

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Wastewater Treatment

10. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of waste water treatment inspectors appointed to date; the total number of inspectors expected to be appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27996/13]

18. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of inspections on waste water treatment systems carried out to date; the total number of inspections expected in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27994/13]

25. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of septic tank assistance grants distributed to date; the estimated number of grants to be distributed in 2013; the estimated average grant; the estimated total cost; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27992/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 10, 18 and 25 together.

The Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 assigns responsibility to the Environmental Protection Agency to make a National Inspection Plan for domestic wastewater treatment systems. The National Inspection Plan 2013: Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems was adopted and published by the EPA in February 2013.

The Local Authority Services National Training Group, in consultation with my Department, the EPA and the water services authorities, has overseen the development and delivery of a training course for the inspectors who will carry out inspections under the 2012 Act. Over the past six weeks the training course has been rolled out to over 100 water services authority personnel in the Training Group's regional training centres in Ballincollig, Roscrea, Castlebar, Ballycoolin and Stranorlar. Further courses are being scheduled.

The EPA is responsible for appointing as inspectors those who have satisfactorily completed the training course and meet other qualification criteria regarding professional or technical qualifications and indemnity insurance cover. Full details of the criteria are set out in the Water Services Act 2007 (Registration and Inspections) Regulations, a copy of which is available in the Oireachtas library. I understand that the Agency will commence processing applications for

appointment as inspectors later this month. The number of appointments to be made is a matter the Agency and I have no role in such matters.

The Plan provides for a minimum of 1,000 inspections to be carried out during the twelve-month period commencing in July 2013; therefore, no inspections under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012 have been carried out to date. Details of the minimum number of inspections for each county are included in the Plan and it is a function of the water services authorities to implement the EPA's Inspection Plan in their functional areas.

In December 2012 I announced my intention to introduce a grant scheme to provide financial assistance to households whose septic tanks and other domestic wastewater treatment systems are deemed to require remediation following an inspection under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012. The grants scheme will not be a universal one – it will only apply to works arising from an inspection and subsequent issue of an advisory notice under the Water Services (Amendment) Act, 2012 and only householders who have complied with the obligation to register their systems by 1 February 2013 will be eligible to apply for grant aid. Full details of the scheme will be set out in regulations which I will make shortly.

As the grant scheme will only apply to owners of domestic waste water treatment systems which are the subject of an Advisory Notice issued by a water services authority following an inspection carried out under the 2012 Act, no grants will be distributed before inspections commence in July. The number of grants to be distributed in 2013 will depend on the number of treatment systems which fail inspection. It will also depend on the number of owners of such systems who meet the eligibility criteria under the grant scheme and the costs incurred by them in remediating the problems with their systems. Provision for the scheme is being made from my Department's Vote in 2013.

Local Authority Staff Numbers

11. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the fact that the local authorities have reduced their staff from 37,243 in 2008 to 28,268, if he will outline in tabular form the local authorities from which these reductions took place; and the grade of employment of these staff and the salary scale of these staff. [28065/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The moratorium on Public Service posts was introduced in 2009 and my Department operates a delegated sanction for its implementation in relation to local authorities. Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each City and County Manager is responsible for staffing arrangements in individual local authorities. My Department works closely with local authority management to ensure that the reduction in staff numbers is managed so that the appropriate service level is maintained within budgetary and staffing constraints.

Since 2008 local authority staff numbers have reduced by 8,975, almost a quarter, from 37,243 to 28,268 whole time equivalent staff and this has contributed to reported payroll savings of some €300 million. It is necessary to continue to focus on achieving the greatest possible savings while an appropriate level of service to the public is maintained. In this context, my Department and local authorities have carried out work force planning, on a sector wide basis, and the process is continuing at local authority level taking account of, *inter alia*, the new municipal district structures, Irish Water and shared service initiatives.

Information regarding staff reductions on a grade by grade basis is not available in my De-

partment. I will, however, circulate with the Official Record, a table showing the reduction in staff numbers in each local authority (WTE).

| Local Authority | June 2008 Quarterly Return (WTE) | Staff Reductions up 31/03/2013 (WTE) |
|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Cork City | 1,530.00 | 262.53 |
| Dublin City | 7,326.15 | 1,573.00 |
| Galway City | 563.50 | 129.46 |
| Limerick City & County | 1,462.40 | 403.35 |
| Waterford City | 491.00 | 148.12 |
| Carlow | 386.00 | 111.66 |
| Cavan | 492.00 | 115.10 |
| Clare | 909.00 | 157.07 |
| Cork County | 2,964.00 | 879.26 |
| Donegal | 1,344.00 | 439.69 |
| Dun Laoghaire / Rathdown (DLR) | 1,397.00 | 366.80 |
| Fingal | 1,696.15 | 370.68 |
| Galway | 1,171.14 | 399.01 |
| Kerry | 1,423.00 | 306.26 |
| Kildare | 1,227.50 | 390.48 |
| Kilkenny | 707.00 | 194.99 |
| Laois | 441.10 | 95.78 |
| Leitrim | 365.50 | 102.55 |
| Longford | 391.60 | 101.55 |
| Louth | 762.61 | 119.64 |
| Mayo | 1,227.30 | 230.27 |
| Meath | 852.52 | 238.57 |
| Monaghan | 480.53 | 94.88 |
| Offaly | 538.00 | 153.30 |
| Roscommon | 582.50 | 151.27 |
| Sligo | 615.90 | 163.17 |
| South Dublin | 1,480.55 | 312.60 |
| Tipp North | 658.00 | 193.45 |
| Tipp South | 721.00 | 122.64 |
| Waterford | 605.50 | 160.44 |
| Westmeath | 598.97 | 154.31 |
| Wexford | 909.52 | 171.36 |
| Wicklow | 921.65 | 205.00 |
| OVERALL TOTAL – Local Authority by Local Authority | 37,242.59 | 9,018.24 |
| Less Regional Authority Staff | | -44 |
| Sectoral Staffing Reduction | | 8,975 WTE |

12. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the new initiatives taken by him to assist rural development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28051/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My colleague, Minister Coveney and I established the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) in September 2012 and tasked it to investigate the opportunities and challenges facing rural populations in the current economic climate. Since then the Commission has been working towards the publication of a report that will inform policies and strategies to support the economic development of rural Ireland into the future. The Commission led by its Chair, Mr Pat Spillane, has been engaging in an extensive schedule of meetings with stakeholder groups and the public over recent months looking at the many issues that affect life in rural Ireland at present. The Commission is also conducting a parallel research process and has invited interested parties to make submissions directly to it via its website at www.ruralireland.ie.

There is also an option to complete an online questionnaire. To date 60 questionnaires have been completed. In addition, 108 submissions have been received. In total between the consultation and research exercises 850 contributions have been received to date for consideration in the CEDRA research process. The Commission presented its preliminary findings at a conference in NUI Maynooth earlier this week with the final report due in October 2013.

I believe there is clear evidence that rural communities all over Ireland have embraced the CEDRA research process. I am confident that it will provide invaluable insights into the potential for the economic development of rural areas and will assist policy making into the future. I look forward to receiving the final report, and I and my colleagues in Government will give due consideration to its findings and make decisions regarding the appropriate actions to be taken.

My Department is responsible for the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 and has to date spent €182 million on the Programme. I recently announced the release of the final €90 million of the Programme. This funding has the capacity not only to facilitate access to sustainable employment opportunities in rural areas but also to help support rural communities and enhance rural economies for business creation and development into the future. In addition, my Department supports a number of initiatives in regard to rural recreation development and continues to be a main funding partner of Leave No Trace Ireland which promotes responsible recreational use in the outdoors. It also chairs regular meetings of Comhairle Na Tuaithe (The Countryside Council) and is working closely with the State Claims Agency following the successful establishment of an Irish arm of the Visitor Safety in the Countryside Group (VSCG), which is focused on how to create safe access to the countryside in ways that do not spoil landscape and heritage, or lessen the visitor's sense of exploration and adventure. A National Indemnity Scheme, to be managed in conjunction with the State Claims Agency, is currently under negotiation.

Local Authority Housing Provision

13. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of vacant local authority homes here on average at any one time; the current average turn around time for vacant local authority homes including the fastest and slowest figure; and the strategies that are being considered for improving these figures. [27059/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Eighth Annual Report of the Local Government Management Agency, published this year, which details service indicators in local authorities in 2011, shows the average time taken, from the date of vacating of a unit to the date when all necessary repairs are carried out, to re-let a unit in each authority. The figures show that some 4,356 dwellings were vacant, accounting for 3.33% of the total national social housing stock of around 130,800 units.

The length of time taken to re-let units varies considerably between authorities and ranges from 8.4 weeks in Offaly County Council to a high of 65.1 weeks in Sligo County Council, with the average time taken to complete repairs just under 21 weeks. I propose to circulate with the Official Report a tabular statement based on the information set out in the Report, outlining the time taken to re-let dwellings in all local authority areas.

It is a matter for each local authority, as an integral part of the management and maintenance of their social housing stock, to carry out any necessary pre-letting repairs and maintenance works to dwellings which are vacated by tenants in order to re-let the units to new tenants within the shortest possible timeframe.

Under my Department’s Social Housing Investment Programme, local authorities are allocated capital funding each year in respect of a range of measures to improve the standard and overall quality of their social housing stock. These measures include large-scale regeneration projects, estate-wide remedial works and retrofitting works to individual properties.

Given the constraints on new local authority housing supply, it is important that the existing stock of local authority housing is available and in fit condition to meet housing need. Houses requiring significant pre-letting improvement works can quickly deteriorate if left vacant for an extended period. Over the course of 2011 and 2012 my Department placed a particular focus on refurbishing vacant properties in order to bring as many as possible back into productive use. In 2011, local authorities prioritised the most seriously deficient properties and funding of up to €35,000 per house was provided to refurbish 2,659 of these at an overall cost of €32.7 million. Last year, the focus on retrofitting vacant properties was maintained and a further €20 million was provided for the retrofitting of around 2,115 vacant properties. I am confident that the figures in the LGMA Report for 2012 will show a considerable improvement on those for 2011.

Given the concentration on vacant properties in recent years, and considering that over 7,600 properties were improved in the last four years, it is timely to focus attention on those occupied and older dwellings which lack adequate insulation and draught-proofing. My Department estimates that there may be as many as 25,000 such properties. I am determined that we enhance the energy efficiency of these properties, improve living conditions and enable tenants to make real and substantial savings on fuel costs. Earlier this year, I put in place a new €10 million energy retrofitting measure for tenanted houses, largely based around roof and wall insulation, with the potential to reduce energy bills by over €400 per year. I’m pleased that last week the Government committed to providing an additional €50 million to accelerate this programme and ensure that up to 25,000 homes are fully insulated and draught-proofed over the next two years.

Table 1 – Average time taken for Repairs.

Average time taken (in weeks) from the date of vacation of dwelling to the date when all necessary repairs are carried out and which are deemed necessary to re-let the dwelling in 2011

| Local Authority | Time Taken for repairs |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Carlow County Council | 18.6 |

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| Local Authority | Time Taken for repairs |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Cavan County Council | 32.5 |
| Clare County Council | 20.2 |
| Cork City Council | 57.8 |
| Cork County Council | 10.2 |
| Donegal County Council | 19.0 |
| Dublin City Council | 26.4 |
| Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council | 10.9 |
| Fingal County Council | 21.5 |
| Galway City Council | N/A |
| Galway County Council | 39.3 |
| Kerry County Council | 28.5 |
| Kildare County Council | 13.8 |
| Kilkenny County Council | 21.3 |
| Laois County Council | 10.0 |
| Leitrim County Council | 22.9 |
| Limerick City Council | 9.0 |
| Limerick County Council | 57.0 |
| Longford County Council | 14.4 |
| Louth County Council | 11.0 |
| Mayo County Council | 29.0 |
| Meath County Council | 12.0 |
| Monaghan County Council | 24.2 |
| North Tipperary County Council | 30.1 |
| Offaly County Council | 8.4 |
| Roscommon County Council | 37.0 |
| Sligo County Council | 65.1 |
| South Dublin County Council | 14.2 |
| South Tipperary County Council | 42.6 |
| Waterford City Council | 16.4 |
| Waterford County Council | 24.3 |
| Westmeath County Council | 9.0 |
| Wexford County Council | 8.9 |
| Wicklow County Council | 21.5 |

Table 2 – Total number of Dwelling in LA stock 2011

| Local Authority | Total number of Dwellings in LA stock 2011 |
|---------------------|--|
| Carlow | 1,612 |
| Cavan | 1,933 |
| Clare | 2,330 |
| Cork City Council. | 8,743 |
| Cork County Council | 7,108 |
| Donegal | 4,604 |
| Dublin City Council | 26,679 |

| Local Authority | Total number of Dwellings in LA stock 2011 |
|--------------------------|--|
| Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown | 4,377 |
| Fingal County Council | 4,508 |
| Galway City Council | 2,242 |
| Galway County Council | 2,366 |
| Kerry | 4,112 |
| Kildare | 3,576 |
| Kilkenny | 2,148 |
| Laois | 2,043 |
| Leitrim | 994 |
| Limerick City Council | 3,134 |
| Limerick County Council | 2,141 |
| Longford | 1,910 |
| Louth | 3,664 |
| Mayo | 2,176 |
| Meath | 2,983 |
| Monaghan | 1,379 |
| North Tipperary | 1,820 |
| Offaly | 1,751 |
| Roscommon | 1,351 |
| Sligo | 2,038 |
| South Dublin CO. CL. | 9,036 |
| South Tipperary | 2,880 |
| Waterford City Council | 3,035 |
| Waterford County Council | 1,767 |
| Westmeath | 1,712 |
| Wexford | 4,216 |
| Wicklow | 4,444 |
| TOTAL | 130,809 |

Local Authority Funding

14. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied that funding for local Government is on a sustainable footing in view of the overall near 40% reduction in the sum allocated to the Local Government Fund in the past five years and the moving of funds out of the ring-fenced motor tax receipts; the way in which service quality will increase from the introduction of both the household charge and local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27978/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The traditional model of local authority funding has been through a combination of central and local resources; General Purpose Grants and other Grants and Subsidies provided by Government are complemented by commercial rates and user charges and fees raised locally by the local authority. General Purpose Grant allocations, predominantly financed by Motor Tax revenues, have been structured so that each authority has sufficient resources, either from central grants or from its local income base, to provide a reasonable level of day to day services

to its customers. There has been an unavoidable reduction in Local Government Fund General Purpose Grant allocations to local authorities, from €832.7 million in 2009 to €640.9 million in 2013, a reduction which has obviously occurred in the context of reduced spending across the public sector.

The Household Charge, introduced in 2012, has made an important contribution to the Local Government Fund. The €131m revenue raised by the Charge so far has funded vital local services and has been a valuable precursor to the introduction of the Local Property Tax.

The local government funding model will change considerably in 2014. Under the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012, commencing in 2014 the Minister for Finance will pay into the Local Government Fund an amount equivalent to the Local Property Tax paid into the Central Fund during that year; this revenue will be allocated to local authorities from the Fund. In addition, the establishment of Irish Water and its financial relationship with the local government sector will have a significant impact on local authority financing.

I expect the Local Property Tax to have multiple benefits, including a more sustainable and resilient system of funding for local authorities and therefore a sounder financial footing for the provision of essential local services; greater local scope for financial decision making concerning service provision - in particular, the inclusion of the local variation mechanism from 2015 will further increase the autonomy of local authorities; and, a strengthening of democracy at local level with a more active relationship between local authorities and local electorates. A stronger democratic relationship and clearer lines of accountability can only have a beneficial impact on service provision from the perspective of the service user.

An important purpose of the changes to the funding of the local authorities has been to place the local government sector on a more sustainable financial footing. The concept of financial sustainability should not solely be considered in terms of national recovery from our current economic circumstances over the short to medium term; longer term viability and the connection with the citizen are also important elements. I am satisfied that the changes which are currently underway will deliver a model of funding which is sustainable in the broadest sense.

Local Authority Housing Maintenance

15. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the conditions being experienced by many low paid or unemployed private rental tenants especially in Dublin's inner city as highlighted by reports from the RIAI and Dublin City Council; and his plans to improve conditions and enforce the law on unscrupulous slumlords. [27060/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Minimum standards in rented accommodation have been raised significantly in recent years under the Action Programme on Standards which was introduced on foot of a commitment in the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement. All landlords now have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with minimum standards for rental accommodation prescribed in the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 and 2009.

Responsibility for the enforcement of these regulations rests with the relevant local authority supported by a dedicated stream of funding provided from part of the proceeds of tenancy registration fees collected by the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB). In general, local authorities have significantly expanded their inspection activity with the number of inspections

increasing by almost 300% – from 6,815 to 19,616 - in the period 2005 to 2012.

On 1 February 2013, Articles 6, 7 and 8 of the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 (as amended) came into effect which means that all rental accommodation must now have its own separate sanitary facilities with updated heating, cooking, food storage and laundry facilities. In 2010, my Department made available to the local authorities additional funding of €2.4m to carry out once-off strategically planned programmes of inspection with a particular focus on accommodation at greatest risk of being sub-standard.

Dublin City Council received €1.1million in additional funding under this Intensified Inspection Programme which involved a commitment to carry out in excess of 8,500 inspections over a three year period. This funding was awarded on the basis of an application submitted to the Department and an additional confirmation that the housing authority had a detailed inspection plan in place to complete the inspections under the project within the stated timeframe. The Council commenced this programme in February 2012 and the programme will continue until March 2015 in addition to their general inspection programme.

Details of the inspections of private rented accommodation carried out, the dwellings inspected which did not meet the statutory standards and prosecutions initiated up to 2011 on a county/city basis are included in my Department's Annual Housing Statistics Bulletins, copies of which are available in the Oireachtas Library and on my Department's website at www.environment.ie. The penalty for non-compliance with the Regulations is a fine not exceeding €5,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or both, and the fine for each day of a continuing offence is €400.

Local Government Reform Expenditure

16. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the estimated total amount of savings from the abolition of town councils; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27984/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Government's Action Programme for Effective Local Government indicated that it would be reasonable to project a target for overall savings in the range €15 to €20 million per annum relative to 2010 expenditure figures as potentially achievable from changes in sub-county governance when the new arrangements have bedded down. Savings will arise from the elimination of parallel structures including on costs associated with supporting 80 separate corporate organisations and the related duplication of functions and processes with the county council, and with the achievement of greater economies of scale and efficiencies within counties.

Question No. 17 answered with Question No. 6.

Question No. 18 answered with Question No. 10.

Proposed Legislation

19. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on the progress made in introducing legislation to put in place a funding mechanism for the repairs needed to pyrite affected housing here. [27064/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Ho-

gan): Following Government approval of the general scheme of a Pyrite Remediation Bill work is now under way, as a matter of urgency, on developing the Bill and it is my intention that it will be published and enacted in the shortest possible timeframe. The Pyrite Resolution Board has made excellent progress on developing the scope and detail of a pyrite remediation scheme, including the terms and conditions of the scheme dealing with eligibility, assessment criteria, procedures, priorities etc. The Board recently launched the initial phase of its website (www.pyriteboard.ie) where it provides an outline of the proposed remediation scheme including the scope of the scheme, the application process and also detailed guidance and information for homeowners on how to identify significant pyritic damage and on the steps involved in the assessment of such damage.

The next phase of the Board's website will include an on-line application system which it is intended will be available in July. Affected homeowners can register their interest on the website now and will be notified when the application system goes live. Discussions are also continuing with a number of financial institutions with a view to making a loan facility available to the not-for-profit entity being set up by the construction stakeholders to facilitate the early commencement of a remediation scheme. I am attaching a high priority to putting in place the necessary structures to deliver a resolution to the pyrite problems for homeowners who have been waiting for a considerable period of time for effective solutions.

Rural Development Programme Funding

20. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the discussions he has had to date with the EU and with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine in relation to the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28059/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) is the Managing Authority for the Rural Development Programme, and is in ongoing discussions with the European Commission on the 2014-2020 Programme. My Department is the delegated paying agency for Axes 3 and 4, the LEADER elements of the Programme. Accordingly, it is in regular contact with the Department of Agriculture, including in regard to programme preparations and Ex Ante Evaluation. At EU level there are three key elements which concern the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) which provides the financial allocation for each fund and Member State has yet to be approved by the European Parliament. The European Council has agreed on a package which provides a total of €2.19bn or some €313m for Ireland per year under Pillar 2 of the CAP for the period 2014 - 2020. This includes a special allocation of €100 million, over the full period, negotiated in the final stages of the talks.

Discussions on CAP Reform, led by my colleague the Minister, Deputy Coveney, at EU level, continue in dialogues between the European Council, Parliament and Commission. This includes the Rural Development Regulation. These dialogue negotiations covering all aspects of Agriculture and Rural Development are complex and multi-layered.

For the period 2014-2020 the Rural Development Fund will form part of the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), including the Social Fund, Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund as well as the European Marine and Fisheries Fund. The ESIF will have common rules and provisions for how all five funds are managed to best assist each Member State achieve its targets under the EU 2020 Strategy.

Leader Programmes Administration

21. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the percentage of project commitments that will have been made by the end of this year under the LEADER programme that he expects to be completed by the latest date to draw down EU funds under the programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28047/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007 – 2013 commenced in February 2009 after a delay of more than two years which reduced the time available to allocate funding to less than five years rather than the normal seven. I expect, however, that all project commitments under the Programme will be made by 31 December 2013 at the latest. Following a comprehensive review of the commitments and expenditure across the various measures of the RDP I recently notified all Local Development Companies (LDCs) of their revised allocations under the Programme.

My Department has notified all LDCs that it will review the level of commitments in late August to ensure that no company is failing to commit the monies that I have made available to them. My Department has now requested that each LDC submits a plan by mid-June profiling their project approvals and both their project and administration expenditure per month. All project expenditure should be completed by December 2014 at the latest and I expect that in some areas the Programme will be finalised well in advance of this.

Question No. 22 answered with Question No. 9.

Departmental Funding

23. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the channel that will manage any future EU community led local development funding and LEADER funding; and if the proposed alignment of local government will impact on this. [28068/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Significant matters regarding EU Community-led Local Development funding and LEADER funding for the 2014-20 period are yet to be agreed, including the value of funding and the regulations governing implementation. In the absence of these, and ahead of the submission of local development strategies, it would be inappropriate for me to confirm any implementation arrangements for future Community-led Local Development or LEADER programmes.

However, the Final Report of the Local Government/Local Development Alignment Group recommended that the Socio-Economic Committee structure “should be considered as the vehicle through which the LEADER approach is implemented for the 2014-2020 round of EU programmes”. This and other alignment recommendations are currently being advanced by my Department with the support of an Alignment Working Group. The latter comprises representatives of the City and County Managers Association, the Irish Local Development Network and Pobal, and is chaired by my Department.

The alignment process affords us a valuable opportunity to bring greater coherence to the delivery of local development programmes, especially at a time when resources are scarce and there is an increasing demand for services. It is important, therefore, that any new implementation arrangements for local development programmes focus on greater collaboration between

local actors, achieving more effective targeting of those resources, delivering greater value for money and, most importantly, improving the delivery of services for citizens and communities.

Waste Management Regulations

24. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if there is legislation preventing local authorities from negotiating contracts, similar to those in the Six Counties, whereby waste collection companies would pay local authorities for the recyclable waste collected. [28066/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): A Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA) published by my Department in July 2012 considered the introduction of franchise bidding by local authorities for household waste collection. This approach has been adopted in other EU Member States, whereby a local authority or group of authorities invite tenders from private operators to bid for the exclusive right to collect waste or certain streams of waste within their functional area. The RIA identified a number of risks associated with such an approach and ultimately made the recommendations to preserve the current market structure of side by side competition and to strengthen the regulation of household waste collection.

The RIA and an extensive consultation process informed Government policy on this issue and I published A Resource Opportunity - Waste Management Policy in Ireland in July 2012. The publication of the policy confirmed the retention of side by side competition in the waste collection market and also brought much needed policy certainty to the waste sector, particularly in terms of facilitating planning and investment decisions. The policy further sets out a range of proposals to significantly revise the existing regulatory regime to ensure, *inter alia*, that waste collected is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy, that mandated service levels are delivered and that Customer Charters are put in place by all waste collection providers.

The work of developing new regulatory structures to give effect to these proposals is underway and my Department is engaging with a range of key stakeholders in relation to the detailed design of the new system. It is my intention that the revised regulatory regime will deliver both enhanced environmental performance and a quality service for consumers. With regard to the transfer of household waste collection services by a local authority to a private sector waste collector, these are matters for the relevant local authority and the waste collector concerned. Questions in relation to specific contractual issues, such as remuneration for recyclable waste collected, should be addressed to the particular local authority in question.

Question No. 25 answered with Question No. 10.

Rural Recreation Promotion

26. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he intends to introduce legislation in relation to countryside access; his view on the recent legislation introduced in the House by Deputy Dowds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28053/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): An expert group established by the then Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht

Affairs to examine and make recommendations on “the Legal Issues of Land Access for Recreational Use” and issues around legislating for countryside access, submitted its report in May 2007. It did not set out specific recommendations but examined existing legislation, such as the Occupiers’ Liability Act 1995, and explored the implications of introducing legislation, such as granting a right of access to recreational users. The report is available on my Department’s website. The Minister at the time formed the view that the best way forward was to develop permissive access with the agreement of landholders through various initiatives such as the Walks Scheme and Pilot Mountain Access Projects. The consensus approach adopted is underpinned by the principle of mutual respect between landowners and recreational users, with acceptance of the rights of landowners regarding access to their land and the need for recreational users to have reasonable access to the countryside.

