce a plastic card driving licence with effect from 19th January 2013. The introduction of the new form of licence presented an opportunity to examine the system by which the current driver licence service was being operated. Following a detailed study and careful consideration of the issues involved, the Government supported my proposal to centralise the service under the Road Safety Authority (RSA).

The benefits of centralisation are significant in themselves, and a centralised system will be more adaptable to any changes to the licence which may be required in the future. It offers a more efficient and cost-effective way of delivering driver licensing services to the public, with the added advantages of more robust identity management and security capabilities, standardised and streamlined process improvements, and improved customer service through

a single point of contact for drivers. The RSA will become the driver licensing authority for the country from 12th January 2013. However, for a period in 2013, while the new system is being developed, local authorities will continue to provide driver licence services and applications for licences will be accepted.

Air Services Provision

177. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide an update on flight paths for Weston Aerodrome in Lucan; the steps being taken to protect residential amenity and ensure public safety (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55018/12]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA) has responsibility for the licensing of aerodromes in Ireland including the approval of flight paths, so I have referred the question to them for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a reply has not been received within 10 working days.

Railway Stations Upgrade

178. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the opening of Kishogue train station in Lucan, County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55019/12]

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. Following the establishment of the National Transport Authority (NTA) on December 2009, the implementation and development of infrastructure projects in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), such as Kishogue train station, comes under the remit of the NTA. The legislative basis for this is Section 11(1)(e) of the DTA Act 2008 “Principal Functions of Authority - The principal functions of the Authority are to secure the provision of public transport infrastructure”. Noting this I have referred the Deputy’s question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within 10 working days.

Taxi Regulations

179. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the process and procedure to be followed to transfer a taxi licence in respect of persons (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [55054/12]

Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Alan Kelly): The regulation of the small public service vehicle (SPSV) industry, including the process for transfer of taxi licences, is a matter for the National Transport Authority (NTA) under the Taxi Regulation Act, 2003. I have referred your question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a response within 10 working days.