My Department continues to work with stakeholders through Comhairle na Tuaithe and is currently negotiating the implementation of a National Indemnity Scheme which will indemnify private landowners against claims from recreational users for injury or damage to property. The Occupiers Liability Act, 1995 already provides significant protection to landowners, but the upfront costs of successfully defending a claim can be significant. My Department is currently reviewing a number of options in relation to countryside access and I will give careful consideration to all options put forward.

Question No. 27 answered with Question No. 9.

Regeneration Projects Status

28. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the plans he has developed for the revitalisation of town centres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28000/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department remains committed to working with local government and other community development and enterprise stakeholders to ensure that a recovering economy will result in an even distribution of opportunity. In this regard there is a need to target, in an integrated way, urban areas which face particular problems resulting from both the economic downturn and investments in the past which did not facilitate the development of sustainable communities capable of benefiting from the period of high prosperity or coping with the subsequent downturn. Major regeneration programmes in Ballymun and Limerick together with a range of other remedial works schemes across the country are being prioritised to assist in addressing this deficit. In addition, I am also seeking to ensure that the forward planning process plays a part in supporting urban development. My Department recently published statutory guidelines for planning authorities on Development Contributions. These contain a strong focus on supporting vibrant town centres by directing planning authorities to put in place reduced rates of development contributions or waivers to support town centre development and to incentivise activity through lower development contributions in the areas prioritised for development in the relevant core strategy.

Water Services Provision

29. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the level of funding provided by his Department to local authorities to maintain water services, including the National Drinking Water Monitoring Programme; and if he

will outline the cost of the water assets and liabilities being transferred by Dublin City Council and other local authorities to Irish Water. [27068/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The overall strategy of investment in water services is to ensure that the timing and scale of investment facilitates economic and other development, achieves compliance with statutory requirements and promotes environmental sustainability objectives. The main vehicles for achieving these objectives have been the multi-annual Water Services Investment Programme 2010-2013 (*WSIP*) and the Rural Water Programme (*RWP*).

Since the current WSIP was introduced in 2010 my Department has provided just over €1 billion to local authorities for capital projects up to the end of 2012, and has also recouped €207 million to local authorities under the RWP over the same period. A further €326 million is being made available under the WSIP and RWP in 2013. The contracts funded include contracts to address deficiencies in the quality of supply, to improve the overall capacity of the system and an accelerated programme of mains rehabilitation, and they were strongly influenced by *inter alia* reports by the Environmental Protection Agency on drinking water quality. The series of reforms currently being advanced in the water sector by the Government is designed to support additional investment in the sector. As part of this strategy, a specific work-stream is considering the matters arising in the proposed transfer of the responsibility for capital programme delivery from the 34 local authorities to Irish Water.

The transfer of assets from the existing water services authorities to Irish Water supports the overall objective of delivering efficiencies within the sector by allowing Irish Water to control assets, revenues and costs, thereby supporting better economies of scale in terms of both capital investment and operating costs, and optimise borrowing capacity. The identification and valuation of the relevant asset base and the development of policy and legislation for the transfer of these assets is being progressed.

Question No. 30 answered with Question No. 6.

Water and Sewerage Scheme Grants

31. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to enhance the group sewerage scheme grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27972/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 642 of 11 June 2013, which outlines the position on this matter.

Priory Hall Development

32. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the date on which Mr. Justice Finnegan will furnish his report to him on all outstanding issues connected with Priory Hall, Dublin; and if he will confirm that his Department will continue to provide all available assistance to displaced former residents of Priory Hall. [27067/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The resolution process in respect of the problems associated with the development at

Priory Hall, which I understand is on-going, arose in the context of legal proceedings which were adjourned to afford relevant parties the opportunity to work together, under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Finnegan (retired President of the High Court), to identify a way forward in relation to the complex problems at Priory Hall. Neither I nor my Department is a party to those proceedings. Given that the matter is before the courts, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further other than to continue to urge all concerned to afford Mr. Justice Finnegan the opportunity to complete the task which he is undertaking.

I am supportive of the Priory Hall residents and my Department is supporting the efforts of Dublin City Council on their behalf, and has previously assisted the Council, in consultation with NAMA, in securing alternative temporary accommodation for many of the residents. My Department has to date contributed in excess of €670,000 towards the costs necessarily incurred by Dublin City Council, in the context of a judgment of the High Court, in providing temporary accommodation for households evacuated from Priory Hall. Dublin City Council is the designated authority with powers to enforce the statutory requirements arising under the Fire Safety Act, the Building Control Acts and the Planning and Development Acts, all of which are at issue in relation to Priory Hall. The Council is also the designated Housing Authority under the Housing Acts. I am aware of the significant efforts that have been made by the Council, with the assistance of my Department, to provide for the needs of residents to date and I understand that the Council will continue to work proactively on behalf of the residents towards achieving the much needed resolution of the issues at Priory Hall.

Wind Energy Guidelines

33. **Deputy John Halligan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will set out in detail the process through which a company such as a particular company (details supplied) would establish an offshore wind farm in the foreshore, as is currently proposed for the Kish Bank, including when the licence was granted and the nature of the public consultation process surrounding the granting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28074/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 567 and 568 of 11 June 2013.

Local Government Reform

34. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if a decision has been made on the powers that will be transferred from city and county manager to elected councillors; and when the relevant legislation will be drafted. [28069/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Action Programme for Effective Local Government - Putting People First, sets out Government decisions for a range of local government reform measures, including matters covered in Chapter 11 to reinforce the primacy of the elected council within the local government system and to rebalance the role of the council in relation to the present position of county manager. These include stronger and more explicit statutory expression in relation to the powers of elected members and the duty of the manager/chief executive to comply with policy as set down by the elected council, together with measures to strengthen the capacity generally of the

elected council to oversee the business of the authority. The relationship between manager and members will also be changed to that of chief executive and “board of directors”, appropriate to a modern system of administration, which better reflects the fact that the primary function of the manager/chief executive is to implement policy determined by the elected council.

Some important new reserved functions are also being created, for example, the adoption of economic development plans, local and community development plans, and service plans. In addition, the scope for further extension of the reserved functions of elected members will be pursued in the implementation of the reform programme and their functions will also be strengthened in the context of the new system of municipal districts.

Details in relation to these measures will be set out in the legislation which is required to provide for the wide range of measures in the Action Programme for Effective Local Government. Work on drafting the Local Government Bill 2013 is proceeding satisfactorily and I am firmly committed to ensuring that the Bill will be published in good time to enable enactment well ahead of the 2014 local elections.

Housing Issues

35. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will set out the objectives with specific targets in respect of the implementation of a comprehensive capital housing programme with particular reference to the need to meet the requirements of the more than 100,000 families currently on local authority waiting lists and the need to provide family type accommodation, a dearth of which is obvious at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27981/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government’s housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support. I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs. In terms of addressing the demand for social housing, the social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €287m in 2013 and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes. The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012 I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department’s housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014. Delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government’s objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management

Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure delivery of housing units for social purposes. In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities must operate the final outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 5,000 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

36. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the new initiatives taken by him to tackle the problems in areas of high deprivation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28050/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): While a number of Government Departments have initiatives to tackle problems in areas of high deprivation, my Department focuses in particular on community and housing issues. My Department's Community Division has two key objectives: to facilitate integrated development at local level and foster vibrant, sustainable and inclusive communities; and to support the Community and Voluntary Sector in its contribution to an active, democratic and pluralist society.

In this regard, my Department is responsible for a range of programmes and initiatives to support communities experiencing high deprivation. These include the Local and Community Development Programme, the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, the Seniors Alert Scheme, the RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Programme, the Scheme to Support National Organisations in the Community and Voluntary Sector, as well as other supports for volunteering, the Forum on Philanthropy and Fundraising and the EU co-funded Peace III and Interreg IVA programmes. Many of these programmes and schemes prioritise disadvantaged communities, focusing on those most in need.

My Department's housing capital programme also places a very high priority on continued support for urban regeneration, including the very large schemes typified by those in Dublin and Limerick but also through a programme of works in individual estates around the country. The regeneration programme places a central importance on social and economic regeneration to accompany the rebuilding of the physical fabric of disadvantaged communities.

One of my main priorities has been fundamentally to review and re-shape local government, and that focus has led to the publication in October 2012 of Putting People First and the report on the alignment of Local Government and Local Development. In the changing landscape for the community and local government sectors, and having regard to my Department's response to differing priorities, my primary concern is to ensure that front-line services, particularly those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities, are protected to the greatest extent possible.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Issues

37. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to deal with local authority built housing which is affected by pyrite such as some homes in Griffith Heights, Dublin 11 which are not covered by the Pyrite

Report. [27063/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): My Department is currently supporting pyrite remediation works at a number of locations in the Dublin City and Fingal areas. Local authorities are responsible for addressing pyrite issues relating to their properties and submit proposals to my Department where remediation works are required, including works relating to pyrite heave.

I understand that properties owned by Dublin City Council at Griffith Heights are not affected by pyrite heave and there are no proposals with my Department in this regard.

Homeless Persons Supports

38. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the recent report from Dublin Region Homeless Agency on the number of persons sleeping rough in the city; his plans to address the growth in these numbers and to provide sufficient emergency accommodation spaces; and his Department’s short, middle and long-term targets in relation to this issue. [27052/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The stubbornly high number of rough sleepers recently reported for Dublin reflects the significant challenge facing the Government, the voluntary sector and other agencies in tackling homelessness.

My Department’s role in relation to homelessness involves the provision of a national framework of policy, legislation and funding to underpin the role of housing authorities in addressing homelessness at local level. Statutory responsibility in relation to the provision of accommodation and related services for homeless persons rests with the housing authorities. Expenditure on homeless accommodation and related services of approximately €50 million will be funded by my Department and housing authorities in 2013. While it is clear that a proportion of funding must be used to provide sufficient bed capacity to accommodate those in need of emergency accommodation it is equally important that resources are channelled to deliver more permanent responses in a more focused and strategic way.

When I published the Homelessness Policy Statement, I outlined the Government’s aim to end long-term homelessness by the end of 2016. The statement emphasises a housing-led approach which is about accessing permanent housing as the primary response to all forms of homelessness. The availability and supply of secure, affordable and adequate housing is essential in ensuring sustainable tenancies and ending long-term homelessness. A set of indicators will be used to demonstrate the dynamics of homelessness as it is addressed. These indicators will give a clearer picture of homelessness in Ireland and, in quantifying its on-going extent, will support the bringing forward of realistic and practical solutions.

The arrangements for devolving homelessness funding to the lead housing authority in each of the 9 regions in 2013 will seek to ensure that the measures being pursued by housing authorities reflect the housing-led approach, that actions are in place towards achieving the target of ending long-term homelessness by the end of 2016 and that evidence to support progress will be presented through the reports on the indicators.

Leader Programmes Funding

39. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if, in the context of the recent LEADER programme funding allocations, his attention has been drawn to the disparity of the new allocation of moneys to Comhar na nOileain Teoranta for Connemara and all Gaeltacht regions from the original allocation to Meitheal Forbatha na Gaeltachta Teoranta; and the steps that will be taken to ensure the communities served by Comhar na nOileáin Teo do not lose out on account of the delay in putting in place a new administration brought about by the legal complexities arising from the collapse of MFG. [28079/13]

64. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if Gaeltacht areas will be prioritised in the review of LEADER funding in August to take account of the inability of LEADER applications to be processed for communities located in Gaeltacht areas during the time consumed in winding up MFG and appointing a new administrative body. [28080/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 39 and 64 together.

My Department recently completed a full review of expenditure under the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 in order to apportion the remaining funding among all the Local Development Companies (LDCs) contracted to deliver the Programme. My Department used the LDCs' original percentage of the Programme to allocate the remaining funding. In the case of Meitheal Forbartha na Gaeltachta (MFG) this would have amounted to some €3.8 million. My Department, however, provided €6 million specifically for the Gaeltacht areas formerly served by MFG. Comhar na nOileáin Teoranta has been allocated a total of €2,122,427 to fund both MFG legacy files and new projects. This equates to more than 35% of the total revised national allocation for Gaeltacht areas. My Department has undertaken to review the level of uncommitted monies in all LDCs in Autumn 2013. If there is funding to be reallocated, due consideration will be given to Gaeltacht areas in that regard.

Fire Service Issues

40. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline in tabular form the funding his Department allocated to each local authority for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 for their respective fire service. [28064/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The provision of a fire service in its functional area, including the establishment and maintenance of a fire brigade, the assessment of fire cover needs, the provision of a premises and the making of such other provisions as it considers necessary or desirable, is a statutory function of individual fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Act 1981.

My Department supports fire authorities through the setting of general policy and guidance, and the provision of capital funding, including the recoupment (within the overall funding available) of costs incurred by fire authorities in relation to the approved purchase of fire appliances and emergency equipment as well as construction and upgrading of fire stations. Continued investment in the fire appliance fleet has been identified as a key national priority for the available capital funds.

The following table details funding allocated to each Local Authority by year from 2009 to date:

Questions - Written Answers

| Fire Authority | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 to date | Cumulative |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|----------|----------|--------------|------------|
| Athlone Town Council | €0 | €0 | €0 | €0 | €0 | €0 |
| Carlow County Council | €205,509 | €89,421 | €271,863 | €345,252 | €49,774 | €961,819 |
| Cavan County Council | €589,072 | €751,785 | €315,689 | €95,883 | €0 | €1,752,429 |
| Clare County Council | €2,012,619 | €692,365 | €852,194 | €0 | €16,504 | €3,573,682 |
| Cork City Council | €459,071 | €196,412 | €313,335 | €0 | €0 | €968,818 |
| Cork County Council | €1,150,287 | €1,355,710 | €349,899 | €627,597 | €555,091 | €4,038,584 |
| Donegal County Council | €425,457 | €1,185,592 | €219,304 | €219,998 | €0 | €2,050,351 |
| Drogheda Corporation | €103,500 | €634,357 | €69,797 | €0 | €21,284 | €828,938 |
| Dublin City Council | €3,580,888 | €1,096,167 | €389,697 | €512,807 | €106,552 | €5,686,111 |
| Dundalk Town Council | €130,000 | €0 | €204,448 | €18,500 | €0 | €352,948 |
| Dun-laoghaire/Rathdown County Council | €0 | €0 | €0 | €40,000 | €0 | €40,000 |
| Fingal County Council | €0 | €0 | €0 | €40,000 | €0 | €40,000 |
| Galway County Council* | €946,710 | €680,207 | €935,795 | €878,221 | €0 | €3,440,933 |
| Kerry County Council | €179,301 | €308,344 | €358,414 | €76,255 | €0 | €922,314 |
| Kildare County Council | €0 | €1,796,426 | €0 | €633,067 | €0 | €2,429,493 |
| Kilkenny County Council | €880,323 | €838,854 | €654,923 | €55,406 | €0 | €2,429,506 |
| Laois County Council | €948,577 | €366,522 | €192,356 | €5,380 | €0 | €1,512,835 |
| Leitrim County Council | €462,323 | €522,653 | €69,868 | €71,156 | €0 | €1,126,000 |

| Fire Authority | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 to date | Cumulative |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|----------|--------------|------------|
| Limerick City Council | €94,921 | €125,317 | €567,690 | €284,979 | €0 | €1,072,907 |
| Limerick County Council | €227,468 | €1,747,827 | €224,854 | €160,609 | €0 | €2,360,758 |
| Longford County Council | €414,713 | €833,971 | €407,400 | €119,032 | €0 | €1,775,116 |
| Louth County Council | €0 | €161,402 | €48,414 | €16,781 | €98,383 | €324,980 |
| Mayo County Council | €150,695 | €538,847 | €403,237 | €87,201 | €24,905 | €1,204,885 |
| Meath County Council | €264,392 | €754,644 | €179,712 | €171,282 | €0 | €1,370,030 |
| Monaghan County Council | €624,604 | €955,678 | €2,135,098 | €240,626 | €0 | €3,956,006 |
| Offaly County Council | €412,649 | €165,383 | €136,591 | €43,072 | €0 | €757,695 |
| Roscommon County Council | €523,457 | €295,088 | €455,012 | €156,925 | €0 | €1,430,482 |
| Sligo County Council | €408,913 | €609,773 | €1,052,349 | €84,961 | €0 | €2,155,996 |
| Tipp. North County Council | €1,105,672 | €170,800 | €306,941 | €4,360 | €5,000 | €1,592,773 |
| Tipp. South County Council | €832,854 | €85,100 | €409,506 | €33,165 | €0 | €1,360,625 |
| Waterford City Council | €86,608 | €401,855 | €0 | €22,656 | €0 | €511,119 |
| Waterford County Council | €1,122,601 | €497,143 | €93,482 | €70,058 | €0 | €1,783,284 |
| Westmeath County Council | €667,011 | €198,946 | €18,755 | €23,063 | €0 | €907,775 |
| Wexford County Council | €484,515 | €334,701 | €440,271 | €91,376 | €0 | €1,350,863 |
| Wicklow County Council | €1,005,290 | €308,710 | €173,106 | €560,142 | €130,728 | €2,177,976 |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Fire Authority | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 to date | Cumulative |
| Total | €20,500,000 | €18,700,000 | €12,250,000 | €5,789,810 | €1,008,221 | €58,248,031 |

**Includes Galway City.*

Leader Programmes Funding

41. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of LEADER projects of more than €150,000 that are awaiting his approval; the date each project was submitted to his Department; the total value of the projects involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28062/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Funding of approximately €370 million is available under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 for allocation to qualifying projects up to the end of 2013. There are 35 Local Action Groups (LAGs) contracted, on my Department's behalf, to deliver the RDP throughout the country and these groups are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding. Such decisions are made in the context of the local development strategy of the individual groups and in line with Departmental operating rules and EU regulations.

Projects that request funding of €150,000 or more are required to seek final approval from my Department. The assessment of these higher value projects usually involves detailed consultations between my Department and the relevant local development company. It frequently necessitates the provision of further documentation or clarifications. It may also, in some instances, result in modifications to the project proposed to ensure best value for money and compliance with all the necessary regulations, both national and European, governing the activities funded under the programme.

The policy in my Department is to work with the LAGs to ensure that the projects submitted are fully compliant and can be approved rather than to refuse approval for funding; it can therefore take some time to come to a final conclusion. My Department will continue to work with the relevant LAGs to make a full assessment of the eligibility of these projects and will advise the LAGs once all queries have been addressed satisfactorily. My Department currently has 44 projects at various stages of assessment to the value of €11.5 million.

| LAG | Date Received | Grant aid requested | Status |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|------------------|
| Cavan-Monaghan LEADER | 05-Jun-13 | €177,517.61 | Under Assessment |
| Clare Local Development Company Ltd. | 18-Jan-13 | €200,000.00 | Under Assessment |
| Clare Local Development Company Ltd | 20-May -13 | €185,000.00 | Under Assessment |
| Comhar na nOileán Teoranta | 30-May-13 | €182,599.35 | Under Assessment |
| Comhar na nOileán Teoranta | 07-Jun-13 | €200,000.00 | Under Assessment |

| LAG | Date Received | Grant aid requested | Status |
|--|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Donegal Local Development Company Ltd. | 18-Apr-13 | €200,000.00 | Under Assessment |
| Fingal LEADER Partnership Co | 30-Oct-12 | €493,385.02 | Under Assessment |
| FORUM Connemara Ltd | 23-Aug-12 | €431,887.50 | Under Assessment |
| FORUM Connemara Ltd. | 11-Feb-13 | €324,766.19 | Under Assessment |
| County Kildare LEADER Partnership | 01-Mar-13 | €200,000.00 | Awaiting Information |
| County Kildare LEADER Partnership | 03-May-13 | €356,450.24 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 04-Dec-12 | €300,000.00 | Under Assessment |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 04-Dec-12 | €268,125.00 | Under Assessment |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 16-Jan-13 | €497,212.87 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 12-Jan-13 | €200,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 03-Apr-13 | €205,867.43 | Under Assessment |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 05-Nov-12 | €428,868.75 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny Leader Partnership | 16-Jan-13 | €225,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny Leader Partnership | 16-Jan-13 | €255,384.18 | Awaiting information |
| Kilkenny LEADER Partnership | 03-May-13 | €169,237.50 | Under Assessment |
| Leitrim Integrated Development Co Ltd | 20-Feb-13 | €376,641.00 | Under Assessment |
| Mayo North East LEADER Partnership | 03-Oct-12 | €194,725.50 | Under Assessment |
| Mayo North East LEADER Partnership | 03-Nov-11 | €196,386.75 | Under Assessment |
| Meath Community Rural and Social Dev. | 19-Mar-13 | €196,934.79 | Awaiting information |
| North Tipperary LEADER Partnership | 16-Jul-12 | €407,675.25 | Under Assessment |

Questions - Written Answers

| LAG | Date Received | Grant aid requested | Status |
|--|---------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| North Tipperary LEADER Partnership | 18-Jan-13 | €199,993.63 | Awaiting information |
| Roscommon Integrated Development Co | 27-Feb-13 | €196,925.00 | Under Assessment |
| Roscommon Integrated Development Co | 13-May-13 | €172,092.85 | Under Assessment |
| South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd. | 28-Nov-12 | €500,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| South and East Cork Area Dev Ltd. | 13-Mar-13 | €330,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| South Kerry Development Ltd. | 21-Dec-12 | €500,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| South Kerry Development Ltd. | 25-Jan-13 | €168,392.50 | Under Assessment |
| South Kerry Development Ltd. | 25-Feb-13 | €194,538.96 | Under Assessment |
| South West Mayo Development Company | 24-Jan-13 | €196,911.00 | Awaiting information |
| South West Mayo Development Company | 21-Dec-12 | €200,000.00 | Awaiting information |
| Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd. | 01-Mar-13 | €183,310.00 | Under Assessment |
| Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd. | 12-Mar-13 | €198,624.04 | Under Assessment |
| Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd. | 14-Mar-13 | €154,927.50 | Under Assessment |
| Waterford LEADER Partnership Ltd. | 10-Apr-13 | €200,000.00 | Awaiting Assessment |
| West Cork Development Partnership Ltd. | 11-Mar-13 | €194,400.00 | Under Assessment |
| West Limerick Resources Ltd | 21-Dec-12 | €196,313.77 | Under Assessment |
| West Limerick Resources Ltd | 26-Feb-13 | €200,000.00 | Under Assessment |
| Westmeath Community Development Ltd | 27-Mar-13 | €461,809.41 | Under Assessment |
| Wexford Local Development | 31-May-13 | €193,383.86 | Under Assessment |

Housing Issues

42. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has met with the Department of Social Protection in relation to the development of a dedicated pathway as suggested by Focus Ireland to provide sufficient support to those under 25 years living in emergency accommodation to move to more stable and suitable housing. [27054/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Neither I nor my Department have met with the Department of Social Protection in this regard and no such meeting has been proposed.

Irish Water Expenditure

43. **Deputy Brian Stanley** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the cost of establishing Irish Water, including wages, contracting out services and programme spending. [28063/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Fergus O’Dowd): The *Water Sector Reform Implementation Strategy*, which is published on my Department’s website, is focused on ensuring that appropriate policy and legal frameworks are put in place for Irish Water and the water sector. A key objective is to rationalise the cost of the current service delivery and ensure more efficient operation of water services by moving from 34 water services authorities to a single body; following enactment of comprehensive legislation later this year, Irish Water will, therefore, become the water services authority from 1 January 2014.

The implementation strategy is being rolled out under a range of work streams which involve local authority, Departmental and Bord Gáis personnel and using the range of skills and experience in these organisations. Bord Gáis are also engaged in an on-going process of seconding staff from local authorities and the Department to support work on the Irish Water programme. A process of direct recruitment has also commenced. External service providers, appointed by Bord Gáis by way of public procurement processes, will be involved in various aspects of the programme including company establishment, customer service and billing and the water metering programme. The Department is not providing funding to Bord Gáis for the establishment costs or the metering programme.

It will be a matter for the Commission for Energy Regulation in due course to satisfy itself in relation to the appropriateness of costs incurred in the operation of Irish Water as part of the process of setting the tariffs for both the domestic and non-domestic sectors in the future. It is envisaged that the Commission will engage in public consultation as part of this process.

Property Taxation Application

44. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the way he expects local authorities to cover the cost of the local property tax on their social housing stock; and if he will issue a directive that local authority rents should not be raised as a result of the property tax bill. [27061/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): In accordance with section 58 of the Housing Act 1966, housing authorities are responsible for determining the rents of their dwellings, subject to complying with broad principles laid down by my Department, notably that the rent payable should

be related to income and that low-income households should pay a lower proportion of income in rent. Within these parameters, it is a matter for housing authorities, as an integral part of their housing management functions, to ensure that their rental income reflects, as far as practicable, the cost of managing and maintaining their housing stock.

The current arrangements for determining local authority rents will be substantially replaced on the coming into force of section 31 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, which predates, and does not refer to, the Local Property Tax legislation. On enactment of the Housing (Amendment) Bill 2013 currently before the House, I will be arranging to make regulations under section 31 re-affirming the principle that rents should be related to household income and composition, and reflecting the requirement that housing authorities should set rent levels that take account, as far as practicable, of the cost of providing works and services to, and managing and maintaining, their rented accommodation. I intend to ask the Housing Agency to provide the relevant guidance to housing authorities to assist them in making their rent schemes to ensure that they comply with the these Regulations.

Local Government Reform Expenditure

45. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the estimated total cost of new councillor numbers in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27986/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The total cost of allowances for additional councillors in the Dublin local authorities is currently estimated to be around €1.5 million per annum. This additional cost will arise from reducing the degree of representational imbalance currently in the Dublin authorities and should also be viewed in the context of overall savings in allowances, which are currently estimated at €3.68 million per annum, which will arise from the reduction of 1,627 local authority members nationally to 949.

Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

46. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if, in advance of the transfer of the administration of the rental supplement scheme to local authorities, he has consulted with the Department of Social Protection on the issue of allowing local authorities leeway in determining differential rental caps within their respective cities/counties; his plans to follow this model to cater for substantial differences in market rental rates within counties such as Wicklow, Meath and Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27979/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Until the transfer of responsibility for long-term rent supplement recipients to local authorities takes place the setting of rent limits under the rent supplement scheme remains the responsibility of the Department of Social Protection. The details of the proposed Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) Scheme are currently being developed by my Department in conjunction with the Department of Social Protection, the County and City Managers Association and other relevant stakeholders.

It is envisaged under the proposed HAP Scheme that local authorities would set appropriate rent limits for their functional areas. The process of how such limits will be set and any con-

sultation required in determining them will be developed in due course, and agreed by Government.

Rural Development Policy

47. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his Department is the lead Department responsible for rural development; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28052/13]

58. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when it is intended that CEDRA will report to him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28060/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 47 and 58 together.

Responsibility for various aspects of rural development rests with a number of Departments. The Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine (DAFM) primarily deals with rural development issues ‘inside the farm gate’, whereas my Department deals with rural development issues ‘outside the farm gate’. DAFM also has overall responsibility for Ireland’s Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, which is co-funded by the EU and the Exchequer, and forms a key part of Rural Development Policy.

My Department also has responsibility for the implementation of :

- I. The 1999 White Paper on Rural Development Ensuring the Future - A Strategy for Rural Development in Ireland,
- II. The LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013, and
- III. The National Countryside Recreation Strategy including the Walks Scheme and Comhairle na Tuaithe.

In addition, the Western Development Commission operates under the aegis of my Department. A number of other Departments administer schemes directed at rural communities e.g. the Department of Social Protection administers the Rural Social Scheme and the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport administers the Rural Transport Programme.

Minister Coveney and I established the Commission for the Economic Development of Rural Areas (CEDRA) in September 2012 and tasked it to investigate the opportunities and challenges facing rural populations in the current economic climate. Since then the Commission has been working towards the publication of a report that will inform policies and strategies to support the economic development of rural Ireland into the future. The Commission, led by its Chair, Mr Pat Spillane, has been engaging in an extensive schedule of meetings with stakeholder groups and the public over recent months looking at the many issues that affect life in rural Ireland at present. The Commission is also conducting a parallel research process and has invited interested parties to make submissions directly to it via its website at www.ruralireland.ie. There is also an option to complete an online questionnaire. To date 60 questionnaires have been completed. In addition, 108 submissions have been received. In total between the consultation and research exercises 850 contributions have been received to date for consideration in the CEDRA research process. The Commission presented its preliminary findings at a conference in NUI Maynooth earlier this week with the final report due in October 2013.

I believe there is clear evidence that rural communities all over Ireland have embraced the CEDRA research process. I am confident that the information that emerges from this process will provide invaluable insights into the potential for the economic development of rural areas and will assist policy making into the future. I look forward to receiving the final report, and I and my colleagues in Government will give due consideration to its findings and make decisions regarding the appropriate actions to be taken.

Rural Recreation Promotion

48. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if Comhairle na Tuaithe has made any recommendation in relation to legislating for countryside access; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28058/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Comhairle Na Tuaithe, was established in January 2004 to address the three priority issues of:

- Access to the countryside
- Developing a countryside code
- Developing the National Countryside Recreation Strategy (published in 2006).

Through Comhairle Na Tuaithe (CNaT), a set of agreed parameters to facilitate access to the countryside for recreational users were set out. The then Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs formed the view that the best way forward was to develop permissive access with the agreement of landholders via such initiatives as the Walks Scheme and Pilot Mountain Access Projects. These initiatives developed through CNaT continue to be implemented by a team of Rural Recreation Officers, employed by Local Development Companies, who also assist in resolving access issues on the ground. The consensus approach adopted is underpinned by the principle of mutual respect between landowners and recreational users, with the acceptance of the rights of landowners in regard to access to their land and the need for recreational users to have reasonable access to the countryside. To date, Comhairle na Tuaithe has made no recommendation in relation to legislating for countryside access.

RAPID Programme

49. **Deputy Willie O’Dea** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of RAPID AITs that have full time co-ordinators; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28054/13]

57. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the names of the chairs of the RAPID area implementation teams; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28049/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 49 and 57 together.

The information requested in the question is being up-to-dated by my Department. I will arrange for the compiled data to be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible.

RAPID Programme

50. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he intends winding up the RAPID programme; if not, the actions he will take to ensure this programme delivers on its aims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28048/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The RAPID programme aims to ensure that priority attention is given to tackling the spatial concentration of poverty and social exclusion in RAPID areas nationally. The programme has made substantial progress in identifying the needs of disadvantaged communities and in bringing forward appropriate local projects in response to those needs.

I have provided funding of €2 million for RAPID in 2013, which will be used to meet the Department's existing contractual commitments on RAPID projects throughout the country, mainly Sports Capital top-ups and CCTV systems, jointly funded with the Departments of Transport, Tourism and Sport and Justice and Equality respectively.

The RAPID programme like other community development programmes will be considered in the context of the alignment of local government and local development under the Local Government Reform Programme, Putting People First. In implementing local government reform decisions, my Department will continue to consult as necessary with the relevant stakeholders, including local authorities, Local Development Companies, RAPID Area Implementation Teams and others. My Department will seek to ensure that RAPID areas are prioritised for purposes of social inclusion measures in 2013 and beyond.

Building Regulations Amendments

51. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to revise building regulations to regulate the retrofitting of septic tanks; the plans, if any, he has to introduce a grant for upgrading of septic tanks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27973/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Building Regulations normally apply to new dwellings and to existing dwellings where a material change is being carried out. Where a service is being replaced then the requirements of the building regulations specific to the replacement apply. Part H of the Second Schedule to the Building Regulations, 1997 to 2010, provides for the disposal of foul and surface water. A copy of the Building Regulations (Part H Amendment) Regulations 2010 is available in the Oireachtas library. The related Technical Guidance Document TGDH, Drainage and Waste Water Disposal, provides guidance on how to achieve compliance with this Building Regulation.

Given that the current regulations and related guidance already set out requirements in respect of septic tanks, there is no requirement to further amend Part H of the Building Regulations. In December 2012, I announced my intention to introduce a grant scheme to provide financial assistance to households whose septic tanks and other domestic wastewater treatment systems are deemed to require remediation following an inspection under the Water Services (Amendment) Act 2012. The grants scheme will only apply to works arising from an inspection and subsequent issue of an advisory notice under the Water Services (Amendment) Act, 2012 and only householders who have complied with the obligation to register their systems by 1st February, 2013 will be eligible to apply for grant aid. Full details of the scheme will be set out

in regulations which I will make shortly.

National Spatial Strategy

52. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the progress he has made on the creation of a new national spatial strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27999/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The 2002 National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is Ireland’s first national strategic spatial planning framework. It provides the spatial vision and principles to achieve a better balance of social, economic and physical development and population growth between regions through the co-ordinated development of nine gateway cities and towns and nine hub towns together with complementary policies to activate the potential for lasting economic development in their hinterlands and wider regions. The NSS serves as a strategic context for spatial planning in Ireland by regional authorities in their regional planning guidelines role and for planning authorities and An Bord Pleanála in their statutory planning functions. It also seeks to influence investment priorities particularly in transport, housing, water services, communications, energy, health and education infrastructure. The 2002 NSS remains in place. However, proposals will be brought to Government later this year for a roadmap to develop a successor strategy that will take account, *inter alia*, of our significantly changed economic circumstances and to contribute to sustainable national recovery.

Water Services Provision

53. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which provision has been made to meet in full domestic drinking water requirements in the short to medium term; if decisions have been made regarding sourcing of the extra supplies required; if, from existing or groundwater sources, the River Shannon is seen as a means of supplementing such supplies; the extent to which the full requirement by 2030 has been determined with the necessary purification and or treatment plans; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27980/13]

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which any evaluation has been done of the domestic and industrial water requirements on a regional basis throughout the country; the extent of the provision being made to meet such requirements over a specific period in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28382/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 53 and 156 together.

The overall strategy of investment in water services is to ensure that the timing and scale of investment facilitates economic and other development, achieves compliance with statutory requirements and promotes environmental sustainability objectives. The main vehicle for achieving these objectives for public domestic water supplies is the multi-annual Water Services Investment Programme. The current Programme, which runs to the end of 2013, provides for the commencement of contracts with a value of over €800m in relation to water supply infrastructure. This includes contracts to address deficiencies in the quality of supply, to improve the overall capacity of the system and an accelerated programme of mains rehabilitation. The Programme also provides for the advancement of a further range of schemes through planning,

for progression to construction in future investment cycles.

The water supply/demand balance in the Greater Dublin Region is considered to be finely balanced at present, with little surplus treatment capacity by international norms. Increased treatment capacity through the expansion of the Ballymore-Eustace Water Treatment Plant, provision of the new Srowland Water Treatment Plant in Kildare using the River Barrow as the source and the expansion of the Leixlip Water Treatment Plant, together with the active water-main replacement/rehabilitation strategy within the region, will address the needs of the Greater Dublin Region in the short/medium-term.

However, studies have shown that in order to meet the long-term demand and to achieve a water supply/demand balance that is in line with international norms, a new source capable of providing up to 250 megalitres per day together with increased treatment capacity for this volume is required before the year 2020 and a further 100 megalitres per day capacity is required by 2030. To address the future requirements in the region, Dublin City Council, as the lead authority, is promoting the Dublin Water Supply Scheme (Long-Term Water Source) project, which is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 as a scheme to advance through planning. Dublin City Council has completed a Strategic Environmental Assessment and a Preliminary Report for the project. They are now in the process of appointing consultants to advance the detailed planning, statutory processes and ultimately the procurement of the elements comprising the recommended option.

Local Authority Housing Provision

54. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide funding to local authorities to build specific instance houses in rural areas to accommodate families in rural communities acknowledging that they are a very cost effective way of providing social housing and recognise the rural nature of many local authority areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27065/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): In submitting proposals for funding under my Department's Social Housing Investment Programme (SHIP), it is a matter for each local authority to determine the nature, location and relative priority of individual projects, including projects for meeting housing need in rural areas. It is normal practice for many local authorities to submit proposals for single instance houses in rural areas as part of their overall social housing funding requirements under SHIP.

In June 2012, my Department invited each city and county council to submit proposals for the purchase or construction of new social housing units over the period 2012-2014. Some €30 million was approved to advance the construction of 185 houses, largely to meet the specific accommodation needs of certain categories of tenants, including rural dwellers. Approvals were based on the prioritisation afforded to the proposals by the local authority and included the construction of a number of specific instance houses in rural areas, including three such houses in Donegal.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Expenditure

55. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the fact that Dublin City Council has confirmed to councillors that it is spending €1.5 million more per year on the rental accommodation

scheme than is given to it by his Department; if this is the case in any other local authority; the reason this is the case and the action his Department is taking to ensure that RAS is sufficiently funded. [27062/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 573 of 11 June. I have already confirmed that funding for the Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) is provided by a transfer of monies from the Department of Social Protection’s Vote to the Vote of my Department on an Exchequer neutral basis to meet the costs of persons transferring from the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Rent Supplement Scheme to the RAS. Therefore as already set out the issue of local authorities incurring costs in excess of the overall amount provided by my Department does not arise.

Social and Affordable Housing Provision

56. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to aid local authorities in developing new more independent housing structures which could seek financing for the provision of social housing in a similar fashion to voluntary housing bodies. [27053/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government’s housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support. I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs. In terms of addressing the demand for social housing, the social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €287m in 2013 and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes.

The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012 I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department’s housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014.

Delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. In the case of local authorities any such initiatives must avoid having any negative implications for public debt. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government’s objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure delivery of housing units for social purposes.

In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities must operate the final outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 5,000 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013.

Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 49.

Question No. 58 answered with Question No. 47.

Local Authority Housing Issues

59. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if his attention has been drawn to the recent call by NABCO and ICSH for investment in social housing which would support jobs; and if he is considering any proposals to undertake an investment package in social housing which would increase housing stock, improve conditions and create jobs. [27058/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Government’s housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support. I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs.

In terms of addressing the demand for social housing, my Department’s social housing capital budget has been reduced from €1.535 billion in 2008 to €287 million in 2013 and the financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes.

The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012, I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department’s housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014. In line with the Government’s Housing Policy Statement which was published in 2011, delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. My Department is actively engaged with various interested parties in this respect.

There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government’s objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA in identifying

suitable housing units for social purposes and this process is on-going. These deliberations have also identified suitably located sites which require substantial works to finish out and NAMA is investing accordingly thus bringing about obvious benefits in terms of job creation.

Earlier this year, I introduced a new €10 million energy retrofitting measure for older local authority dwellings, based around roof and wall insulation and with the potential to reduce energy bills by around €400 per year. Last week the Government committed to providing an additional €50 million to accelerate this programme and ensure that up to 25,000 homes are fully insulated and draught-proofed by mid-2015. In addition to providing immediate benefits to the families concerned, this new investment package has the capacity to create approximately 1,000 new jobs and reduce carbon emissions by some 30,000 tonnes per year – an important contribution to Ireland's climate change strategy.

The Housing Policy Statement specifically identifies approved housing bodies (AHBs), such as those represented by ICSH and NABCO, as key partners in the delivery of social housing. This recognises both the constrained funding levels available for local authority construction programmes and the capacity and track-record of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector.

AHBs are uniquely placed to help drive the achievement of the housing supply responses set out in the policy statement. However, the move from capital funded programmes of construction and acquisition by approved housing bodies to more revenue funded options presents challenges for them. As such, I am developing an enabling regulatory framework for the sector that will provide support and assurance both to the sector itself and to its external partners as it takes on the expanded role envisaged for it in the policy statement.

The development of a regulatory framework will take time. In the meantime, I am engaging with the sector on the development of a voluntary regulation code which, I would hope, most approved housing bodies will sign up to over time and I expect to publish a final version of this code in the coming weeks.

My Department, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, is also exploring a range of options for external investment in social housing including, *inter alia*, social housing bonds and social impact bonds. Such options are still in development. In some instances, this could potentially enable sizeable lending by the European Investment Bank and others to the AHB sector.

Taken together, this package of direct Exchequer investment, new funding models and the creation of an environment that will encourage new external lending to the sector is a flexible response to the challenge of meeting social housing need in the most trying of economic circumstances.

Electoral Divisions Report

60. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the status of the report on the Constituency Commission produced in June 2012 recommending no changes to electoral boundaries for European Parliament elections; in view of a decision taken at European level to reduce Ireland's number of MEPs from 12 to 11 at the next European Parliament elections in 2014, the implications it has on the report; if he is considering forming a new Commission to report on electoral boundaries for next year's European Parliament elections in view of the number of constituencies needing to be revised; if the new report will be taking submissions from the public in a suitable timeframe as per all previous Constituency Commission reports on Dáil and European Parliament boundaries; when submis-

sions will be taken from the public regarding the boundaries; when the Commission will be reporting to the Dáil; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [26847/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Constituencies for European Parliament elections were most recently reported on in the 2012 Constituency Commission Report, where no change to the existing arrangement of European Parliament constituencies was recommended. At the time of that report there was no change to the number of members to be elected in Ireland. However, with the accession of Croatia to the European Union this year, there is a need to adjust the distribution of seats in the European Parliament. This is done on the initiative of the European Parliament which adopted a resolution on 13 March 2013 on the composition of the European Parliament for the 2014 – 2019 term. That resolution includes a reduction, from twelve to eleven, in the number of representatives to be elected in Ireland. The matter will next go to the European Council for decision by unanimity and with the consent of the European Parliament.

In the event that the number of MEPs to be elected to represent Ireland is reduced it will be necessary to review and revise the constituency arrangement. This can be addressed once decisions are made in Europe. In the meantime my Department is giving consideration to how such a review might be carried out having regard to the provisions of the relevant legislation. In that context, the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2013, currently being drafted, will provide for necessary amendments to the Electoral Act 1997.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

61. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update in the delivery of the National Asset Management Agency social housing; the cost to date to the State; and the amount it is estimated that the return of each unit will cost local authorities when the leasing arrangement ends. [27056/13]

67. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of units from the National Asset Management Agency housing stock that have been taken under control by local authorities; and the number that are occupied at this moment in time. [27057/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 61 and 67 together.

To the end of Quarter 1 2013, the transition of 263 properties from the NAMA portfolio has been completed, with contracts signed in respect of a further 76 properties. All but 24 of the 263 completed units are being made available for people deemed by the local authorities to be in need of housing. These 24 units were part of a project of 58 apartments delivered in Sandyford with the other 34 apartments delivered for social housing use. The 76 contracted properties are units where a local authority or approved housing body has signed legal contracts to take possession of properties once fitting out or other works have been completed. These works are ongoing. In addition, a further 1,198 housing units are either under consideration or under negotiation.

The current average cost of NAMA units brought into operation to date is €820 per unit per month. There is no cost to the State for an authority or approved housing body when returning a unit to its owner, if it is returned in the same condition, less fair wear and tear, as when leased.

Dormant Accounts Fund Administration

62. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when it is hoped to publish the next Dormant Accounts disbursement plan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28057/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Disbursement Plan of 2009, put in place by the former Dormant Accounts Board, will be replaced later this year by a new disbursement scheme in accordance with the Dormant Accounts (Amendment) Act 2012. My Department is consulting with relevant Government Departments and other stakeholders as appropriate in relation to the preparation of the new scheme; the scheme will be submitted to Government for approval and laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas which will have 21 days to consider it.

Property Taxation Exemptions

63. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason his Department refused to add four unfinished estates in County Wexford (details supplied) to its list of unfinished housing estates to be exempt from the local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [27982/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): An exemption from the local property tax applies to developments listed in the schedule to the Finance (Local Property Tax) Regulations 2013. The list of unfinished housing developments eligible for the exemption was compiled by local authorities utilising the categorisation employed for the purposes of the National Housing Survey 2012. The Survey was carried out over the course of summer 2012 by my Department in conjunction with local authorities and the Housing Agency. The categorisation methodology for the survey was different to that which was used in 2011 and which provided the basis for the waiver from the household charge. That earlier categorisation related largely to the level of on-site activity at the time the 2011 survey was carried out and had less to do with the physical character of a development. The 2012 survey was based purely and objectively on the actual state of completion of a development and established that there were 1,700 unfinished developments, with 1,100 of them deemed to be in a seriously problematic condition. This represents a 37% reduction in unfinished developments since 2010. Only developments that were deemed by local authorities to be in a "seriously problematic condition", regardless of whether a developer was on or off site, were included in the LPT regulations. For purposes of preparing the final list of developments to which the exemption from the local property tax would apply local authorities were asked by my Department to confirm or update the then existing list of estates in a "seriously problematic condition" as appropriate.

In relation to the developments listed in the question, the local authority included those areas in the Bridgemeanows and Riverchapel Woods developments which were in a seriously problematic condition in their return to my Department and an exemption from the Local Property Tax applies. Neither Glen Aoibhinn nor Aylesbridge were deemed by the local authority to be in a seriously problematic condition and accordingly they were not recommended for inclusion on the final list of developments.

Question No. 64 answered with Question No. 39.

65. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the other sources of funding that are available to Irish Water apart from the National Pensions Reserve Fund, public Exchequer and borrowing on the commercial market; and the way it will access this funding. [28067/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): The creation of Irish Water as a public utility, in a regulated environment, together with the introduction of domestic water charges, will allow for the building of a more sustainable and a fair funding model for the water sector in the future. The introduction of economic regulation will, inter alia, ensure that the funding certainty provided by stable and transparent regulation will help Irish Water secure third party funding to underpin increased investment and position it to become self-financing in time.

It is envisaged that in addition to funding from other sources, the State will provide financial support to Irish Water, the amount of which will be determined as part of the budgetary process.

Dormant Accounts Fund Deposits

66. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the net inflow of funds from dormant accounts in the years 2011, 2012 and to date 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28055/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Under the Dormant Accounts legislation, balances on dormant accounts with banks, building societies and An Post and the net encashment value of certain life assurance policies are paid into the Dormant Accounts Fund, which is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA). The primary purpose of the legislation is to reunite the original account holders with their moneys, including all interest due. In addition, the legislation also provides that disbursements from the fund may be made for charitable purposes or for purposes of community benefit.

The net inflows into the Dormant Accounts Fund for the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013 are €10.5m, €18.4m and €34.04m respectively. Further details of all inflows etc. can be found in tabular form on www.environ.ie. under the Dormant Accounts section of Community and Voluntary Supports.

Question No. 67 answered with Question No. 61.

Human Rights Issues

68. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has conveyed his position on the incidences of violence perpetrated by the police forces in Turkey, in which three persons have died and many more have been injured, to the Turkish Ambassador; if he intends to pursue the matter with his EU counterparts in relation to the forthcoming decision on the regional policy chapter of the *acquis* to which Turkey's accession process is due to turn; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28114/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I would draw the Deputy's attention to my response yesterday to questions posed on the current situation in Turkey. I support the call by High Representative Ashton that it is essential that all violence stops and that all cases of excessive use of force by the police are recognised as

such and investigated promptly, and that those responsible are held fully accountable. Ireland has long been supportive of Turkish EU membership and one of our EU Presidency priorities is to reinvigorate the accession process with Turkey, including by way of trying to open a negotiation Chapter, the last having been opened three years ago. We remain committed to this objective. Our support is influenced by a number of factors including the exercising through the accession perspective of a positive influence on reforms. EU-inspired reforms have, in fact, facilitated the increasing space for peaceful protest and dissenting voices. Turkey as a candidate for membership of the EU is expected to uphold the democratic values of the EU. The accession process provides a framework for ensuring Turkey's full commitment to and guarantee of human rights and fundamental freedoms for the benefits of all the citizens of the country, without discrimination. It is for this reason that we remain committed to advancing Turkey's EU accession negotiations as the most effective means of encouraging democratic reforms in line with EU norms. When I met the Turkish Foreign Minister last month at the EU-Turkey Association Council, I encouraged him to further improve the observance of fundamental rights and freedoms, including in areas such as freedom of expression.

Passport Applications

69. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the reason in a situation where the High Court has sanctioned a change of a foster child's name to that of the fostering family's name the Passport Office will not issue the passport in their new name as per change in the High Court and deed poll. [28119/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): This question refers to a case where a child is in full care of the HSE under Section 18(1) of the Child Care Act 1991. This child has been named in that Care Order using the name on their Birth Certificate as this is the child's legal name. For a Passport to be issued to a child in a name other the one recorded on the Birth Certificate and Court Order, the written consent of the birth parent or a subsequent Court order authorising the Passport office to issue a Passport in the new name is sought. I note that the child in question is not far off her 18th birthday. For this reason I would advise the applicant to contact Ms. Fiona Penollar, Head of the Molesworth Street Office in Dublin, to see how we can advance the processing of this application in these exceptional circumstances.

Consular Services Provision

70. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will investigate the case of a person (details supplied) from County Louth who is in a prison in Lithuania. [28123/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): I can inform the Deputy that the Embassy of Ireland in Lithuania and the Consular Assistance Section in Dublin has provided consular assistance to the person in question since that person's initial detention in Lithuania. The Embassy is in regular contact with the appropriate Lithuanian authorities in response to questions or matters which have arisen during the period of imprisonment. The person and his next of kin are kept informed of the Embassy's representations to the Lithuanian authorities on various matters, and the outcomes of these representations. I wish to inform the Deputy that the Department of Foreign Affairs has no role of legal representative or investigator in foreign jurisdictions.

Departmental Reports

71. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28175/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): My Department is committed to assessing its work and performance, including the conduct of *Value for Money and Policy Reviews* (VFM) in keeping with the spirit of the Public Spending Code. Under the current round of Value for Money and Policy Reviews, 2012-2014, two studies have been planned. The first, a VFM Review of Bilateral Diplomatic Missions in the EU, is coming to completion and the other, a VFM Review of Irish Aid's support to the Haiti earthquake disaster, has just commenced. Both of these studies will be made public and action will be taken in relation to recommendations. In order to ensure that such action is appropriate and timely, a system has been put in place by my Department to track and follow-up on recommendations from VFMs and other evaluations that are regularly undertaken. A whole of Government comprehensive review of expenditure was conducted in 2011. My Department made a submission to that review in July 2011. That submission, with other Departmental submissions, was published on the DPER website in December 2011.

No other Value for Money Reviews or Focused Policy Assessments have been undertaken by my Department since March 2011.

Overseas Development Aid Issues

72. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade further to Parliamentary Question No. 128 of 28 May 2013, in which he stated that 20% of Irish Aid's expenditure is on hunger reduction, if he will specifically detail the way this is measured and the type of expenditure that falls under Irish Aid's definition of hunger reduction spending. [28210/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Combating global hunger and under-nutrition is a key pillar of Ireland's overseas development assistance programme, which is a central element of our foreign policy. This commitment was renewed last month when we launched Ireland's new policy for international development, 'One World, One Future'. In 2008, Ireland's Hunger Task Force called on the Government to work towards an indicative target of directing twenty per cent of our overseas development assistance budget to hunger-related activities by 2012. We have delivered on that target, and over 20% of the Irish Aid budget is now focused on the fight to reduce hunger.

All of the work of the aid programme on the reduction of poverty naturally has an impact on hunger reduction. However, the hunger target expenditure is made up of programmes and interventions which have a significant impact on hunger reduction. These include Irish Aid's support for agriculture programmes which help poor smallholder farmers to boost their yields and diversify their crops, as well as our support for agricultural research for development. They also include Irish Aid's support for nutrition programmes and interventions, school feeding programmes, food assistance programmes and emergency food distribution.

The social protection programmes supported by Irish Aid have a significant impact on hunger reduction and are also included in our hunger target. These programmes play an important role in addressing income poverty, and improve the ability of poor people to buy more nutri-

tious food and to have two meals a day rather than one.

Health care, health education and improving the supply of drinking water and sanitation also have a significant impact on reducing hunger, and programmes which Irish Aid support in these areas are included in our hunger target.

Reaching and exceeding our 20% hunger target has involved a reorientation of our development programme to ensure a stronger hunger response at the global level and in the countries in which we work. It clearly marks Ireland out in global terms for our commitment in the fight against hunger and under-nutrition. We are determined to stay on track with this important work.

Overseas Development Aid Issues

73. **Deputy Seán Crowe** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if Irish Aid reviewed Dóchas recently published Models of Agricultural Investment research paper; and if Irish Aid plans to implement any of the recommendations contained in this paper. [28211/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): I warmly welcome the report, “Models of Agricultural Investment”, published last November by Dóchas, the umbrella organisation for Irish development NGOs. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine contributed to the report’s formulation. The report concludes that the local context is a crucial determinant of the suitability of any agricultural investment model in the developing world. I strongly share the view that a differentiated approach is necessary in working with development partners, taking account of local conditions. Combating global hunger and under-nutrition is a key pillar of Ireland’s overseas development assistance programme, as re-confirmed in the Government’s new policy for international development, ‘*One World, One Future*’. Support for poor agricultural smallholders is a core element of our strategy, which is guided by the 2008 Hunger Task Force Report. This report highlighted in particular the need to support smallholder farmers in Africa, and in particular women farmers, to increase their productivity. Through our aid programme, Ireland supports international agricultural research for development, primarily through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). Ireland advocates to ensure that CGIAR research programmes are climate-smart, gender-sensitive and nutrition-sensitive. We also support a range of smallholder support activities in our Key Partner Countries, and we prioritise the implementation of beneficial research outcomes.

The Dóchas report contains a number of recommendations. One is that evidence-based assessment is necessary for effective evaluation of the impact of work carried out by NGOs supported by the Government. I am in full agreement. Irish Aid funding decisions are based on a strong results-based management system. As a condition of funding, all NGO partners must set out clearly defined results and demonstrate strong monitoring and evaluation procedures to track those results.

The report also recommends support for the implementation of the UN Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land. As Presidency of the EU, Ireland worked to ensure that the guidelines were included in the new EU Food and Nutrition Security Implementation Plan which was adopted by EU Development Ministers at the Foreign Affairs Council on 28 May 2013.

I look forward to continuing dialogue with Dóchas on our approach to agriculture in the

fight to end extreme hunger and poverty in the world.

Trade Data

74. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will provide a list, in tabular form, in order of the highest to lowest of all of Ireland's trading partners, with the amount of trade valued, the amount our exports are to that country and the value of the imports from that country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28251/13]

Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore): In 2012, Ireland's total bilateral trade (imports to and exports from Ireland) increased by 4.7% to €318.5 billion, despite a difficult global economic environment. Total exports (merchandise and services) increased by 5.5% in nominal terms in 2012 to their highest level ever (€182 billion) and they are now 16% higher than the pre-crisis high in 2007. The total value of merchandise exports in 2012 was €92,120 million, up 1% from 2011, while total imports were valued at €49,024 million, up 1.5% on 2011. Services exports increased 11%, from €81,448 million in 2011 to €90,218 million in 2012. Figures for 2012 services exports, broken down by country will not be available from the CSO until autumn 2013.

As the Deputy is aware, the Embassy network is engaged, in close co-operation with the relevant State Agencies, in the drive to promote Irish exports through the local market teams established under the Government's Trade Strategy. The local market team, chaired by the Ambassador consists of the Embassy and representatives from the relevant State Agencies in the field. These market teams submit annual market plans as well as six monthly reports of activity, which are reviewed by the Export Trade Council, which I chair.

The following tables provides a breakdown of merchandise trade figures by total trade, exports and imports for 2012.

Irelands Trading Partners – Merchandise figures (€000) 2012

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Great Britain* | 13,857,163 | 15,411,489 | 29,268,652 |
| United States* | 18,156,979 | 6,479,864 | 24,636,843 |
| Belgium* | 13,618,547 | 958,955 | 14,577,502 |
| Germany* | 7,517,282 | 3,415,750 | 10,933,032 |
| France* | 4,403,266 | 1,905,522 | 6,308,788 |
| Switzerland* | 5,070,306 | 957,649 | 6,027,955 |
| Netherlands* | 3,324,340 | 2,369,949 | 5,694,289 |
| China* | 1,564,943 | 2,751,117 | 4,316,060 |
| Italy* | 2,672,121 | 780,239 | 3,452,360 |
| Spain* | 2,768,585 | 656,390 | 3,424,975 |
| Japan* | 2,099,983 | 734,049 | 2,834,032 |
| Northern Ireland | 1,451,370 | 1,029,877 | 2,481,247 |
| Norway | 298,417 | 938,162 | 1,236,579 |
| Sweden* | 829,848 | 378,790 | 1,208,638 |
| Poland* | 681,609 | 370,790 | 1,052,399 |
| Canada* | 781,358 | 245,929 | 1,027,287 |

Questions - Written Answers

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Nigeria | 304,540 | 676,405 | 980,945 |
| Denmark* | 525,257 | 453,173 | 978,430 |
| Mexico | 679,788 | 271,521 | 951,309 |
| Other (Intra EU) | 38,198 | 913,004 | 951,202 |
| Australia* | 724,139 | 105,556 | 829,695 |
| Singapore* | 512,701 | 297,092 | 809,793 |
| Brazil* | 255,830 | 515,713 | 771,543 |
| Turkey | 455,243 | 309,200 | 764,443 |
| Algeria | 48,197 | 715,361 | 763,558 |
| Hong Kong | 594,904 | 115,609 | 710,513 |
| Russia* | 602,619 | 102,398 | 705,017 |
| South Korea* | 355,912 | 334,185 | 690,097 |
| Other (Non-EU) | 44,991 | 620,343 | 665,334 |
| Czech Republic* | 336,965 | 297,216 | 634,181 |
| Saudi Arabia* | 626,197 | 4,144 | 630,341 |
| Israel | 553,646 | 60,435 | 614,081 |
| India* | 234,576 | 365,356 | 599,932 |
| Austria* | 331,359 | 211,896 | 543,255 |
| Portugal | 386,165 | 131,284 | 517,449 |
| Finland | 383,461 | 113,594 | 497,055 |
| Romania | 351,824 | 125,712 | 477,536 |
| Malaysia* | 240,852 | 216,157 | 457,009 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Thailand | 137,880 | 298,645 | 436,525 |
| South Africa* | 283,325 | 117,881 | 401,206 |
| United Arab Emirates* | 373,678 | 23,250 | 396,928 |
| Hungary | 277,499 | 107,579 | 385,078 |
| Taiwan | 129,423 | 252,160 | 381,583 |
| Stores and Provisions (Non EU) | 369,063 | | 369,063 |
| Ireland | | 341,849 | 341,849 |
| Argentina | 80,711 | 236,681 | 317,392 |
| Greece | 255,876 | 23,766 | 279,642 |
| Libya | 31,335 | 169,669 | 201,004 |
| Vietnam | 76,279 | 100,603 | 176,882 |
| Egypt | 135,649 | 28,006 | 163,655 |
| Indonesia | 64,874 | 97,429 | 162,303 |
| Bangladesh | 6,714 | 131,358 | 138,072 |
| Slovakia | 62,868 | 62,626 | 125,494 |
| Chile | 62,197 | 56,765 | 118,962 |
| Luxembourg | 68,819 | 47,520 | 116,339 |
| Philippines | 82,515 | 30,042 | 112,557 |

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| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|-------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Latvia | 72,836 | 37,621 | 110,457 |
| New Zealand | 69,007 | 40,378 | 109,385 |
| Lithuania | 55,704 | 52,353 | 108,057 |
| Guinea | 2,676 | 100,111 | 102,787 |
| Kuwait | 97,928 | 377 | 98,305 |
| Morocco | 68,282 | 20,376 | 88,658 |
| Bulgaria | 66,795 | 12,004 | 78,799 |
| Pakistan | 26,080 | 51,597 | 77,677 |
| Ukraine | 50,185 | 20,089 | 70,274 |
| Ghana | 54,657 | 13,535 | 68,192 |
| Lebanon | 59,460 | 5,219 | 64,679 |
| Qatar | 58,541 | 4,086 | 62,627 |
| Colombia | 33,840 | 27,173 | 61,013 |
| Serbia | 54,039 | 2,333 | 56,372 |
| Iraq | 56,038 | 88 | 56,126 |
| Venezuela | 52,467 | 1,343 | 53,810 |
| Jordan | 51,317 | 1,944 | 53,261 |
| Oman | 46,883 | 6,200 | 53,083 |
| Senegal | 51,174 | 582 | 51,756 |
| Iran | 50,752 | 767 | 51,519 |
| Croatia | 40,262 | 8,264 | 48,526 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Sri Lanka | 4,114 | 42,861 | 46,975 |
| Peru | 28,638 | 14,699 | 43,337 |
| Costa Rica | 14,260 | 28,210 | 42,470 |
| Kenya | 22,298 | 18,900 | 41,198 |
| Slovenia | 32,164 | 8,934 | 41,098 |
| Cameroon | 31,008 | 7,595 | 38,603 |
| Kazakhstan | 37,715 | 146 | 37,861 |
| Cambodia | 3,234 | 33,775 | 37,009 |
| Bahrain | 36,144 | 99 | 36,243 |
| Cyprus | 32,417 | 3,540 | 35,957 |
| Estonia | 23,685 | 11,585 | 35,270 |
| Confidential (Non EU) | | 32,945 | 32,945 |
| Malta | 23,816 | 9,006 | 32,822 |
| Iceland | 23,434 | 8,755 | 32,189 |
| Congo | 31,709 | 262 | 31,971 |
| Congo (Dem Rep) | 30,907 | 6 | 30,913 |
| Tunisia | 15,095 | 12,422 | 27,517 |
| Andorra | 355 | 26,843 | 27,198 |
| Dominican Republic | 13,213 | 8,043 | 21,256 |
| Syria | 18,102 | 325 | 18,427 |

Questions - Written Answers

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|-----------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Mauritius | 4,736 | 12,818 | 17,554 |
| Angola | 17,065 | 1 | 17,066 |
| Uruguay | 12,393 | 4,587 | 16,980 |
| Zambia | 16,143 | 56 | 16,199 |
| Ecuador | 14,158 | 1,980 | 16,138 |
| Mali | 15,944 | 111 | 16,055 |
| Trinidad and Tabago | 15,502 | 374 | 15,876 |
| Bosnia and Herze- govina | 14,978 | 807 | 15,785 |
| Panama | 14,681 | 688 | 15,369 |
| Sudan | 13,546 | 1,398 | 14,944 |
| Ethiopia | 14,649 | 253 | 14,902 |
| Tanzania United Rep | 14,265 | 360 | 14,625 |
| Belize | 551 | 12,603 | 13,154 |
| Togo | 12,181 | 35 | 12,216 |
| Uganda | 11,644 | 182 | 11,826 |
| Yemen | 11,818 | 0 | 11,818 |
| Macao | 8,085 | 2,574 | 10,659 |
| Guam | 10,464 | 1 | 10,465 |
| Ivory Coast | 8,268 | 1,869 | 10,137 |
| Albania | 5,001 | 5,039 | 10,040 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Macedonia | 8,426 | 995 | 9,421 |
| Benin | 9,120 | 0 | 9,120 |
| Nicaragua | 3,080 | 5,317 | 8,397 |
| Bahamas | 2,758 | 5,396 | 8,154 |
| Afghanistan | 8,078 | 30 | 8,108 |
| Georgia | 6,781 | 1,109 | 7,890 |
| Guatemala | 6,664 | 1,151 | 7,815 |
| Gabon | 4,862 | 2,888 | 7,750 |
| US Minor Islands | 7,245 | 418 | 7,663 |
| Honduras | 3,266 | 4,344 | 7,610 |
| Belarus | 4,631 | 1,569 | 6,200 |
| Azerbaijan | 6,153 | 3 | 6,156 |
| El Salvador | 5,970 | 95 | 6,065 |
| Jamaica | 4,760 | 1,221 | 5,981 |
| Namibia | 2,611 | 1,816 | 4,427 |
| Burkina Faso | 4,073 | 47 | 4,120 |
| Tokelau Islands | 3,701 | 276 | 3,977 |
| New Caledonia | 3,674 | 10 | 3,684 |
| Swaziland | 2,699 | 958 | 3,657 |
| Mozambique | 3,614 | 5 | 3,619 |
| Zimbabwe | 2,986 | 591 | 3,577 |
| Malawi | 3,405 | 60 | 3,465 |

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| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Moldova | 2,975 | 460 | 3,435 |
| Gibraltar | 3,304 | 4 | 3,308 |
| Sierra Leone | 2,161 | 973 | 3,134 |
| Maldives | 435 | 2,588 | 3,023 |
| Fiji | 2,945 | 74 | 3,019 |
| Botswana | 2,941 | 0 | 2,941 |
| Mongolia | 2,554 | 6 | 2,560 |
| Laos | 768 | 1,708 | 2,476 |
| Liberia | 2,110 | 251 | 2,361 |
| Faroe Islands | 366 | 1,674 | 2,040 |
| Bolivia | 1,467 | 513 | 1,980 |
| North Korea | | 1,837 | 1,837 |
| Seychelles | 1,559 | 205 | 1,764 |
| Mauritania | 1,629 | 125 | 1,754 |
| Papua New Guinea | 1,497 | 221 | 1,718 |
| Brunei | 1,652 | 4 | 1,656 |
| Uzbekistan | 1,449 | 21 | 1,470 |
| Barbados | 1,448 | 6 | 1,454 |

Additional tables.

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Armenia | 1,181 | 26 | 1,207 |
| Guyana | 1,192 | 0 | 1,192 |
| Cuba | 865 | 310 | 1,175 |
| Turkmenistan | 1,032 | 106 | 1,138 |
| Chad | 1,075 | 49 | 1,124 |
| French Polynesia | 1,044 | 45 | 1,089 |
| Liechtenstein | 408 | 644 | 1,052 |
| Mayotte | 996 | | 996 |
| Netherlands Antilles | 937 | 16 | 953 |
| Haiti | 675 | 273 | 948 |
| Central African Republic | 423 | 516 | 939 |
| Gambia | 869 | 6 | 875 |
| Surinam | 796 | 28 | 824 |
| Bermuda | 813 | 5 | 818 |
| Madagascar | 627 | 131 | 758 |
| Burma | 681 | 40 | 721 |
| Paraguay | 648 | 62 | 710 |
| Nepal | 320 | 377 | 697 |
| US Virgin Islands | 608 | 37 | 645 |
| Somalia | 626 | 18 | 644 |
| Samoa | 615 | 0 | 615 |
| Grenada | 131 | 452 | 583 |

Questions - Written Answers

| | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| Rwanda | 471 | 73 | 544 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 512 | 0 | 512 |
| Ceuta | 105 | 401 | 506 |
| St Vincent & Grenadines | 447 | 0 | 447 |
| Turks & Caicos Islands | 2 | 433 | 435 |
| Occupied Palestine | 330 | 88 | 418 |
| Kosovo | 377 | 31 | 408 |
| Niger | 211 | 190 | 401 |
| Cayman Islands | 309 | 1 | 310 |
| Djibouti | 74 | 199 | 273 |
| Kyrgyz Republic | 210 | 57 | 267 |
| St Lucia | 136 | 126 | 262 |
| Tonga | 226 | 4 | 230 |
| Saint Helena | 130 | 69 | 199 |
| San Marino | 109 | 23 | 132 |
| Dominica | 95 | 20 | 115 |
| Burundi | 90 | 16 | 106 |
| St Kitt & Nevis | 78 | 26 | 104 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Micronesia | | 95 | 95 |
| British Virgin Islands | 8 | 80 | 88 |
| Greenland | 3 | 73 | 76 |
| Lesotho | 66 | 3 | 69 |
| Montenegro | 53 | 10 | 63 |
| Aruba | 56 | | 56 |
| Anguilla | | 51 | 51 |
| Comoros | 18 | 31 | 49 |
| Falkland Islands | 1 | 48 | 49 |
| Nauru | 4 | 42 | 46 |
| Solomon Islands | 39 | | 39 |
| Eritrea | 6 | 32 | 38 |
| French Southern Terr | 8 | 24 | 32 |
| Cape Verde | 22 | 4 | 26 |
| Norfolk Island | 6 | 13 | 19 |
| British Indian Ocean Territory | 2 | 15 | 17 |
| Antigua & Barbuda | 7 | 2 | 9 |
| Christmas Island | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| St Pierre & Miquelon | | 6 | 6 |
| Vanuatu | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| Timor-Leste | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| American Samoa | 0 | 5 | 5 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|---------------------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| Melilla | | 4 | 4 |
| Cook Islands | | 4 | 4 |
| Niue | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Wallis & Futuna | | 2 | 2 |
| Sao Tome & Principe | 2 | | 2 |
| Bouvet Island | | 2 | 2 |
| Pitcairn | | 1 | 1 |
| Tajikistan | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Holy See | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Montserrat | | 1 | 1 |
| Tuvalu | | 1 | 1 |
| Bhutan | | 0 | 0 |
| South Georgia | | 0 | 0 |
| Guinea Bissau | | | |
| Cocos Islands | | 0 | 0 |
| Kiribati | 0 | | 0 |

| Country | Exports | Imports | Total bilateral trade |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|
| Stores & Provisions (Intra EU) | | | |
| Antartica | | | |
| Heard Island | | 0 | 0 |
| Northern Mariana Islands | | 0 | 0 |
| Palau | | 0 | 0 |
| Marshall Islands | | 0 | 0 |
| Grand Total | 92,120,100 | 49,231,251 | 141,351,351 |

* Priority markets identified under the Government's Trade Strategy.

Question No. 75 withdrawn.

VAT Rates Application

76. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will confirm the VAT rate applicable on the monitoring of personal security alarms for the elderly. [28144/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The standard VAT rate of 23% applies to the personal security alarms for the elderly. This rate also applies to fees charged for monitoring of such personal alarms. It is not possible under EU VAT law to apply a reduced or zero rate of VAT, or an exemption from VAT, to the supply and monitoring of such products. Under the Value Added Tax (Refund of Tax)(No. 15) Order, 1981, it may be possible to obtain a VAT refund in respect of the purchase of a panic alarm system by or on behalf of a disabled person, as it may be considered a medical device for the purpose of this refund order. However, monitoring and maintenance fees are not recoverable under the order.

Questions - Written Answers
Value for Money Reviews

77. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28174/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In September 2008 the Government agreed to undertake a new round of Value for Money and Policy Reviews covering the three year period 2009-2011. The Department of Finance was not scheduled to carry out any reviews during that round. Instead, the evaluative resources within the Department of Finance (via the Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit) were to be focused primarily on contributing to the process through membership of the Steering Committees for individual reviews and through co-authoring on the larger reviews. The Central Expenditure Evaluation Unit transferred to the newly formed Department of Public Expenditure and Reform from July 2011. A review of the Paymaster General Office was proposed for inclusion in the 2012 round of reviews. This review is now encompassed within a general review of Financial Management Reporting and Banking as part of a general shared services initiative.

Mortgage Interest Rates Issues

78. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the recent interest rate increase on variable rate mortgages by a bank (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28194/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I, as Minister for Finance, have no statutory role in relation to the variable mortgage interest rates charged by regulated financial institutions. It is a commercial matter for the banks concerned. The mortgage interest rates that financial institutions operating in Ireland charge to customers are determined as a result of a commercial decision by the institutions concerned. This interest rate is determined taking into account a broad range of factors, including European Central Bank base rates, deposit rates, market funding costs, the competitive environment and an institution's overall funding arrangements.

However, as part of the Central Bank's work on mortgage arrears, lenders were asked to consider all avenues to help customers in arrears, including interest rate reductions. Currently, several lenders do consider a temporary interest rate reduction but this is on a case by case basis.

Property Taxation Exemptions

79. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Finance in view of the exemption from the local property tax for residential properties owned by a charity or a public body and used to provide accommodation and support for persons who have a particular need in addition to a general housing need to enable them to live in the community such as sheltered accommodation for the elderly or the disabled, the reason it is that a disabled person living alone in a specially adapted house that she inherited would not be eligible for an exemption. [28264/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): Based on the information provided by the Deputy it is not possible to give a definitive reply. However, the following information may be of relevance, depending on the circumstances. While there is no overall exemption from the

Local Property Tax (LPT) for a person with a disability, or for houses which have been specially adapted to cater for a resident with a disability, in certain limited circumstances an exemption may apply. Section 10B of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) provides that an exemption from the charge to LPT may apply to a residential property purchased, built or adapted to make it suitable for occupation by a permanently and totally incapacitated individual as their sole or main residence, where an award has been made by the Personal Injuries Assessment Board or a court, or where a trust has been established, specifically for the benefit of such individuals.

I am advised that section 189A of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 (as amended), defines ‘incapacitated individual’ as an individual who is permanently and totally incapacitated, by reason of mental or physical infirmity, from being able to maintain himself or herself. Entitlement to the exemption provided for in section 10B will depend on whether the extent of a person’s disability is such that they are permanently and totally incapacitated from being able to maintain himself or herself.

Where an exemption cannot be claimed under section 10B of the Act, an incapacitated person may qualify for a reduction in the market value of their property under section 15A of the 2012 Act. This section provides for a reduction in the market value of a residential property that has been adapted for occupation by a disabled person where the adaptation has been grant-aided or approved for grant aid, by a local authority. I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that this relief only applies where the adaptation work increases the market value of the property. Furthermore, the person with the disability must occupy the property as his or her sole or main residence after the adaptation is completed. The reduction in value is limited to the lesser of the market value attributable to the adaptation work carried out on the property and the maximum grant payable under the relevant local authority scheme.

The LPT relief for adaptations for the disabled has been linked to the grant scheme for adaptations to ensure the relief is targeted at cases where necessary adaptations are made. It also ensures consistency of approach to the issue of adapting homes to assist disabled persons to live in the community.

Budget 2014 Issues

80. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide a list of all publications of forecast accounts from his Department which have been released to date this year, and which will be released for the rest of the year, which provide financial information relevant to Budget 2014, and the timing of their release (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28310/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In the past, the Department of Finance has generally released three separate publications containing macroeconomic and budgetary forecasts.

1. The Stability Programme Update, the most recent of which was published on April 30th this year.
2. The Medium Term Fiscal Statement (MTFS), the most recent of which was published in early November 2012.
3. Updated forecasts in the Budget documentation.

As the Deputy will be aware, under the two-pack of European Regulations formally adopted

on the 30th of May 2013, a common budgetary timeline has been introduced for all euro area member states. In line with the requirements of the two-pack, Budget day will be on or before the 15th of October each year from now on.

Given the new Budget date, it is proposed to incorporate the information normally published in the Medium Term Fiscal Statement each October/November into the Budget Documentation. Therefore, under the new budgetary framework, both the Stability Programme Update and the Budget will show medium-term macroeconomic and budgetary projections.

The Deputy should also note that the Maastricht returns, which are published in April and October each year by Eurostat after submission by the CSO, contain forecasts calculated by my Department for both the general government deficit and debt for the current year.

Site Acquisitions

81. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a site has been purchased in respect of a school (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28136/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that a site for the school to which he refers was acquired by my Department in November 2012.

Further Education and Training Programmes Provision

82. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to introduce legislation to ensure SOLAS develops an adult literacy and numeracy strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28138/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): I recognise that further education and training as it is currently delivered covers a broad spectrum that ranges from basic adult literacy and numeracy courses to courses that are certified at level 6 and above on the National Framework of Qualifications. Section 9 of the Bill provides that SOLAS, once established, will prepare and submit, to the Minister, a strategy in respect of further education and training. The issue of including a provision in the Bill for the development of a national adult literacy and numeracy strategy was raised at Dáil Committee Stage, and will be addressed in the Report Stage in the Dáil.

Value for Money Reviews

83. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports [28172/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information is being compiled and will be sent to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Special Educational Needs Staffing

84. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason special needs assistants in second level schools are not utilised fully during the month of June when they are not assisting students sitting State examinations, but continue to be paid; if he will consider allowing such SNAs to undertake an alternative role within the school during this period, such as scribes or readers for the exams or school administrative duties, which would be a cost-saving measure by the Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28249/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to set out the clear position of the Department and the employers regarding June working for Special Needs Assistants employed in the post-primary sector. The contract for Special Needs Assistants in the post primary sector (DES Circular SNA12/05) specifically requires that SNAs are required to work the month of June on examinations and work appropriate to the grade including training.

The utilisation of this period is not solely for examinations or training purposes only, although they are two of the purposes for which this period of time can be utilised. Duties such as assisting students and acting as reader/scribe for a student who is doing a state examination form part of the normal duties of SNAs and attract no additional payment.

Schools Building Projects Applications

85. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a school (details supplied) in County Tipperary was not approved and or considered for a major funding grant in the latest round of funding investing in infrastructure and jobs; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that this school has been in temporary accommodation for almost 20 years and has now been granted planning permission to progress to the building stage; if he will reconsider this school for funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28252/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I wish to advise the Deputy that the school projects announced as part of the Government's "Investing in Infrastructure & Jobs" Package last week are school projects that have completed extensive architectural planning already and which my Department has identified can progress to tender and construction before end year. In relation to the school, referred by the Deputy, I am aware that planning permission has been recently obtained for an extension for the school concerned. The Deputy will however also be aware that my Department's over-riding objective is to ensure that every child has access to a physical school place and that our school system is in a position to cope with increasing pupil numbers. To ensure that this is achieved, the delivery of major school projects to meet significant demographic demands nationally will be the main focus for capital investment in schools in the coming years. The five year programme is focused on meeting those demographic needs. The area in which the school, in question, is located has not been identified as an area of significant demographic growth. In that context, it has not been possible to advance all applications for capital funding concurrently. All school building projects, including the project for the school in question, will continue to be advanced incrementally over time within the context of the funding available. However, in light of current competing demands on the Department's capital budget, it is not possible at this time to give an indicative timeframe for the construction of a new school building for the school.

Schools Building Projects Administration

86. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will include social clauses for the long-term unemployed in the education projects announced as part of the €150

million extra in capital expenditure for 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28256/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In common with the rest of the Public Sector, capital works projects in schools are tendered under the standard Public Works Contracts as required by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Government Contracts Committee for Construction (GCCC). The Guidelines require a competitive process carried out in an open, objective and transparent manner to achieve best value for money in public procurement. Essential principles to be observed in conducting all procurement functions include non-discrimination, equal treatment, transparency, mutual recognition, proportionality, freedom to provide service and freedom of establishment. School Building Projects are tendered in compliance with the above guidelines and requirements. The current public works contract does not include social clauses for the long-term unemployed. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Government Construction Contracts Committee are currently considering the possibility of inclusion of social clauses in future public works contracts. My Department will implement any future changes to public works contracts in accordance with the guidelines given.

Residential Institutions Redress Scheme

87. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if an application has been received by the Residential Institutions Redress Board from a person (details supplied) in County Offaly; if this person is entitled to compensation for the period of time spent in the home; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28268/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Residential Institutions Redress Board was established pursuant to the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 to provide fair and reasonable financial awards to victims of childhood abuse in scheduled institutions. The Board operates independently and the application process is confidential in accordance with the terms of the 2002 Act. Therefore, I am not in a position to comment on any individual application to the Board. However, I can confirm for the Deputy that the Good Shepherd Mother and Baby Home, Dunboyne, Co. Meath was not a scheduled institution under the Redress Scheme. The closing date for receipt of applications by the Redress Board was 15th December, 2005. The Board could however accept late applications in exceptional circumstances, up until September 2011. The Board is currently finalising the remaining applications it received.

State Examinations Issues

88. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on an election style media moratorium on the reporting of State examinations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28335/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I will not be seeking a moratorium on media coverage during the State examinations. It is important that the examinations are seen to be open and transparent and that is why, for example, the papers are available to everyone on the SEC website www.examinations.ie the evening of the examination. Apart from the difficulty in trying to secure a moratorium on coverage in the newspapers, radio and television, it would be impossible to have such an arrangement in the social media which many young people use. I am, however, aware of the effects that adverse media coverage can have

on the candidates. It can be unnerving and stressful. In that context, the issue of media coverage is constantly reviewed.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

89. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) should apply for a grant under the higher education grant or the vocational education committee. [28352/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Students commencing a new course in the academic year 2013/14 are required to submit their grant application to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) via www.susi.ie. To have their eligibility for grant assistance assessed. To satisfy the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme in relation to progression, a student must be moving from year to year within a course having successfully completed the previous year or be transferring from one course to another where the award for the subsequent course is of a higher level than the previous course. In the absence of all of the details that would be contained in an individual's application form, it is not possible for me to say how a student should be assessed. However, from the details presented by the Deputy, it would appear that the student may not be progressing to a course at a higher level.

Student Grant Scheme Administration

90. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if Student Universal Support Ireland should consider where a student is ordinarily resident on 1 October prior to their first point of entry into third level education or at the start of the approved postgraduate course they are undertaking (details supplied). [28364/13]

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, his student grant application was appealed on the 29th May 2013 to the appeals officer in SUSI. On that basis, the application is currently being reassessed and the student will be notified directly by SUSI of the outcome.

Redundancy Payments

91. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a redundancy payment; the reason for the delay in issuing this payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28374/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): A redundancy application from the person referred to by the Deputy was received by my Department on 8th November 2012. Applications are processed in date order of receipt and every effort is being made to process these applications as quickly as possible. The application from the person referred to is currently being processed and it is expected that they will receive payment in July 2013.

Garda Stations Closures

92. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Re-

form the plans if any the Office of Public Works has for a Garda station (details supplied) in County Dublin. [28323/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The OPW is currently assessing the property options arising in respect of all closed Garda Stations including the former Garda Station in Kill of the Grange, Co. Dublin. The stated policy is to identify if other State Bodies, including government departments and the wider public sector has a use for the property. If there is no other State use for a property the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market, if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate much needed revenue for the Exchequer. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property the OPW would consider community involvement subject to the receipt of an appropriate business case which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property.

Garda Stations Closures

93. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the plans if any the Office of Public Works has for a Garda station (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28324/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The OPW is currently assessing the property options arising in respect of all closed Garda Stations including the former Garda Station in Dalkey, Co. Dublin. The stated policy is to identify if other State Bodies, including government departments and the wider public sector has a use for the property. If there is no other State use for a property the OPW will then consider disposing of the property on the open market, if and when conditions prevail, in order to generate much needed revenue for the Exchequer. If no State requirement is identified or if a decision is taken not to dispose of a particular property the OPW would consider community involvement subject to the receipt of an appropriate business case which would indicate that the community/voluntary group has the means to insure, maintain and manage the property.

Semi-State Bodies Dividends

94. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will set out in tabular form the dividend paid to the State from each of the commercial semi-state companies for the past ten years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28147/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The following table shows the dividends received from State owned companies in the period 2003 to 2012.

| Year | Dublin Airport Auth. | Bord Gáis Éireann | Irish Aviat. Auth. | Elec. Supply Board | Bord na Móna | Dublin Port Co. | Coillte | Cork Port Co. | Aer Lingus* | Total |
|------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------|---------|---------------|-------------|---------|
| 2003 | 7,245 | 9,796 | 1,000 | 18,719 | - | - | - | - | - | 36,760 |
| 2004 | 6,074 | 9,679 | 1,271 | 63,762 | - | - | - | - | - | 80,786 |
| 2005 | - | 10,093 | - | 73,543 | - | - | - | - | - | 83,636 |
| 2006 | - | 9,079 | - | 68,770 | 3,850 | - | - | - | - | 81,699 |
| 2007 | - | 8,361 | - | 63,386 | 8,035 | 4,200 | - | - | - | 83,982 |
| 2008 | - | 27,941 | - | 123,010 | 12,249 | 5,108 | 2,600 | - | - | 170,908 |

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|------|--------|--------|---|--------|-------|--------|--------|-----|-------|---------|
| 2009 | 19,400 | 38,187 | - | 77,869 | 4,994 | 5,300 | - | - | - | 145,750 |
| 2010 | - | 30,251 | - | 89,718 | 3,296 | 5,500 | - | - | - | 128,765 |
| 2011 | - | 33,091 | - | 73,167 | 4,115 | 16,500 | 10,000 | 634 | - | 137,507 |
| 2012 | - | 23,814 | - | 68,840 | 2,375 | 10,200 | 2,000 | 359 | 4,023 | 111,611 |

* Government owns 25.1% of Aer Lingus

Public Sector Pensions Expenditure

95. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the savings that will be achieved in 2013 and 2014 from public sector pensions in payment arising from the measures contained in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (2013) Act; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28148/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): With effect from 1 July 2013, the *Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2013* will reduce public service pensions valued above €32,500 per annum, applying to all such pensions already payable on that date or awarded up to end-August 2014. The reductions will range from about 2% near the €32,500 threshold level (subject to no pension falling below €32,500), to 5% for the highest pensions. The Act secures the appropriate reductions by revising and adapting the existing “Public Service Pension Reduction” (PSPR) in such a way that:

- revised (higher) rates of PSPR will apply to those pensions above €32,500 which have been subject to PSPR before July 2013 - largely comprising pensions awarded up to end-February 2012, while

- new rates of PSPR will be introduced for those pensions above €32,500 not previously subject to PSPR – largely comprising pensions awarded after February 2012, and up to end-August 2014.

The savings arising from this pension reduction measure are estimated to be €12.9 million in 2013 and €24 million in 2014.

Haddington Road Agreement Savings

96. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will set out in tabular form a breakdown for each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 of the savings to be achieved under the Haddington Road agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28149/13]

97. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will set out the savings to be achieved in his Department under the Haddington Road agreement for each of the years 2013, 2014 and 2015; the way this differs from the savings targeted under the Croke Park II proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28162/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 96 and 97 together.

Public service trade unions are currently considering the various proposals put forward under the Haddington Road Agreement and those that need to ballot will do so over the coming weeks ahead of the implementation date of 1 July. The composition of the savings arising can

only be finalised when the results of the various ballots are known. However, the measures set out in the Agreement will enable the Government to achieve the targeted savings of approximately €300 million in the public service pay and pensions bill in 2013, including savings on Local Government, and it is estimated that the measures set out in the Haddington Road Agreement will reduce the public service pay and pensions bill by €1 billion by the end of the Agreement.

The Revised Estimates Volume was published on the basis of the previous Labour Relations Commission (LRC) recommendations, prior to the recent re-engagement between the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the trade unions. These recommendations were, at the time, the most appropriate means of achieving the savings required and it was important that the relevant Oireachtas Committees could begin the process of examining the Vote allocations for 2013. While the recommendations set out in Haddington Road Agreement have changed since the previous LRC recommendations, the pay allocations for individual Votes based on the implementation of these recommendations remain largely the same.

Departmental Reports

98. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28179/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The responsibility for conducting value for money reviews lies in the first instance with the spending Departments and Implementing Agencies. The role of my Department is to assist these bodies by promoting best practice in the evaluation and implementation of programme and project expenditure, including the provision of guidance which is now captured in a unified Public Spending Code. While my Department has not carried out any value for money reviews since the specified date, it has provided on-going technical assistance in respect of the value for money reviews conducted by other Departments.

Focused policy assessments were introduced on foot of the Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012 - 2014 (<http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/CER-Estimates-Final2.pdf>), as a model whereby a single evaluator or a small team can address specific aspects of policy configuration and delivery in a tightly-focused manner. The Expenditure Report 2013 (<http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Expenditure-Report-Final-Version-for-Print-04-Dec-2012-pdf-Adobe-Acrobat-Pro.pdf>) published some analytical outputs (including analyses on: reducing public expenditure in respect of legal services; the expenditure impacts of climate change; and demographic implications for education expenditure) and provided an overview of the range of work being carried out in the form of focused policy assessments within my Department. This work will feed into the deliberations in respect of the forthcoming Budget. A copy of the two reports mentioned can be found on my Department's website at the links set out above.

Public Procurement Contracts Social Clause

99. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his plans to promote the use of social clauses for the long-term unemployed in the projects announced as part of the €150 million extra in capital expenditure for 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28259/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The use of a social clause requiring a contractor to recruit a certain percentage of those employed on a public works construction site from the ranks of the long term unemployed will be piloted on a limited number of schools projects under the Devolved Schools Programme being administered by the National Development Finance Agency on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

It is important to note that such a provision must be managed carefully both to ensure that the requirements set can be met and monitored but also consideration must be given to their impact on a sector that has experienced decline in output since 2008 as it may result in significant displacement of those already in employment.

Whilst it is not intended to incorporate such provisions as part of the €150 million extra in capital expenditure for 2013 and 2014, the pilot programme under taken as part of the Devolved Schools Programme will inform the activation measures being considered for the €1.4 billion Public Private Partnership (PPP) element of the €2.25 billion Stimulus Programme, announced by my Department. This will result in significant additional investment in the sector over and above the funds committed to the Public Capital Programme and, given the estimated workforce of 13,000 required to deliver the PPP element of the Programme, the provision of a requirement to recruit from the ranks of the long-term unemployed is entirely appropriate in this context.

A framework of contractors has been set up for the Devolved Schools Programme and the first tender will be issued shortly. Once the pilot programme is completed an evaluation will be prepared and submitted to the Government Contracts Committee for Construction for their consideration.

Departmental Reports

100. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a list of all publications of forecast accounts from his Department which have been released so far this year, and which will be released for the rest of the year, which provide financial information relevant to Budget 2014, and the timing of their release (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28311/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): The Expenditure Report 2013, published 5 December 2012, included the overall aggregate expenditure ceiling for 2014 which was then split out into Departmental level current and capital expenditure ceilings.

Following on from the Expenditure Report 2013, the Stability Programme Update (SPU) was published in April 2013 and included aggregate voted and non-voted expenditure ceilings for 2014.

In line with the new multi-annual budgetary process, the expenditure ceilings for 2014-2016 will be published at the time of the Budget in October this year after detailed discussions have been taken by Government.

National Lottery Licence Sale

101. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if those currently employed at a company (details supplied) will have their positions protected

when the contract for the National Lottery is put out to bid; if it will be a condition of the contract that the technical operations must be based here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28322/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As you are aware, a competition for the next licence to operate the National Lottery commenced in May 2013 and is due to conclude later this year.

I do not wish to disclose the contents of the draft licence until the competition has been concluded and the licence has been granted to the successful bidder. The Deputy will appreciate that any requirements which might be included in the draft licence concerning the location of the operations of the next licensee must comply with EU law. The Deputy will also be aware that the company to which his question relates is a private company which has a contract with the holder of the current National Lottery licence.

Public Procurement Regulations

102. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on the way new policies on public procurement will affect small and medium enterprises in view of the concerns expressed by the Small Firms Association; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28365/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Reform of public procurement is one of the major projects of key strategic importance in the Government's Public Service Reform Plan, which was published in November 2011. Procurement of supplies and services accounts for around €9 billion of current spending by the State per annum. This represents a very significant portion of overall spending and it is, therefore, essential that the Public Service achieves maximum value for money and operational efficiency in its approach to public procurement.

In this regard, the National Procurement Service (NPS), which will be transferring into the new Office of Government Procurement (OGP), has put in place a number of national arrangements designed to secure better value for money from leveraging the public service's buying power in relation to a range of goods and services that are commonly purchased across the public service. These national arrangements have benefits that include:

- cash savings;
- administrative savings from reduced duplication of tendering;
- greater purchasing expertise;
- improved consistency; and,
- enhanced service levels.

In some instances the take up of the NPS arrangements has been low. In order to increase the usage of the NPS arrangements and thereby secure best value for money, the Government decided that it should be mandatory for public service bodies to use specified national procurement arrangements. Last year my Department issued Circular 06/12 which implements the Government decision by making it a mandatory requirement that public service bodies avail of specified national arrangements put in place by the NPS.

While the key purpose of Circular 6/12 is to enable the State to do more with less by ag-

gregating procurement to secure better value for money, it is worth noting that such aggregation arrangements can be implemented in a manner that achieves value for money with a minimal negative impact, or indeed a positive impact, on SMEs. While a number of the categories of goods and services mandated under the Circular are suited to single supplier national arrangements, these need not be accepted as the norm. The greater use, where appropriate, of multi-supplier frameworks can address local supplier issues while also ensuring on-going cost competitiveness of the framework itself. Such multi-supplier frameworks may also offer SMEs the opportunity to participate in national level contracts, thereby offering valuable reference work when competing for public procurement contracts in other jurisdictions.

In relation to plans for further reform of public procurement, an external review of the central procurement function was commissioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The report of the review, which was published late last year, found that significant savings can be achieved through the implementation of a transformational change to the central procurement model. In December 2012, arising out of recommendations in the report I announced the appointment of a Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) to lead a key element of the Government's Public Service Reform agenda. The new approach to public procurement will involve:

- integrating procurement policy, strategy and sourcing in one office;
- strengthening spend analytics and data management;
- much greater aggregation of purchasing across public bodies to achieve better value for money;
- examining the specifications set out for goods and services;
- evaluating demand levels to assess how demand and volume can be reduced; and
- strengthening supplier and category management.

Since the appointment of Mr Paul Quinn, CPO, on 28 January 2013, he has initiated and completed a series of engagements (workshops and one-to-one meetings) with key stakeholders within the public sector and their representatives in relation to the development of the proposed governance structures, implementation plan, transition arrangements and savings targets for the procurement function. The following sectors were engaged in workshops / meetings: Health, Education, Local Government, Defence, Justice, and other Central Government Departments.

To summarise: the government wants better value for money for our substantial procurement spend and we want Irish SMEs, where necessary, to form alliances and networks to ensure they can tender on a competitive basis for this work. To ensure the reform process takes account of the needs of stakeholders further consultations will be undertaken with employees and workers' representatives as the new Office for Government Procurement is established. We are committed to ensuring that SMEs are fully engaged in the process and will be encouraged, where necessary, to form alliances and networks to ensure they can tender on a competitive basis for this work.

Capital Programme Expenditure

103. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to his recent announcement of funding of €150 million for capital projects such as new schools, roads, refurbishment of public buildings and so on, the amount of this money that has already been committed to or spent on projects; the date on which it was spent; the amount of

money in real terms, out of this pool of €150 million that will now be spent were the project listed already committed to and identified in the past 24 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28377/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): As the Deputy is aware, last Wednesday I announced the allocation of an additional €150m for new capital projects in three sectors, education, transport and social housing. The additional monies will be allocated by the relevant Departments as follows. €50m will be spent on an additional 28 school building projects which were outside and in addition to the published five year building programme. The Department of Education and Skills have identified other schools that have a deficit of mainstream accommodation capacity in respect of current enrolments and/or require major refurbishment/replacement. These 28 (10 replacement schools and 18 large scale extension/refurbishment) projects are those where extensive preparations are complete in terms of architectural planning and which can be progressed quickly to tender and construction with the additional resources available.

In transport, the additional €50m will be spent on the repair and rehabilitation of 600 km of local and regional roads in 29 local authority areas. The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport will be providing this extra funding directly to local authorities, which can start work on the repairs as soon as they receive the grants.

In the energy efficiency area, €50m is being provided for a new retrofitting scheme for local authority houses which will target up to 25,000 older local authority dwellings and aim to ensure that adequate wall and attic insulation is provided in all occupied properties. The scheme will be rolled out as quickly as possible so that works can commence during the summer.

All of the additional monies will be allocated to new projects which were not provided for in the budget allocations for 2013 and none of the monies had been spent prior to the announcement.

Departmental Reports

104. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28177/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): My Department and its enterprise agencies have a culture of engaging in on-going evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of agency supports to business, to ensure that taxpayers are getting value for money and enterprises can avail of the most appropriate supports tailored to their needs.

Shortly after my appointment as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, I requested that Forfás undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the suite of enterprise support programmes provided by the enterprise development agencies. This involves the systematic evaluation of about 70 programmes. An evaluations framework was developed to ensure a consistency of approach that facilitates comparison (where appropriate) and that is cognisant of the common challenges facing enterprise evaluation. The Framework was informed by international best practice regarding the core principles and methodologies required for the evaluation of enterprise support programmes. It provides a common basis for the evaluation of all enterprise support interventions and is cognisant of common challenges and issues facing enterprise evaluation.

The aim of the evaluations is to assess the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of this package of supports for enterprises in Ireland. Programmes will be evaluated in terms of:

- Individual programme performance;
- Programme performance in relation to other interventions in the enterprise support system;
- Programme performance in relation to the enterprise policy context that applied during the time period under review.

The evaluations involve an extensive programme of work involving both internal and external resources. A Steering Group, chaired by Forfás and including representatives from my Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, the relevant Enterprise Development Agencies and an external adviser, oversaw the work.

To structure the evaluations, the agency programmes were categorised by thematic area:

- Entrepreneurship/Start-up Programmes;
- Research, Development and Innovation Programmes; and
- Business Development Programmes.

The evaluation of programmes under the first two thematic areas above has been completed and will shortly be published. Even in advance of their publication, many of the recommendations are being implemented by my Department and relevant Agencies, both through the Action Plan for Jobs process and as part of Agency on-going redesign of programmes, as schemes are identified as the most likely to impact positively on enterprise, growth and job creation.

Work on the third thematic area i.e. Business Development Programmes (BDPs) provided by Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland has recently commenced.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is also in the process of finalising a separate Focused Policy Assessment on Enterprise Ireland supports to indigenous companies.

In addition, there were general expenditure reviews of capital and current spending undertaken across my Department in mid-2011, of which a significant element related to STI (Science, Technology and Innovation) expenditure.

Further, a PA Consulting report was undertaken on behalf of the Higher Education Authority (HEA) regarding a review of Cycles 1 - 3 of the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions (PRTLTI) in 2011. While this exercise was not undertaken directly by my Department, as my Department does not have responsibility for the HEA, my Department assumed responsibility for the PRTLTI programme in March 2010, and some Cycle 3 projects were still on-going at that time.

Birth Certificates

105. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an apostille stamp in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [28328/13]

106. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an Apostille stamp issue in respect of a person (details supplied). [28519/13]

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

105 and 106 together.

In order to properly identify the parties to a marriage, the requirements under section 46(7) of the Civil Registration Act, 2004, include, inter alia, the authentication of birth certificates.

This step is necessary to help ensure that the intended marriage is not for unlawful purposes. In this regard, it is not possible to discriminate between persons born outside this jurisdiction, either by exempting or targeting persons born in specific jurisdictions. Therefore, all birth certificates issued by authorities outside this jurisdiction must bear an Apostille stamp or, in the case of a country that is not a signatory of the Hague Convention, be attested by the relevant Embassy.

The birth records of persons born in this jurisdiction must also be fully checked before a marriage registration form can be issued. However, there is no requirement for these records to be authenticated further, as the registrar taking the notice of intention to marry is in a position to do this.

Jobseeker's Allowance Appeals

107. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28121/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that a jobseeker's allowance appeal, by the person concerned, together with the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal were received in that office on 04th June 2013. The case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Invalidity Pension Eligibility

108. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will reconsider her decision not to grant an invalidity pension to a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28122/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Invalidity pension is a payment for people who are permanently incapable of work because of illness or incapacity and who satisfy the contribution conditions. One of the contribution conditions for invalidity pension is that the claimant must have 48 contributions paid or credited in the last complete contribution year before the date of claim. Only classes A, E or H contributions are reckonable for invalidity pension purposes.

An application for invalidity pension was received from the person concerned. According to the department's records the person concerned has only 45 qualifying contributions paid in 2012, the governing contribution year in this case, and consequently her claim was refused by a deciding officer. The applicant was notified on 21 May 2013 and advised of her rights of review or to appeal against this decision.

Alternatively, if the person's means are insufficient to meet their needs, they may apply for means-tested disability allowance from the Department by completing the relevant application form and returning it to the address stated on the form. Their eligibility for disability allowance will then be assessed and they will be notified directly of the outcome.

One-Parent Family Payment Appeals

109. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a one-parent family payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28124/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case on 24th June 2013. The person concerned will be notified of the arrangements for the hearing.

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

Social Welfare Overpayments

110. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an overpayment of supplementary welfare allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28126/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 19th April 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 13th May 2013 and the case will be referred to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Departmental Expenditure

111. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current cost of administration for all universal payments made by her Department in tabular form; the current cost of administration for all means tested payments made by her Department in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28132/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Estimates for the Department published on Budget day provides for expenditure of €20.243 billion on schemes, services and administration in 2013. Of this, just under €580 million or 2.9% of total estimated expenditure will be spent on administration.

The Department provides a very wide range of schemes and services. These include social insurance schemes where entitlement, in the first instance, is based on PRSI contribution, means tested social assistance schemes and a universal scheme (child benefit) payable to families with children. It should also be noted, in this regard, that

- there is a means testing element to determining entitlement to an increase for a qualified adult and qualified child as well as the fuel allowance for social insurance schemes, and

- claimants of many schemes may have to satisfy conditions other than those related to PRSI contributions or means in order to fulfil the statutory requirements for entitlement to a given scheme. These conditions may, for example, relate to requirements in relation to jobseeking, illness, impact of disabilities, care requirements, as appropriate to the relevant scheme.

The various schemes are operated through a network of local and central offices. The main components of workflow in the department's processing sections are claim processing, maintenance, control activity and dealing with enquiries. These functions are supported by investigators and employment services, as appropriate, and by a shared infrastructure and IT systems. The latter systems deliver various aspects of claim processing and payments, including means assessment. In addition, certain scheme administrative costs are also incurred centrally including, accounts, payment costs by external agencies such as An Post and the Revenue Commissioners, policy development, social welfare appeals, medical assessors and training.

Many staff may be involved, on a daily basis, in the administration of both social insurance and social assistance schemes such as jobseeker's benefit and allowance which are both administered side by side in the local offices of the Department.

This means that it is not possible to disaggregate the specific administration costs for particular schemes given the level of costs which are borne centrally and the number of staff who are engaged, on one level or another, in the administration and support functions of more than one scheme.

Question No. 112 withdrawn.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

113. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an invalidity pension appeal will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28135/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 20th March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Carer's Allowance Appeals

114. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an application for a carer's allowance on appeal will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28140/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 16th May 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Departmental Reports

115. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within her Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28180/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Following a Government decision to defer the selection of reviews pending the outcome of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Comprehensive Review of Expenditure (CRE) there were no Value for Money (VFM) reviews carried out in 2011. Each Government Department, including the Department of Social Protection, instead prepared a Comprehensive Expenditure Report in respect of the Department and its associated agencies, to identify expenditure programme savings, scope for savings arising from efficiency and other reforms, proposals for reducing and/or merging of agencies and associated reductions in staff numbers. This review continues to inform the evaluation of every budgetary programme.

During 2012, a Review of the Employment Support Schemes was undertaken within the Department. The review examines the policies and programmes in place within the Department of Social Protection to address the particular difficulties that the labour market is currently experiencing and assess individual schemes against an agreed set of criteria.

Following publication of the Review in January 2013 I convened a stakeholder's forum which brought together relevant experts, practitioners, policy makers and representative bodies to consider the review and offer suggestions and input to how future policy in this area should evolve.

In common with all VFM reviews, the recommendations and implementation are monitored by the Department's Policy Committee.

While the Department is not at present carrying out any formal Value for Money reviews, the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare is reviewing a number of priority areas. The group, which I established during 2011 in line with Programme for Government commitments, is focussing on the production of modular reports on the priority areas identified in the Group's

terms of reference. To date the Group has completed three modules of work: child and family income supports; proposals relating to disability allowance and domiciliary care allowance; extending Social Insurance coverage for the self-employed. The Group is currently progressing its final module of work on the issue of working age income supports and the interaction of the tax and social welfare systems. It is anticipated that this module will be completed by the end of 2013.

All schemes within my Department remain under constant review particularly in the budgetary context. A wide range of other policy reports have been undertaken by the Department since 2011, such as the recently published OECD review on long term pension policy in Ireland and the report on pension charges pension charges produced by the Department in conjunction with the Central Bank and the Pensions Board. My Department officials also support a number of Focussed Policy Assessments currently being carried out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

All published policy reports are available on the Department's website.

Household Benefits

116. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reasons a person (details supplied) in County Kildare has not received their companion bus pass; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28203/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was medically assessed by a Medical Assessor on 13th May, 2013. The medical opinion was conveyed to Household Benefits Section, Sligo and a decision letter was issued directly to the person concerned from Household Benefits Section on 14th May 2013 regarding the decision on her application.

Social Welfare Overpayments

117. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she has responsibility regarding the paying of a full-rate qualified allowance to a person in receipt of the jobseeker's allowance in respect of their spouse, who was in employment for a period of over three years, and whose P60s were returned each year to the Revenue Commissioners with the person's PPS number; the measures in place between her Department and the Revenue Commissioners over a number of years to ensure that persons were not making a claim in respect of a spouse whom the Government bodies were aware was in employment, notwithstanding the responsibility on the person not to make an overclaim; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28208/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Every week, the Department pays nearly 1.5 million people a social welfare payment and, when qualified adults and children are included, almost 2.3 million people benefit from weekly payments from the Department.

The Department engages in data exchange and matching exercises with other Government Departments and public bodies, including the Revenue Commissioners, for control purposes. Data matching is an efficient and effective mechanism to target control related activity. It is an important preventative and detection control measure.

However, it is the customer's responsibility to provide full and accurate information about their particular circumstances to support their claim and they must also inform the Department

promptly if their circumstances change as this may affect their entitlements.

An overpayment is any social welfare assistance or benefit payment which the person who received the amount was not entitled to receive. Where overpayments occur, they are regarded as a debt to the Exchequer and every effort must be – and is - made to recover the amounts due.

Debt holders should be aware that a Departmental debt will remain on their records until it is fully recovered. This may result in a reduction of all future entitlements up to and including state pension.

After-School Support Services

118. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Social Protection if Ballymun will be included as a location in the next phase of the new after-school childcare scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28253/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The After-school Child Care Scheme commenced its first pilot phase on 29 April, 2013, with up to 500 places made available in seven designated Social Welfare Local / Intreo Offices located in King's Inn Street in Dublin city centre, Finglas, Cork city, Dominic Street in Limerick city, Dundalk, Mullingar, and Tralee. This initial launch phase of the pilot scheme will allow the Department to review the effectiveness of the scheme criteria. This review will inform the scheme's subsequent roll-out in July 2013 and for its nationwide roll-out in September, 2013. The Offices that will participate in the second pilot phase in July remain to be determined and will be announced in due course.

Disability Allowance Appeals

119. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an application for a disability allowance now under appeal will be expedited and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if supplementary welfare will be approved for this person; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28261/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 13th May 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

If the person concerned's means are insufficient to meet their needs, they should contact the Community Welfare Service regarding their entitlement to Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

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

Question No. 120 withdrawn.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

121. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a response to an application for carer's allowance which is now under appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [28266/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Carer's allowance was stopped on 24th October 2012 in respect of the person in question as, following a review, it was decided that the medical criteria were no longer satisfied.

In order for a child under 16 years to be deemed eligible for carer's allowance, domiciliary care allowance must be in payment for that child. In those circumstances, the child is deemed to be automatically medically eligible for carer's allowance. Once the child reaches 16 years and is no longer entitled to domiciliary care allowance, a review of the continuing entitlement to carer's allowance is carried out.

The person in question requested a review of this decision and submitted additional medical evidence in support of the application on the 2nd of November 2012 and again on the 5th of February 2013. However, on both occasions the additional information did not alter the opinion of the medical assessor and the decision remained unchanged. She was notified of the outcomes of these reviews, and the reasons for them, on the 19th of December 2012 and 1st of May 2013.

If the person in question is not satisfied with the decision to stop her carer's allowance, she may submit an appeal to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office. To date there is no record of an appeal against this decision from the person in question.

Invalidity Pension Appeals

122. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will examine an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28272/13]

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 10th June 2013, 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.

Social Welfare Appeals Data

123. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applicants awaiting payment following successful appeals to the independent Social Welfare Appeals Office; if she will provide an indication of the number of such applications per payment; and the measures her Department is taking to ensure that this backlog is dealt with in view of the fact that the majority of applicants who have already waited up to 12 months for a decision on their appeal are now being forced to wait months for further assessments to be carried out. [28309/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): My Department aims to process and pay as appropriate all successful appeals returned by the Social Welfare Appeals Office (SWAO). In general, across schemes, there is no issue with implementing successful appeals.

However, in the disability allowance and invalidity pension scheme areas, temporary delays are currently being experienced by successful appellants. These delays are arising due to the large number of backlogged new claims that have been processed over the last year, resulting in high levels of appeals. There are approximately 1,000 cases across the two schemes, awaiting payment at present following successful appeals. Additional staff resources have been assigned to clear these appeals and it is envisaged that all cases will be actioned within the next 4 weeks.

After-School Support Services

124. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will clarify, for those who come off lone-parent allowance early and therefore cannot avail of jobseeker’s transition payments due to employment but still struggle with the costs of childcare, the reason they cannot avail of the pilot after-school childcare supports which are part of the jobseeker’s transition; the reason more childcare supports are not in place for lone parents who are already engaging in labour activation but are living with existing family requirements, such as increased childcare costs during the summer months; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28312/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The reforms to the one-parent family payment (OFP) scheme aim to provide the necessary supports to lone parents to help them to escape poverty and social exclusion. I believe that supporting lone parents to participate in education, training, and the workforce, once their children have reached an appropriate age, will improve both their own and their families’ economic and social circumstances. As a result of these reforms, once an OFP recipient’s youngest child reaches the relevant age threshold, they will no longer be entitled to the OFP payment. These changes will be gradually phased in during the period between July 2013 and 2015. Once a customer is no longer entitled to the OFP payment and if they still have an income support need, they can apply for another social welfare payment. Individuals working 19 hours or more each week may be entitled to apply for FIS or to have their existing FIS claim re-rated as appropriate. It is expected, however, that the majority of individuals will apply for the jobseeker’s allowance (JA) scheme.

Some of these former OFP recipients will still have caring responsibilities for young children and, as such, may not be able to meet all of the conditionality provisions that apply to the JA scheme – which requires all JA recipients to be available for, and genuinely seeking, full-time work.

That is why I have in the Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013, included legislative provisions to introduce transitional arrangements into the JA scheme. These arrangements will assist former OFP customers who’s youngest child is under 14, make the transition to JA. These customers will be exempt from the JA conditionality that requires them to be available for, and genuinely seeking, full-time work, until their youngest child reaches the age of 14 years. In addition, these individuals will not have to satisfy the JA rule, which requires an individual to be unemployed for at least 4 out of any 7 consecutive days. This means that lone parents under the JA transitional arrangements will be able to work a few hours each day subject to them satisfying the JA means test.

The legislative amendments I am proposing to the JA scheme take account of the caring responsibilities of lone parents with young children. They also enable lone parents with young children who are working part-time – for example, mornings only – to remain in work and to receive income and activation supports as appropriate.

The availability of these JA transitional arrangements to lone parents reduces the need for

childcare support. However, if a lone parent in this situation wishes to avail of an employment opportunity or engage on a Community Employment scheme, they are eligible to apply for the Subsidised After-school Child Care scheme. This scheme is available to JA customers who were former OFP recipients, who avail of an employment opportunity and who have children of primary school age (i.e. 4 to 13 years). The scheme is designed to provide subsidised afterschool childcare during the school term and full time childcare provision during school holidays.

In addition to this scheme there are other child care supports available from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (D/CYA). The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) programme, funds some 1,000 community-based non-profit child care facilities nationwide to enable them to charge reduced child care fees to disadvantaged and low-income families who avail of their services. The Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) scheme provides subsidised childcare places for parents who engage in eligible education and training programmes.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

125. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied). [28327/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned is in receipt of Rent Supplement of €970 per month. However, the rent currently being paid exceeds the maximum amount for which a supplement is payable and the person has been advised on a number of occasions to seek a reduction in rent from the landlord, to a level that comes within the statutory maximum limit. In order to allow the person additional time to seek a reduction in rent or to seek alternative accommodation that falls within the rental limit applicable to the family circumstances, it was decided to continue payment of the rent supplement for a further period. The period allowed is to the end of July 2013, in consideration of the fact that the person's children are undertaking exams.

New maximum rent limits were recently announced and the person concerned may now seek a voluntary reduction from the landlord or seek new accommodation within the new appropriate maximum rent limit of €1000.

Carer's Allowance Appeals

126. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance appeal will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28333/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 27th March 2013. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred in to an Appeals Officer who will make a summary decision on the appeal based on the documentary evidence presented or, if required, hold an oral hearing.

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

Social Welfare Appeals Data

127. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of appeals adjudicated upon by the Social Welfare Appeals Office and the average waiting time for an appeal in respect of applications for rent supplement in the years 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013. [28347/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that statistics are not maintained in the format requested by the Deputy. The average processing times are maintained for the overall scheme type, not for the issue(s) under appeal i.e. in this case rent supplement.

The number of rent supplement appeals decided by Appeals Officers, and the number and average processing times for all supplementary welfare allowance appeals for years 2011 to date in 2013 are given in the attached tables.

Prior to October 2011, supplementary welfare allowance appeals were submitted directly to appeals officers of the Health Services Executive (HSE) and appellants had a final right of appeal to the Chief Appeals Officer following appeal to the HSE appeals officer. Since the transfer of Community Welfare Services to my Department in October 2011 supplementary welfare allowance appeals are made directly to the Chief Appeals Officer.

Table 1: Outcome of Rent Supplement Appeals 2011 – 2013

| | | | | |
|--|---------|-------------------|------------|-------|
| Rent Supplement Appeals 2011 – 2013 (to 31/5/2013) | - | - | - | - |
| Year | Allowed | Partially Allowed | Disallowed | Total |
| * 2011 | 128 | 29 | 468 | 625 |
| 2012 | 473 | 88 | 1,562 | 2,123 |
| 2013 (to 31/5/2013) | 225 | 41 | 546 | 812 |

* Since the transfer of Community Welfare Services to the Department in October 2011 supplementary welfare allowance appeals are made directly to the Chief Appeals Officer.

Table 2: Outcome of All Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals 2011 – 2013

| | | | | |
|--|---------|-------------------|------------|-------|
| Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals 2011 – 2013 (to 31/5/2013) | - | - | - | - |
| Year | Allowed | Partially Allowed | Disallowed | Total |
| * 2011 | 307 | 68 | 1,126 | 1,501 |
| 2012 | 1,017 | 142 | 3,105 | 4,264 |
| 2013 (to 31/5/2013) | 410 | 65 | 1,123 | 1,598 |

Table 3: Processing Times for Supplementary Welfare Allowance Appeals 2011 – 2013

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Appeals processing times for Supplementary Welfare Allowance appeals 2011 – 2013 (to 31/5/2013) | - | - |
| Year | Average processing times (weeks)Summary Decisions | Average processing times (weeks)Oral Hearings |
| * 2011 | 6.3 | 17.6 |
| 2012 | 17.6 | 22.9 |
| January 2013 | 16.5 | 33.3 |
| February 2013 | 17.0 | 27.4 |
| March 2013 | 17.5 | 21.7 |
| April 2013 | 18.2 | 21.5 |
| May 2013 | 17.1 | 24.7 |

Departmental Consultations

128. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will report on her Department's consultations with the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government on the plans contained in the programme for Government to move the payment of rent supplement to a housing assistance payment which would be administered by local authorities. [28348/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. Currently, there are approximately 86,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided over €403 million for 2013.

The Government has approved in principle to transfer responsibility for the provision of rental assistance to persons with a long term housing need from this Department to housing authorities using a new Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

Reporting and policy matters in relation to HAP, including the necessary legislative requirements to facilitate its implementation, are a matter for the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government (DECLG). However, officials in this Department are working closely with those in DECLG to assist with the necessary work required to initiate HAP including the business planning process, examining the possibilities for providing for direct deduction from social welfare payments, assisting with the economic assessment and supporting the piloting of HAP.

In December 2012, this Department's household budgeting scheme was amended to provide for the mandatory deduction of local authority rents. This is a major stepping stone in facilitating the transfer to local authorities. The purpose of this measure is to help local authorities address their concerns regarding the build-up of rental arrears and assist with the implementation of HAP. To further strengthen their position, DECLG have indicated that they will review tenancy agreements to make it a provision of such agreements that tenants must sign up for the household budgeting facility.

Rental Accommodation Scheme Payments

129. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that her decision to cut rent allowance rates throughout the country will directly result in homelessness, especially for single persons and couples with one child; the basis on which her decision was made to cut the rate in South Tipperary, where a very strong private rental market exists and where it is simply not possible for those listed above to find suitable accommodation at the newly reduced rates; if her Department discussed the new rates with local rent officers who are experiencing first-hand the difficulties in trying to implement such rates; how she expects a single person in South Tipperary to source accommodation with €12 per week less; if she will reverse this decision and carry out a real review of how lower rates will directly lead to homelessness; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28353/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supplement scheme is to provide short-term income support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. There are approximately 86,000 recipients of rent supplement for which the Government has provided over €403 million in 2013.

I recently announced my intention to implement revised rent limits under the rent supplement scheme which will come into force on Monday 17 June 2013 and will be in place until 31 December 2014.

The new rent limits have been determined following an extensive review of the private rental market. This review has been based on the most up-to-date market data available. This review continues the previous rent limit reviews' emphasis, to ensure that value for money is achieved while at the same time ensuring that people on rent supplement are not priced out of the market for private rented accommodation. The Department currently funds approximately 30% of the private rented sector so it is essential that the rent limits are kept under review.

The Department has completed a full review of rental costs throughout the country using data received from the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) of actual rental tenancies registered with them, including that in South Tipperary. The Department also used publicly available data sources including the Central Statistics Office rental indices, the Daft.ie Rental Report and leading websites advertising rental properties to ascertain both the market trends and the current asking prices for rental of one, two and three-bedroom properties.

The Department engaged with a number of stakeholders as part of the review process, including staff with responsibility for the administration of the rent supplement scheme.

In relation to the new maximum rent limits for South Tipperary I regret there was an error in the rates quoted in the list circulated to Oireachtas members. The correct limits for South Tipperary are set out in the attached table. There is no change to the single rate.

Department officials administering the scheme will continue to ensure that the accommodation needs of rent supplement recipients are met. The necessary regulations to give effect to the revised limits will be finalised within the coming week, and the full report of the Rent Limit Review will be published at that time.

South Tipperary Maximum Rent Limits from 17 June 2013

| County: | Single Shared | Couple Shared | Single | Couple | Couple/ One Parent Family - 1 Child | Couple/ One Parent Family - 2 Children | Couple/ One Parent Family - 3 Children |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------|--------|--------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| South Tipperary | €195 | €220 | €370 | €400 | €485 | €500 | €525 |

One-Parent Family Payment Application Numbers

130. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to address the needs of those in receipt of the one-parent family payment who will be affected by the changeover to the transition payment, who are working as little as an hour a day for five days; if her attention has been drawn to the fact that if these recipients change over to jobseeker's payments they will lose income and many will be left with no option but to give up employment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28391/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The reforms to the one-parent family payment (OFP) scheme aim to provide the necessary supports to lone parents to help them to escape poverty and social exclusion. I believe that supporting lone parents to participate in education, training, and the workforce, once their children have reached an appropriate age, will improve both their own and their families' economic and social circumstances. As a result of these reforms once an OFP recipient's youngest child reaches the relevant age threshold, they will no longer be entitled to the OFP payment. These changes will be gradually phased in during the period between July 2013 and 2015. Should former OFP recipients still have an income support need they will be required to apply for another social welfare payment. It is expected that the majority of individuals in these circumstances will apply for jobseeker's allowance (JA). They may also apply for the family income supplement (FIS) if they are working at least 19 hours per week.

The Social Welfare and Pensions (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013 contains legislative provisions to introduce transitional arrangements into the JA scheme to assist former OFP recipients whose youngest child is under 14 make the transition to JA. These customers will be exempt from the JA conditionality that requires them to be available for, and genuinely seeking, full-time work until their youngest child reaches the age of 14 years. In addition, these individuals will not have to satisfy the JA rule, which requires an individual to be unemployed for at least 4 out of any 7 consecutive days. This means that lone parents under the JA transitional arrangements will be able to work a few hours each day subject to them satisfying the JA means test.

Former OFP recipients who have a youngest child aged 14 years or over can apply for the JA payment, with the full conditionality of that scheme applied. This includes satisfying the scheme rule whereby JA is payable only where a person is fully unemployed for 4 out of any 7 days. In situations where the working patterns of former OFP recipients do not conform to this rule a number of options are available to the customer.

They may be able to reorganise their current hours of employment to satisfy JA scheme conditionality or secure an increase in their hours in order to qualify for FIS. If they are unable to meet either JA or FIS scheme rules and they have an income need, they may have recourse to Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA).

Persons due to exit the OFP scheme in the coming period are being engaged with at local

level by Social Welfare Local / Intreo Offices. During these engagements the options available to a former OFP recipient who works across a number of days per week can be discussed.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Payments

131. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 707 of 16 April 2013, when payment of bog compensation will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28134/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As outlined in my replies to previous questions from the Deputy on this matter, the individuals referred to in the Deputy's Question sold their interest in land in a raised bog special area of conservation under the voluntary bog purchase scheme, administered by my Department. An incentive bonus of €5,400, available under the scheme, was also paid to the applicants at the time of purchase, on the condition that they were selling all plots of bog land in their possession and registered or unregistered turbarry rights within a designated area.

The individuals have applied for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme. The qualifying criteria for this scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the 53 raised bog special areas of conservation – ownership or turbarry right;
- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbarry rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbarry on the site must not be exhausted;
- The claimant must have been cutting turf on the land in question during the relevant five year period; and
- No turf cutting or associated activity is ongoing on the property.

From the application submitted to my Department, it appears that the applicants purchased additional land within the raised bog special area of conservation in 2012. Therefore, they do not appear to have had a legal interest in the site through ownership or a turbarry right on 25 May 2010.

My Department has recently written to the applicants setting out its decision on their application.

Departmental Reports

132. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28168/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy is aware, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht was established on 2 June, 2011 following substantial Departmental configurations. Shortly thereafter, all areas of my De-

partment's expenditure were subject to a root and branch analysis as part of a Comprehensive Expenditure Review. There followed a consultation process culminating in the approval by Government last year of a new Public Spending Code. The new Code revised and strengthened arrangements in relation to the Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative and introduced a new concept of Focused Policy Assessments. New Value for Money (VFM) Reviews were then selected.

A VFM Review of the Arts Council was approved by the Government as part of a wide-ranging programme of VFM reviews across Departments. My Department has engaged with the Arts Council and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in that regard. A new Evaluation Unit has now been established in my Department and preliminary work in scoping the review is well advanced. Draft Terms of Reference and the composition of the Steering Committee are currently being finalised by the Department.

The question of undertaking a Focused Policy Assessment during 2013 is currently being examined.

Warmer Homes Scheme Applications

133. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his Department will honour an application made by a person who was in receipt of fuel allowance at the time of applying for inclusion on the Warmer Homes scheme but was not in receipt of fuel allowance by the time the provider of the scheme processed their application, in view of the fact that the delay in processing the application was not the fault of the applicant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28366/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme under the Better Energy Programme. The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme delivers a range of energy efficiency measures to households that are vulnerable to energy poverty.

The SEAI maintains a live database of applicants who apply to be considered for the Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme. No pre-checks on the qualifying criteria are carried out at this point. Applicants are sent a letter confirming that they are on the waiting list, informing them of the qualifying criteria and notifying them that these criteria will be verified at the point of survey. If any applicant, at the point of survey, is not in a position to verify they meet the qualifying criteria, their application is cancelled. No applicant has any guarantee of service delivery unless a survey verifies that works are technically possible and that the homeowner qualifies for the services at the time of survey.

The SEAI has advised that the applicant in question applied to the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme in late April 2013 (they have no record of a 2012 application), with the house surveyed in early June 2013. At this point, the applicant failed to provide proof of eligibility resulting in his application being cancelled. However, if the applicant is indeed eligible for the scheme, the SEAI is happy to accept proof of eligibility. On foot of receipt of this information, arrangements to install the appropriate energy efficiency measures will be put in train.

In view of the above, if the applicant would like to submit proof of eligibility or requires any other information regarding the scheme, he should call the Better Energy Warmer Homes Helpdesk at 1800 250 204.

Departmental Reports

134. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28170/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Value for Money and Policy Reviews are designed to secure improved value for money from public expenditure by providing systematic analysis of expenditure programmes and policies to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made on priorities within and between programmes.

My Department has completed a number of Value for Money and Policy Reviews since March 2011, publishing two initial reviews on proposed mergers of bodies under the aegis of the Department (Broadcasting Authority of Ireland with ComReg, and Digital Hub Development Agency with Dublin City Council), and participated in a review of merger of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, the Property Registration Authority and Valuation office, which has been led by the Department of Justice and Equality and is published on its website.

My Department also carried out a Value for Money Review on the proposal to introduce a Public Service Broadcasting (PSB) Household Charge. The independently chaired Review Group, which was established under the auspices of my Department, considered a range of issues in relation to the proposal, including the efficiency and effectiveness of the current licensing system. The Group's report has been submitted to me recently and I am now considering its findings in the context of the next steps to be taken in regard to introduction of the PSB Charge. I expect to be in a position, subject to Government approval, to initiate work in the autumn on the legislative and other work necessary to implement the household based Public Broadcasting Charge.

Recreational Angling Sector Data

135. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a detailed breakdown between sea angling, coarse angling and game angling in terms of the number of the general public and visitors who have taken part in these activities in each of the past five years; and if he will report on the amount of revenue generated for the Exchequer from each activity. [28342/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Fergus O'Dowd): I can advise the Deputy that it is intended to publish, in the coming weeks, the results of the most comprehensive National survey and analysis ever undertaken of the Recreational Angling Sector.

I am advised by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), who commissioned the study, that while it is being finalised, the initial results indicate that there are 406,000 participants in angling across all species types with many targeting more than one species.

The Angling sector is generating direct revenues in excess of €500 million per annum the vast majority of which is retained in the localised communities where the activity occurs. The economic importance of the sector is underlined by the fact that it sustainably supports more than 10,000 jobs in rural and peripheral communities particularly in the West of Ireland.

I will arrange to have the completed study forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Warmer Homes Scheme Data

136. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of applicants who have applied for the warmer homes schemes to date in 2013; if he will provide a breakdown of the number of applications which have been approved, refused and those which are pending. [28343/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Better Energy Warmer Homes scheme is administered by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) under the Better Energy Programme. Warmer Homes provides a range of energy efficiency measures to households that are vulnerable to energy poverty.

The SEAI has received 5,445 applications for the Better Energy Warmer Homes Scheme to date in 2013. Of these, 1,217 homes have been completed, 776 have been found to be ineligible or have been cancelled, while the remainder are on the waiting list.

Non-Principal Private Residence Charge Administration

137. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government whether the non-principal private residence tax is payable for 2013; if it will continue, and when it will end; whether it is payable in respect of the same properties for which the local property tax is payable this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28216/13]

140. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government whether the non-principal private residence tax is payable for 2013; if it will continue, and when it will end; whether it is payable in respect of the same properties for which the local property tax is payable this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 140 together.

The Local Property Tax is being introduced on a half year basis this year and accordingly 50% of the Tax is payable in 2013. The Local Property Tax and Non Principal Private Residence Charge operate quite differently in many respects ; however, in general, those properties which are liable for the Charge will also be liable for the Tax. The amount of Local Property Tax incurred in respect of a liable property is based on that property's value, while the Non Principal Private Residence Charge is incurred on the basis of a flat rate of €200 per liable property per annum. Therefore, it is not appropriate to assume equivalence between the Charge and the Tax. This year will be the final year of the operation of the Non Principal Private Residence Charge.

NAMA Social Housing Provision

138. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown by county of the number of properties identified by the National Asset Management Agency for social housing provision; the number accepted as suitable by local authorities; the number transferred from NAMA to the local authority or housing association to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28196/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): To the end of Quarter 1 2013, the transition of 263 properties from the NAMA portfolio has been completed, with contracts signed in respect of a further 76 properties. All but 24 of the 263 completed units are being made available for people deemed by the local authorities to be in need of housing. These 24 units were part of a project of 58 apartments delivered in Sandyford with the other 34 apartments delivered for social housing use. Units are delivered in a number of ways with some purchased directly by local authorities and approved housing bodies while others are acquired under lease arrangements.

The 76 contracted properties are units where a local authority or approved housing body has signed legal contracts to take possession of properties once fitting out or other works have been completed. These works are ongoing. The 239 properties delivered or contracted to date for social housing purposes were sourced in the following local authority areas -

Carlow -55

Cork County - 53

Drogheda - 27

Dublin City - 27

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown - 34

Galway City - 30

Kildare - 4

Limerick - 5

Westmeath – 4.

In addition to units delivered or contracted, a further 1,198 housing units are either under consideration or under negotiation. Of the units identified by NAMA to date as potentially suitable for social housing purposes, 687 properties were deemed unsuitable by local authorities while 539 were considered by local authorities to be in unsuitable locations. A further 807 properties are no longer available for social housing purposes as they have been let or sold on the private market. My Department, the Housing Agency and NAMA continue to work together with housing authorities and approved housing bodies towards bringing suitable NAMA units into social use. It will continue to be my Department’s objective in 2013 to maximise the delivery of social housing using all of the resources available. Quarterly updates in relation to the delivery of NAMA sourced units are available at www.housing.ie.

Leader Programmes Expenditure

139. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money that remains for sanctioning in respect of projects under the LEADER programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28198/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): During 2011, the European Commission approved a change in the maximum co-funding rate from 55% to 85% for the LEADER elements of Ireland’s Rural Development Programme but only for expenditure incurred in 2012 and 2013. This had the effect of reducing the available funding under the Programme from €427 million to an estimated €370 million. The exact

value of the Programme will not be known until the end of the year when the final figure for expenditure in 2013 is established. A revised financial plan will be submitted to the European Commission late this year reflecting the up-to-date Programme value.

To date, the Local Development Companies (LDCs) have committed €228 million on projects and spent €54 million of administration/ animation (€42 million of this on administration). Up to €74 million, 20% of each LDC's total Programme expenditure, can be spent on administration. However, I have advised all LDCs that they should aim to spend substantially less than the allowed 20% on administration. This gives a balance of approximately €88 million remaining to be committed on projects and spent on administration.

Question No. 140 answered with Question No. 137.

Departmental Reports

141. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28173/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department has concluded a number of Value-for-Money and Policy Reviews since March 2011, namely:

- Value for Money Review of the CLÁR and RAPID Leveraged Expenditure Approach. A copy of the report along with the Department's response are available at www.environ.ie/en/publications/community/rapid

- Value for Money Review - Water Services Investment Programme 2007-2009. A copy of the report along with the Department's action plan are available at www.environ.ie/en/publications/environment/water

The Water Sector Reform Programme currently underway, which includes the establishment of Irish Water to take over responsibility for the delivery of water services from 1 January 2014, has superseded many of the VFM report recommendations.

- The Rental Accommodation Scheme (RAS) Value for Money and Policy Review, which is available in the Oireachtas Library, highlighted six key recommendations that would contribute to the improved operation of the scheme in the future. As far as is possible action has been taken by the Department in relation to all of the recommendations:

- the on-going monitoring and auditing by the Department of the value for money of RAS at recoupment stage, including an analysis of the discount levels achieved by local authorities for each RAS case (recommendation 1);

- the establishment by the Private Residential Tenancies Board of a national rent index in April 2013 (recommendation 2);

- on-going engagement with local authorities to integrate, where possible, the RAS function into the general housing administrative framework of the local authorities (recommendation 3);

- through the Housing Agency, a network of RAS liaison officers has been established with

local authorities to try to ensure that any training or information requirements of RAS staff are met (recommendation 3);

- it has been recognised that activation and employment are key concerns: in that context, the Department has been working to remove where possible any barriers in the housing systems that would impede a return to work (recommendation 4);

- on-going review of the administrative processes underpinning social housing delivery and the requirement for performance indicators (recommendations 5 and 6).

In addition to the above, my Department has undertaken other substantial evaluation work in recent years, including the Local Government Efficiency Review, strategies/reports on Ballymun Regeneration, review and assessment of the EPA, review of the Homeless Strategy, Spot Checks on Capital Projects, study on Irish Water and the report on alignment of Local Government and Local Development.

My Department is currently engaged with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on Focussed Policy Assessments of the efficiency and effectiveness of Pobal in the management of grant schemes and the use of Public Private Partnerships in the Water Services sector.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Issues

142. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding redress by the pyrite board (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28205/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): One of the key recommendations of the report of the independent Pyrite Panel (July 2012) was the establishment of a Resolution Board to supervise the implementation of a pyrite remediation programme for homeowners who have no other viable options to have pyrite remediation works undertaken. The Pyrite Resolution Board (PRB), which I established earlier this year, has recently published an outline of a proposed remediation scheme. The qualification criteria for inclusion in the scheme are reflective of the conclusions and recommendations of the pyrite report. The scope of the remediation scheme is restricted to providing a solution for those homeowners whose homes are affected by significant pyritic damage and who have no other viable means to have their homes remediated. It is not a compensation scheme and consequently the scope of the scheme does not extend to cover remediation works already undertaken. This is in line with standard practice whereby prior approval would form part of the terms and conditions for inclusion in a scheme of this nature.

Local Authority Housing Issues

143. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will include social clauses for the long-term unemployed in any projects under the aegis of his Department announced as part of the extra €150 million in capital expenditure for 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28258/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Last week I announced a new €50 million three-year energy efficiency investment programme for local authority homes. This is a key part of the Government's additional €150 million capital investment in the economy over 2013-2014.

This programme will target the 25,000 least energy efficient local authority homes. This will result in warmer homes and lower energy bills for thousands of families and will also create around 1,000 jobs in the sector. I intend to announce capital allocations to local authorities very shortly in order that contracts can be commenced as soon as possible. These works will be undertaken by small, locally-based contractors for the most part and will provide job opportunities for the long-term unemployed. I will be asking local authorities to ensure that the potential to employ local labour is exploited to the fullest extent possible, having regard to public procurement rules.

Parking Charges

144. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if local authorities can apply parking charges to privately owned car parks in retail parks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28269/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): A local authority has powers to make bye-laws for or in relation to the use, operation, protection, regulation or management of any land, services or any other matter provided by or under the control or management of the local authority, whether within or without its functional area or in relation to any connected matter (section 199 (1) of the Local Government Act 2001). The application of parking charges on privately-owned land is a matter for the owner concerned and not the local authority.

Tenant Purchase Scheme Applications

145. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will extend the 30 June deadline for tenants to purchase their local authority home under the 2011 scheme to allow more tenants to avail of this scheme's favourable terms. [28271/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The 2011 Fixed Tenant Purchase Scheme was a once-off scheme introduced in the context of that year's Budget and was available to local authority tenants of more than 10 years standing.

Applications were accepted by local authorities up to 31 December 2011, with authorities initially given 12 months, i.e. to end 2012, to complete all sales. The 2012 deadline was subsequently extended via Regulations to the current date of 30 June 2013 in order to ensure that all sales could be completed within the regulatory framework of the Scheme.

There are no plans to reopen the scheme to allow for new applications, nor is it proposed to extend further the 30 June deadline for the completion of sales.

Pyrite Resolution Board Remit

146. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reasons County Donegal is not included in the pyrite resolution board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28313/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Ho-

gan): The independent Pyrite Panel, which I established in September 2011, undertook a desk-top study, in conjunction with stakeholder consultation, to establish certain facts in relation to the potential exposure to pyrite problems. The information was gathered from a number of sources including local authorities, structural guarantee providers, representatives of homeowners, private builders, construction professionals and public representatives and was cross referenced to verify, as far as practicable, its validity.

Seventy four estates were identified to the Pyrite Panel as possibly having pyrite. All of these estates are located in the five local authority areas of Dublin City, Fingal, Kildare, Meath and Offaly.

I understand that the Pyrite Panel were not made aware of any instances of pyrite occurring outside of those five local authority areas at the time of the report's compilation.

I established the Pyrite Resolution Board earlier this year to oversee and ensure the effective implementation of a pyrite remediation programme for homeowners who have no other viable options to have pyrite remediation works undertaken. The Board has recently published an outline of the proposed remediation scheme in accordance with the recommendations of the report of the Pyrite Panel.

While the outline of the scheme provides that dwellings must be located in one of the five local authority areas of Dublin City, Fingal, Kildare, Meath or Offaly, the Board have signalled that the scheme will be reviewed from time to time having regard to prevailing facts and circumstances.

Water Meters Installation

147. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will outline the cost that will occur in relation to the installation of the water meters; if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the rollout of the water meters including cost of installation, cost per cubic metre per household and so on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28317/13]

148. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide details of the companies that are installing the water meters in households; if they have the any plans to replacing the existing network at stages where leaks exist; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28318/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 and 148 together.

In relation to the roll-out of the metering programme, the procurement process and measures to address leakage, I refer to the reply to Questions Nos. 6, 7, 17 and 30 on today's Order Paper. It would be inappropriate to release estimates of the cost of the metering programme in advance of the completion of the ongoing procurement process.

Fire Service Issues

149. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if an adequate risk assessment has been done for the Keeping Communities Safe document; the reason local fire authorities are not being merged into one overseeing body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28319/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I have recently published Keeping Communities Safe (KCS) as national policy for the future direction of fire services in Ireland. The document was prepared by the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in my Department through a collaborative process, which included consultation with stakeholders. The intention is to ensure that Ireland continues to manage its fire risk effectively in accordance with current international best practice and that the successful approaches to fire safety, under which the level of fire fatalities recorded in 2012 was the lowest for four decades, are extended and consolidated.

With a view to developing a common understanding in relation to terminology in risk management, relevant definitions are set out in KCS. In particular, the term ““Risk Assessment”” as used in KCS is one stage of the risk management process. The National Directorate prepared a series of Task Analyses to show how the initial fire crew, including the incident commander, would work to safely undertake tasks normally associated with the range of fire scenarios set out in Appendix A to the document.

Under Section 19 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation, the phrase ‘risk assessment’ has a particular meaning, and requires employers to carry out risk assessments of their work activities. Guidance on relevant aspects of risk assessment for fire services, and meeting this legislative requirement, is provided in the Fire Services Ancillary Safety Statement (generic risk assessments), in the Fire Service National Incident Command System (dynamic risk assessments) and Fire Service Standard Operational Guidance (SOGs) (specific situational risk assessments). Individual fire services will prepare any additional risk assessments, guided by the Task Analyses referred to above, which may be necessary to comply with their statutory responsibilities as employers on foot of changes arising from implementation of KCS. Specifically on firefighter safety, KCS recognises the importance of the twin duties on fire authorities under the Fire Services and Safety, Health and Welfare at Work legislation. An updated Fire Services Safety Management System (SMS) support document is being developed as part of the KCS implementation process (a draft is currently out with stakeholders as part of the consultation process) to ensure that occupational health and safety in fire services is fully aligned with international best practice and the recently adopted local government SMS policy.

The Keeping Communities Safe development process also considered the structures appropriate for delivering effective and efficient fire services to communities. Ultimately, it was considered that it is appropriate that fire services remain a local government service, with appropriate local political accountability. However, while fire authorities based on the principal local authorities remain, KCS provides for a move to a “shared services” structure, involving a reduction in the number of actual fire services from 30 to 21. This solution will provide for efficiencies and consistency, and evolved from a detailed consideration of options. It was noted that there is a very good fit between the roles provided currently by local authority fire services and the local government system.

The new structures provide for service delivery units based mainly around population groups between 120,000 to 200,000 persons. There will be fourteen single authority and seven multi-authority shared services arrangements. The policy also includes a strong regional dimension based on the current eight major emergency regions to achieve/ co-ordinate efficient service provision and “mutual assistance” and support among fire services. The KCS document is available on my Department’s web site at www.environ.ie.

Planning Issues

150. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Lo-

cal Government if quarries which are currently operational will continue to operate during the substitute consent process contained within the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28362/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): Quarries which are required to apply for substitute consent, either following a confirmation by An Bord Pleanála of a decision of a planning authority in this regard or in a case where the quarry owner or operator did not refer the planning authority decision to the Board for a review, have been subject to a determination that environmental impact assessment (including screening) or appropriate assessment should have been carried out but were not carried out. Accordingly, it is considered that the continuation of extraction in such a quarry during the period in which the substitute consent application is being made would not be in compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive or the Habitats Directive, as appropriate.

Leader Programmes Funding

151. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason funding which was previously sanctioned by his Department is not being made available for a project (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28363/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I understand that the project referred to in the Question was approved by Donegal Local Development Company under the LEADER elements of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013. It was selected for inspection by the Inspection Services Division of my Department and, following an audit of the file, it was identified that, among other issues, the procurement for the project was not compliant with the Public Procurement Guidelines. The European Regulations under which the Programme operates require that all projects must be compliant with public procurement.

Housing Issues

152. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which he has quantified the local authority housing requirements in each local authority area by reference to the number of the housing applicants recorded by each authority; if he intends to take any specific steps to address this issue in the short and medium term thereby alleviating some of the cost of rent support currently incurred annually; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28378/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): In accordance with Section 21 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009, I directed all housing authorities to prepare a summary of social housing assessments carried out in their areas on 7 May 2013. A report on the results will be published in the autumn and this will provide an important insight into the level and type of need for social housing support across the country. The results of the assessment carried out in 2011 are available on my Department’s website *www.environ.ie* and the Housing Agency’s website *www.housing.ie*.

In terms of addressing that need, the Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support requirements through a variety of mechanisms,

including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012, I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department's housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014.

Delivery of social housing will be significantly facilitated through more flexible funding models such as the Rental Accommodation Scheme and leasing but the Government is also committed to developing other funding mechanisms that will increase the supply of permanent new social housing. Such mechanisms will include options to purchase, build to lease and the sourcing of loan finance by approved housing bodies for construction and acquisition. There is also obvious potential, across a range of housing programmes, for the Government's objective of sourcing and providing suitable residential units for use as social housing to be aligned with the commercial objectives of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). My Department and the Housing Agency are engaged with NAMA to ensure the identification of suitable housing units for social purposes and this process is on-going.

In spite of the challenging circumstances within which local authorities must operate the final outcome for 2012 is expected to be in the region of 5,000 housing units. Given the current volatility of the market and different challenges to the channels of supply it is difficult to estimate the likely output of new units for social housing this year. However, it is provisionally estimated that in the region of 5,000 units will be provided for social housing in 2013. The payment of rent supplement is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Social Protection.

Fire Service

153. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of structures of the fire services part-time and whole-time throughout the country; if any particular weaknesses exist which might affect the ability of the services to respond in particular emergency situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28379/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No. 153 of 2 May 2013, which sets out the position in relation to this matter.

Local Authority Housing Provision

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which it is expected to increase local authority housing stock in line with the local authority housing waiting lists in the next three years excluding any provisions in respect of voluntary housing bodies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28380/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Government's housing policy statement, published in June 2011, clearly identifies that the priority for Government will be to meet the most acute needs of households applying for social housing support. I am determined to ensure that the social housing programme optimises the delivery of social housing and the return for the resources invested. To achieve this, it is essential that we tailor the use of available Exchequer

supports to prevailing conditions and explore the full range of solutions to address housing needs. The financial parameters within which we will be operating for the coming years rule out a return to large capital funded construction programmes. The Government is committed to responding more quickly and on a larger scale to social housing support needs through a variety of mechanisms, including through increased provision of social housing. In July 2012 I announced details of a three-year funding programme of €100 million to deliver some 800 new units of voluntary and local authority owned social housing. I am monitoring expenditure under my Department's housing programme for 2013, together with the level of contractual commitments extending into 2014, with a view to a decision later this year on approving some limited new construction and house purchases over the period to end 2014.

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Local Authority Housing Provision

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of housing units likely to be constructed for or provided directly by local authorities or voluntary housing agencies in the course of the next four years; the extent to which this is intended to address the needs as defined by the current numbers on the waiting lists of the respective local authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28381/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question Nos. 155 and 156 of 2 May 2013 which set out the position in this matter.

Question No. 156 answered with Question No. 53.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the various local authorities have received adequate provision to meet the disabled person's housing adaptation grant requirements in 2013; the numbers awaiting approval throughout the various local authorities countywide; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28383/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Gov-

ernment (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I refer to the reply to Question No 159 of 2 May, 2013 which sets out the position in this matter.

Local Government Reform

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the traditional services provided by local authorities are likely to continue in the context of the reform of local government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28384/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): As indicated in the reply to Question No. 609 on 5 February 2013, The Action Programme for Effective Local Government, which sets out Government decisions in relation to local government reform, has affirmed (paragraph 4 .3.1) that, with the exception of functions relating to water services that will be assumed by Irish Water and certain functions relating to river basin management planning that will be transferred from local authorities to the EPA, the functions that have hitherto been performed by local authorities will continue to be exercised by them. A service level agreement will be put in place between Irish Water and Local Authorities to set out the respective roles. Furthermore, a similar arrangement is agreed regarding the local enterprise function between Enterprise Ireland and each Council.

Fire Service

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the extent to which the cost-cutting requirements he inherited are affecting the quality and capacity of emergency services such as the fire services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28385/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I refer to the reply to Question No 606 of 5 February 2013 which sets out the position in this matter.

Local Authority Housing Mortgages

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when it is expected that legislation to improve the shared ownership mortgage scheme will occur with particular reference to the need to facilitate those who find themselves unemployed and the need to enable those wishing to move from inadequate or overcrowded accommodation to family sized homes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28386/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Government's 2011 housing policy statement announced the standing down of all affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership scheme, as part of the review of Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000. That review is now almost concluded and I have also asked the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency to provide me with a standalone analysis of the shared ownership scheme, including identification of the main difficulties and recommendations for mitigating measures. Any future changes to legislation governing affordable housing schemes, including the shared ownership

scheme, will be made in the context of both pieces of work and I expect to make announcements in this regard in the coming months.

Waste Water Treatment Issues

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of reported incidents of pollution that have arisen from the malfunction or inadequacy of municipal waste water treatment plants; the action taken or pending arising therefrom on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28387/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Environmental Protection Agency is the statutory body responsible for the supervision of wastewater discharges from local authority wastewater treatment plants. The Agency is also the statutory body for investigating complaints of pollution and for the enforcement of environmental legislation in Ireland. Details of all prosecutions taken by the Agency for pollution incidents and details of the Agency's enforcement activities are published on the Agency's website (www.epa.ie).

Rented Dwellings Register

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the total number of landlords registered in each of the years 2004 to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28388/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 regulates the tenant-landlord relationship in the private rented residential sector and the Act provides that landlords in the sector must apply to register the tenancy of a dwelling with the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB). I have no function in the operational matters of the PRTB which is an independent statutory body established under the Residential Tenancies Act. The PRTB publishes tenancy registrations statistics in its Annual Reports which are available on its website www.prtb.ie and the most recent report relates to 2011. Copies of the PRTB Annual Reports are also available in the Oireachtas library. The website also contains the published register of tenancies maintained by the PRTB.

EU Conventions

163. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will be signing the European Convention on Violence against Women; the reason he has not signed it to date; if he will provide a date for the signing to take place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28118/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Ireland supports, in principle, the aims and terms of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. It is a detailed Convention with a very broad scope across a number of policy areas with potential policy and legislative implications. The provisions of the Convention and the legislative and administrative arrangements that would be necessary to allow signature and ratification of the Convention by Ireland are being examined in conjunction with the government commitment to introduce consolidated and reformed do-

mestic violence legislation to address all aspects of domestic violence, threatened violence and intimidation, in a way that provides protection to victims.

However, a particular difficulty to be addressed in Ireland's consideration of the Convention relates to reconciling property rights under the Irish constitution with the requirement under Article 52 of the Convention - the availability of emergency barring orders. The development of the consolidated and reformed legislation, including consideration of the Convention provisions, will be progressed as soon as possible having regard to the need for consultations and other legislative priorities in my Department. I should also inform you that, to date, 30 Council of Europe member states have signed the Convention of which four have ratified it. Of these just one EU member state, Portugal, has as yet ratified the convention. The convention has not yet entered into force as this requires at least ten ratifications, including 8 Council of Europe member states.

Departmental Reports

164. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28178/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): A Value for Money Review was carried out by my Department on the Legal Aid Board during 2011, with the report published in 2012. The recommendations from this Value for Money Review and the current position in relation to these recommendations are set out in the following table.

| Key Recommendation | Current Position |
|---|---|
| The relative efficiency of law centres and the scope for improving efficiency through increasing throughput of cases within the existing level of resources; | The Board has updated efficiency indicators used in the review (the total direct cost of cases cleared and the solicitor days per case cleared for 2011 which demonstrates a continued improvement in the Legal Aid Board's productivity. These indicators now form an important element of the Board's procedures for managing risk and performance across the law centre network. |
| The cost of providing services through private practitioners compared to the current model which involves mainly direct service provision through law centres | The Board continues to operate a mixed model of service delivery and uses private practitioners where resources allow. However, due to resource constraints, private practitioners are now mainly used for District Court cases only which attract a significantly lower fee than cases before the higher courts. The main focus of effort in the law centre network is to continue to improve work practices and procedures to increase the throughput of cases within existing resources. |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>The scope for co-location of services with other agencies (Family Mediation Services (FMS) now within the Board and the Courts Service), to encourage ADR (alternative dispute resolution) along the lines of the Integrated Mediation Initiative in Dolphin House.</p> | <p>This initiative has been extended following a review of its operation that clearly demonstrated efficiency savings (in terms of costs avoided). A similar integrated approach has recently been introduced in Cork and Naas in cooperation with the Courts Service;</p> |
| <p>The issue of how the current operation of the Courts (listing of cases, etc) imposes inefficiencies and costs on the Board (and indeed other Court users) – suggestion is that both the Department and the Board approach the Courts Service jointly about this matter (Key issue is the independence and wide discretion of judiciary in this regard).</p> | <p>There is a review group in place in the Department currently examining how the efficiency of the Courts might be improved on which the Board is represented;</p> |
| <p>Seeking legislative change to enable the Board to save approx €250k on practising certificates for solicitors (seek to have just one certificate for the Board in line with Chief State Solicitors Office practice rather than individual practising certificates for all solicitors employed in the Board). This is also consistent with “An Bord Snip Nua” recommendations to reduce non-pay overheads in the Board.</p> | <p>Briefing material on the suggested legislative amendment required has been supplied by the Board to the Department and it is now being considered in the context of the draft legislation covering the future regulation of the legal profession.</p> |
| <p>Reviewing locations of law centres and identification of possibilities for mergers/consolidation (the results of the analysis undertaken illustrates that costs and throughput of cases in the smaller law centres compare favourably to the larger centres – so the case for possible merger of smaller law centres is not generally supported by the analysis).</p> | <p>The Board has reviewed the structures for service delivery in Cork, Galway and Dublin and has consolidated its previously separate Refugee Legal Services operations in those 3 locations into the law centre network. Further work on consolidation of services in the Dublin area is also underway to improve efficiency and effectiveness in that location;</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Reviewing HQ costs on an ongoing basis to seek efficiencies (€500 cost per case figure is used, but this reduces if productivity in law centres rises).</p> | <p>The impact of the moratorium on recruitment has resulted in reduced numbers of staff in HQ while taking over responsibility for the corporate support functions of the FMS has increased the workload in support areas as only front-line FMS staff were transferred to the Board. A further review of support service structures is currently underway to identify how best to deploy resources in these areas of the Board to:- better support front line service delivery; and- meet corporate governance obligations in the most cost effective and efficient manner possible (this includes measures for the more active management of the Board's property portfolio and procurement of supplies and services).</p> |
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Garda Vetting of Personnel

165. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plan to tackle the waiting list in Garda vetting, which is currently at 16 weeks, and is unnecessarily delaying the time to process employment checks and is preventing persons from taking up employment in vital industries such as home care; the reason Garda checks are not transferable for employees between different companies operating in the same sector; the reason a new Garda check must be completed upon entering a new employment, regardless of the date of the previous check; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28186/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the current average processing time for applications is approximately 14 weeks from date of receipt. However, seasonal fluctuations and the necessity to seek additional information on particular applications can result in this processing time being exceeded on occasion. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time-frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process.

A vetting disclosure is made in response to a written request and with the permission of the person who is the subject of that request. Garda vetting disclosures are issued to specified organisations registered with GCVU for that purpose in respect of a particular post or employment. The Unit processed approximately 328,000 vetting applications on behalf of these organisations in 2012. The disclosure is made to the requesting, registered organisation of the position at the time when it is issued. Each time a new vetting application is received, a full vetting check is conducted to ensure that the most recent data available is taken into account. The non-transferability and contemporaneous nature of the certificate protects against the risk of fraud or forgery and is a guarantee of the integrity of the vetting service. It also affords the registered organisation the facility to assess suitability based on the most up to date information available on the applicant.

I remain in ongoing contact with the Garda Commissioner as to how best the service can continue to be delivered and improved upon, while at all times protecting the integrity of the process. Clearly, the protection of children and vulnerable adults is the primary objective of the

Garda Central Vetting Unit and this must remain the case. The possibility of introducing an e-vetting system has been assessed and the Garda authorities are now in the process of developing a system which will enable vetting applications to be submitted electronically through a secure web service. In addition, the system will facilitate the checking and monitoring of applications. The relevant work is being pursued on a priority basis and it will be completed as quickly as possible.

The Garda Commissioner has informed me that there are currently 1 Superintendent, 2 Sergeants and approximately 113 civilian personnel assigned to the Garda Central Vetting Unit. This civilian complement includes 23 staff recently transferred from the Department of Agriculture who are undergoing the required training course. A further 9 personnel were allocated to the GCVU on 13th May 2013 and an additional 6 took up positions on the 31st May 2013. When these staff have been fully trained on the vetting process I expect there will be a positive effect on vetting times. My Department is also examining the scope for the redeployment of additional personnel from within the public service to the Unit.

Court Orders

166. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports under Section 47 of the Family Law Act 1995 that have been ordered in the District Court. [28190/13]

167. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports under Section 47 of the Family Law Act 1995 completed in the District Court and paid for, wholly or partially, by the Legal Aid Board. [28191/13]

168. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of reports under Section 47 of the Family Law Act 1995 completed in the District Court by Barnardos. [28192/13]

169. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the total cost to the State of all reports under Section 47 of the Family Law Act 1995 completed in the District Court by Barnardos. [28193/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 166 to 169, inclusive, together.

It should be noted that section 47 of the 1995 Family Law Act does not provide for the provision of reports in the District Court. Reports on the welfare of children in proceedings before the District Court are more usually provided under section 20 of the 1991 Child Care Act which provides that the court may direct the HSE to undertake an investigation of the child's circumstances. As the Deputy knows, the Legal Aid Board is a statutory body which is independent in its operation. Nevertheless, I have made enquiries of the Board and I am informed that the Board may fund reports for clients, where appropriate, in certain cases. Although such expenditure is recorded on each case file, it is not feasible to retrieve the information in the form required by the Deputy's question.

Departmental Reports

170. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when he will publish in full Chapter 20 of the Report of the Commission of Investigation into the Catholic

Archdiocese of Dublin chaired by Judge Yvonne Murphy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28326/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I can inform the Deputy that the publication of the relevant sections of the report referred to is subject to directions of the High Court under section 38 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 and that these proceedings were yesterday adjourned until 3 July. Accordingly, I am not free at present to publish the Chapter in question. I can assure the Deputy that I am, of course, anxious to see the Chapter in question published as quickly as possible, subject to the requirements of the legislation.

Public Order Offences

171. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will request a report from the Garda Commissioner regarding riots (details supplied) in County Dublin; the number of persons arrested; the amount of alcohol seized; and the number of juveniles who came to the Garda Síochána's attention. [28336/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to the matter referred to by the Deputy. I will contact the Deputy directly as soon as the report is to hand.

Crime Prevention

172. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied that the law is sufficiently robust to deal with gangs who are involved in the theft of clothes from charity clothes banks and who have caused damage to the clothes banks; the number of prosecutions, if any, that have taken place in each of the past three years against persons apprehended for theft or damage of this kind. [28337/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): An Garda Síochána's Policing Plan 2013, sets out the continued commitment of An Garda Síochána to pro-actively target groups and individuals engaged in criminal activity, including all forms of organised criminal activities. There is a wide range of robust legislation already in place to tackle criminality of the kind referred to by the Deputy. In particular individuals involved in theft or criminal damage are subject to extensive penalties including under the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 and the Criminal Justice (Criminal Damage) Act 1991.

An Garda Síochána continues to develop and implement new operations and strategies aimed at targeting, dismantling and disrupting criminal networks by utilising advanced analytical and intelligence methodologies. An Garda Síochána also continues to work closely with neighbouring police forces to tackle cross border criminality and transnational criminal groupings. This includes ongoing cooperation and interaction with Europol and Interpol agencies.

I should mention that at my request, I have received a detailed confidential report from the Garda Commissioner on the activities of certain crime gangs involved in bogus charity collection and related criminality. The Deputy will appreciate that I cannot go into the detail of the Garda analysis of this phenomenon but I can assure him that extensive operations have been put in place which are successfully impacting and disrupting the activities of those involved.

Insofar as the number of prosecutions that have taken place over the past three years that directly relate specifically to stealing clothes from charity banks and/or causing criminal damage

to clothes banks, I am advised that it would not be possible to produced these detailed figures without a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources.

Garda Operations

173. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on the Garda Operation Headrest; the number of persons arrested and charged in line with this operation; the number of successful convictions secured to date; if the operation is still ongoing. [28338/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Headrest, which commenced in 2010, is a joint operation between An Garda Síochána and the Department of Social Protection targeting particular fraudulent claimants on the social welfare system. The Garda investigation was conducted by the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation and involved searches of dwellings, seizures of documents, arrests and detention of suspects resulting in charges being brought against a number of persons which resulted in successful prosecutions.

The operation is ongoing and investigations are continuing.

Garda Training

174. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide a breakdown of the full cost to the Exchequer of training an additional 250, 500, 750 and 1,000 members of An Garda Síochána. [28339/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed that on the basis of current figures the direct cost, incorporating basic pay and allowances, of a Garda recruit up to attestation would be in the region of €8,000 and that uniform costs amounting to approximately €1,200 would be incurred. Additional expenditure would also arise in a number of areas, such as for training and maintenance, but the relevant amounts would depend on a number of factors, including the number of recruits involved.

Garda Divisional Policing Plans

175. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the Garda divisional policing plans for 2013 will be published on the website of An Garda Síochána, particularly the policing plan for the Dublin Metropolitan Region northern division; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28340/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Garda Divisional Policing Plans for 2013, including that for the Dublin Metropolitan Region North Division, are available on the Garda Síochána website, www.garda.ie, under 'Publications'.

Stardust Fire Issues

176. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will lay the Report of the Independent Examination of the Stardust Victims Committee's Case for

a Reopened Inquiry into the Stardust Fire Disaster as originally drafted and submitted to his Department by Mr. Paul Coffey SC before Dáil Éireann. [28341/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy will be aware, the document in question has been released under Freedom of Information legislation but I do not propose to depart from normal practice by laying before the Oireachtas a draft version of an independent report, which was submitted on the basis that amendments could be made prior to its publication.

Road Safety Issues

177. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the actions his Department will take to ensure that road safety laws concerning cyclists are enforced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [22988/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that members of An Garda Síochána enforce the law on pedal cycling as part of their normal duties on an ongoing basis. In addition to the day to day enforcement of the relevant provisions of the Road Traffic Acts, breaches of the legislation in respect of pedal cycle behaviour are regularly targeted by way of specific Garda operations throughout the country. Where breaches of legislation are detected, members of An Garda Síochána, depending on the circumstances, may deal with the incident by way of advice or caution or by initiating criminal proceedings.

I am further informed that the Garda authorities regularly give educational talks, including through the Garda Schools Programme, on road safety and road traffic legislation, including on pedal cycling, to young people and other identified high-risk road users to encourage increased compliance.

Subsidiary Protection Applications

178. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the application for subsidiary protection in the State will be decided in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [28367/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Following the formal refusal of his asylum application, the person concerned lodged an application for subsidiary protection. In light of the High Court Judgment of Mr. Justice Hogan in the MM case, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), in conjunction with the Offices of the Attorney General, is working on the development of a framework, legislative and administrative, under which existing and future applications for subsidiary protection will be determined. Once the necessary legislative provisions have been completed, the new subsidiary protection determination arrangements will be put into operation as soon as possible thereafter. Further information is available on the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) Website - www.inis.gov.ie - and this information will be updated as developments occur.

The legislative provisions referred to above are being given priority attention. Once the new arrangements are in place, steps will be taken to have all outstanding applications for subsidiary protection, including the application lodged by the person concerned, processed in a timely manner.

In the event that his 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.

European Arrest Warrant Issues

179. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of extradition requests made here in 2012 under the European arrest warrant scheme; the number of persons returned here under the European arrest warrant; the amount the European arrest warrant scheme cost the Exchequer in 2012; the amount that was paid in legal fees in 2012 under the European Arrest Warrant Scheme; the number of requests Ireland made in 2012 under the European arrest warrant scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28369/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The Deputy may be interested to know that the Central Authority produces an annual report, under the *European Arrest Warrant Act 2003*, relating to European arrest warrants both received in and issued by the State. The annual report which provides details of 2012 figures was laid before the Oireachtas on 28th March 2013 and is available to view on the Department's website, www.justice.ie, under "Press & Publications > Publications > Annual Reports".

The specific figures requested by the Deputy are as follows:

- A total of 313 European arrest warrants were received from Member States by the Central Authority in 2012;

- 52 persons who were subjects of European arrest warrants from Ireland were surrendered to this jurisdiction during 2012;

- 88 European arrest warrants were transmitted by the Central Authority to other Member States in 2012.

With reference to legal fees, while I as Minister have no function in relation to the payment such fees, I have asked my Department to make enquiries with the relevant bodies and, once this information is to hand, I will write to the Deputy.

Prison Committals

180. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the fact that, as of March 2013, three prisoners aged 17 years were on protection in St. Patrick's Institution, Dublin, two of whom are locked up for 23 hours per day; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [21821/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by my officials in the Irish Prison Service that of the three prisoners referred to in the Deputy's question, two of those prisoners requested to be placed on protection in St Patrick's Institution. I am further advised that the other prisoner was placed on protection following a case conference at which the relevant services, the prisoner's family and also the prisoner himself were in attendance. The Deputy might note that this prisoner is no longer on protection and is described by local management as 'getting on well'.

Of the further two 17 years olds who are on protection and were previously on 23 hour lock up, I wish to advise the Deputy that while still classified as protection prisoners, both prisoners work in the kitchens (Work and Training) and therefore mix with other prisoners 7 days a week, 7.30 am to 5.30 pm.

Penalty Point System

181. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the serious implications for road safety, if he will outline the steps he has taken to deal with the allegations of widespread cancellation of fixed charge notices; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [23303/13]

182. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he is satisfied with the conduct of the investigation into the cancellation of fixed charge penalty notices in view of the serious implications for road safety. [22664/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 and 182 together.

As the Deputies are aware, the Garda Commissioner appointed Assistant Commissioner John O'Mahoney, in October 2012, to conduct the examination of the allegations that fixed charge notices were improperly cancelled. The report by Assistant Commissioner O'Mahoney constitutes a detailed examination of the allegations. It concluded that there was no evidence to suggest criminality or corruption, but did identify certain departures from administration procedures. Arising from this, files in respect of three members of the Garda Síochána have been forwarded to the Assistant Commissioner in charge of Internal Affairs in the Garda Síochána for further investigation under the Disciplinary Regulations.

In addition, the O'Mahoney report, and a related report by the Garda Professional Standards Unit, have recommended a number of changes aimed at ensuring that administrative procedures are correctly followed throughout the Force in relation to the cancellation of fixed charge notices. I have asked the Garda Síochána Inspectorate to consider these changes prior to implementation, to make any necessary supplementary recommendations, and to review their implementation after 18 months. I have also referred both reports to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality, and I look forward to the views of the Committee, in particular on whether any additional procedural or legislative changes are desirable.

Garda Operations

183. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the contact he has had with the Garda or other State bodies in relation to the GoSafe operation and whether he is satisfied with its role in relation to road safety. [22665/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána is satisfied with the service provided by Go Safe in the provision of an outsourced safety camera network. Go Safe is contracted to provide the service to the Garda authorities for five years (from November 2010) with an option to extend provision of the service for one further year and provides 6,000 speed monitoring hours and 1,475 traffic survey hours per month across the country. I am advised by the Garda authorities that, in accordance with the contract, the surveying hours may be exchanged for speed monitoring at the discretion of An Garda Síochána.

I am also advised that the results of speed surveys carried out in the two years from January 2011 to January, 2013 show there has been a sustained improvement in driver behaviour and increased compliance with the limits in most speed enforcement zones, which is very welcome. I am, of course, determined that the resources of An Garda Síochána are used in the most efficient and effective way possible. In that regard, the outsourced safety camera network represents a considerable increase in capacity in terms of road safety enforcement while using Garda resources to the best possible effect and is playing an important part in the overall Road Safety Strategy.

Defence Forces Expenditure

184. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide in tabular form on a monthly basis for 2013 the total cost of sending soldiers from the military barracks in Dundalk, Athlone and Donegal, namely the 27 Infantry Battalion, 6 Infantry Battalion, 28 Infantry Battalion and 2 Field Artillery Regiment, to carry out routine regimental duties(details supplied) in a tabular form on a monthly basis in 2013. [28165/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): It was not possible to provide the information sought by the Deputy in the time available. My Department is currently seeking to compile an accurate reply and I will provide the information directly to the Deputy once it comes to hand.

Departmental Reports

185. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Defence if he will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports [28171/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): No Focused Policy Assessments have been carried out within my Department during the time frame outlined. Since March 2011, a Value for Money (VFM) Review of the Reserve Defence Force (RDF) was finalised and published.

Since the publication of this Review in November, 2012, there has been significant progress made in implementing its recommendations. New organisational structures for the Reserve were introduced at the end of March, 2013. The Reserve budget has been rebalanced and funding previously allocated to gratuities has been redirected to increase the amount of paid training available to the Reserve. This will ensure that the revised organisational strength ceiling of 4,069 personnel is sustainable within the prevailing resource envelope. The implementation of other recommendations is ongoing and these changes will ensure the continued viability of the Reserve.

Defence Forces Personnel

186. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Defence if the personnel model adopted for enlisted personnel entrants to the Permanent Defence Force, PDF, since 1994 will be adjusted to facilitate the continued service of soldiers who meet high fitness and health standards of the organisation and who have high skill levels that the PDF needs to carry out its assigned roles; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28376/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): A claim has been received from the Permanent Defence Force Other Ranks Representative Association (PDFORRA) in relation to this matter. In accordance with normal procedures the Association's claim is being dealt with under the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme (C&A Scheme) for members of the Permanent Defence Force and is the subject of correspondence between the Department and the Representative Association. The Deputy will appreciate that as discussions under the C&A Scheme are confidential to the parties involved it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this time.

Ministerial Correspondence

187. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Defence if he is in receipt of information (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28395/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): It was not possible to provide the information sought by the Deputy in the time available. My Department is currently seeking to compile an accurate reply and I will provide the information directly to the Deputy once it comes to hand.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

188. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria used in selecting applicants for agri-environment options scheme 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28111/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The closing date for receipt of AEOS III applications was Friday 7th December 2012 and 9,703 applications were received by my Department. The detailed actions listed in each application have been recorded and the pre approval validation checks have been carried out in respect of each application.

The approval of applicants was determined by the following priority selection criteria:

- Applicants within a targeted area of the Boora region of Co. Offaly who select Wild Bird Cover Option B (Grey Partridge) will get first access,
- Applicants with eligible Natura land will get access next,
- Applicants with at least 0.5 hectares of Utilisable Agricultural Non-Natura Commonage land rank next,
- Farm Partnerships,
- Previous Participation in REPS,

- Farm Size (Favouring smaller holding) based on the utilisable agricultural area,
- Location of farms in Less Favoured Areas.

Approximately 4,500 applicants selecting Grey Partridge, Natura and Commonage actions were approved into the scheme and the remaining 1,500 applicants selected had all previously participated in REPS and had a reference area of 22.06 ha or less on their 2012 Single Payment Scheme application.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

189. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria used in each county for selecting applicants for the agri-environment option scheme 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28112/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The approval of applicants was determined by the following priority selection criteria:

- Applicants within a targeted area of the Boora region of Co. Offaly who select Wild Bird Cover Option B (Grey Partridge) will get first access,
- Applicants with eligible Natura land will get access next,
- Applicants with at least 0.5 hectares of Utilisable Agricultural Non-Natura Commonage land rank next,
- Farm Partnerships,
- Previous Participation in REPS,
- Farm Size (Favouring smaller holding) based on the utilisable agricultural area,
- Location of farms in Less Favoured Areas.

Approximately 4,500 applicants selecting Grey Partridge, Natura and Commonage actions were approved into the scheme and the remaining 1,500 applicants selected had all previously participated in REPS and had a reference area of 22.06 ha or less on their 2012 Single Payment Scheme application.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Eligibility

190. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the main reasons applicants for the agri-environment option scheme 3 were ruled invalid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28113/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Despite the challenging budgetary constraints facing my Department, last year I allocated €20 million annually to fund the Agri Environment Options Scheme III. I decided on a maximum payment of €4,000 per annum for individual applicants which allowed for 6,000 new participants to be accepted to the scheme.

The approval of applicants was determined by the following priority selection criteria:

- Applicants within a targeted area of the Boora region of Co. Offaly who select Wild Bird

Cover Option B (Grey Partridge) will get first access,

- Applicants with eligible Natura land will get access next,
- Applicants with at least 0.5 hectares of Utilisable Agricultural Non-Natura Commonage land rank next,
- Farm Partnerships,
- Previous Participation in REPS,
- Farm Size (Favouring smaller holding) based on the utilisable agricultural area,
- Location of farms in Less Favoured Areas.

Approximately 4,500 applicants selecting Grey Partridge, Natura and Commonage actions were approved into the scheme and the remaining 1,500 applicants selected had all previously participated in REPS and had a reference area of 22.06 ha or less on their 2012 Single Payment Scheme application. The remaining 3,350 applications were unsuccessful in the selection process as the applicant had never previously participated in the Rural Environment Protection Scheme or if they had their farm size was in excess of the limit, as determined by the selection process, of 22.06 hectares. In addition, 349 applications did not meet the basic scheme eligibility criteria and were therefore excluded from the selection process.

Departmental Reports

191. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28167/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Value for Money and Policy Review Initiative was introduced in 2006 as the successor to the 1997 Exchequer Review Initiative. The objectives of this programme of reviews are to analyse Exchequer spending in a systematic manner and to provide a basis on which more informed decisions can be made within and between programmes. Value for Money Reviews are organised in three year cycles. As part of the 2009 – 2011 round of reviews, my Department published two reviews in January, 2012. The publication of these reviews meant that the Department had met in full its obligations under the 2009-2011 round.

The first of these reviews was the Review of the Fisheries Decommissioning Scheme. In terms of implementation, the key recommendations in the report were presented in the form of observations based on lessons learned from the decommissioning schemes in the 2005-2008 period. It is intended that the findings of the review would feed into the design of any future fleet restructuring initiative.

The second review completed under the 2009-2011 round was the Review of the Animal Welfare, Recording and Breeding Scheme for Suckler Herds (the Suckler Cow Scheme). This review examined a scheme intended to have a five year life-span with its final year in 2012. In summary the review concluded that the Scheme has largely met its original objectives and brought about improvements in animal welfare, collection of breeding data and ultimately achieving improved competitiveness in the beef sector. The review also noted that the position at the end of 2012 was different to that which prevailed at the time the Scheme was designed

and recommended that neither continuation of the Scheme in its current format nor its full cessation were the preferred policy options.

Bearing these findings in mind, I introduced a new Beef Data Programme in Budget 2013 to build on the progress achieved in the Suckler Cow Scheme over the previous 5 years. The new Beef Data Programme will assist farmers in further improving the genetic quality of Irish cattle and will maintain the data flow into ICBF in order to build further knowledge and more rapid progress in breeding and ultimately in profitability for farmers.

Under the 2012-2014 round of reviews, my Department is due to undertake three further Value for Money Reviews. In 2012 work was undertaken on the Review of the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme. This review will be published shortly. Work is currently under way on the Review of the Organic Farming Scheme. Work on the third review in this round is scheduled to take place in 2014. There are currently no plans for Focussed Policy Assessments.

Felling Licences Conditions

192. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for re-planting trees in the Dublin and Wicklow mountains, to prevent soil erosion, in view of the amount of tree-felling currently underway. [28188/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): All felling licences issued by my Department have, with rare exception, a replanting condition that must be satisfied. The onus is on the licensee to comply with his obligations under the licence and failure to do so could result in prosecution under the Forestry Act, 1946. My Department is not aware of any large scale failure to replant in any County.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Applications

193. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an agri-environment options scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28314/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the Agri-Environment Options Scheme from the person named was received in my Department on 22nd November 2012.

Under the selection criteria regarding farm size, only farms of 22.06 hectares or less were into admitted into the scheme. During the pre approval validation checks on the application of the person named, it was found that the farm size was in excess of the 22.06 hectares which resulted in the application being unsuccessful. On 27th May 2013, a letter issued to the person named informing him of this and giving him the option of appeal to the Department. To date, no appeal has been received by my Department.

Single Payment Scheme Applications

194. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline the level and nature of assistance available from his Department for a young farmer less than 30 years old who has commenced drystock heifer and sheep farming and who rents approximately 40 acres of land and has attained the necessary educational qualifications by

way of attending the relevant courses and being awarded the appropriate certificates; if such a person can now apply to the National Reserve to secure vital entitlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28351/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A National Reserve has operated under the current Single Payment Scheme since 2005. However, since the National Reserve is funded solely from the reversion of unused entitlements, and as the number of unused entitlements has been decreasing in recent years, it is not possible to operate a National Reserve for the 2013 and 2014 scheme years.

It is envisaged that the new CAP regime that will apply from the 2015 scheme year will include provisions for both young farmers and for farmers who have recently commenced their agricultural activity. A new National Reserve will be constituted which can cater for these groups although it is likely that other criteria such as educational qualifications will also be applied.

I can assure you that the interests of young farmers are of primary importance to me and we have strongly represented such interests at the ongoing negotiations on CAP reform. However as the final stage of the negotiations involves reaching agreement between the three European Institutions i.e. the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and the Commission, it is too early to speculate on how the final agreement will affect individual farmers.

Genetically Modified Organisms

195. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his position in relation to GMO/GE crops in view of the increasing number of countries worldwide banning such crops; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28361/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Genetic modification is a science-based technology which, in the case of plants, alters the gene structure in a way that does not occur naturally through fertilisation or natural recombination. This modification confers certain traits to the plant that can be advantageous to agriculture and food production.

The issue of genetic modification is dealt with by three State agencies in Ireland. In summary:

- Issues relating to GM foods come under the remit of the Minister for Health and Children (DHC) and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI);
- GM feeds and the coexistence of authorised GM crops alongside non-GM crops rest with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM);
- Approval to trial GM crops or authorise new GM crops for deliberate release into the environment rests with the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Minister's and the Department's sole responsibility with regard to the cultivation of GM crops relates to coexistence measures in the event that commercial GM crops are grown alongside conventional crops.

Only one product, a GM maize (MON 810) is authorised for cultivation in the EU but it is not grown in Ireland.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

196. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will be paid their single farm payment and agri-environment options scheme payment for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28368/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Deputy will be aware from my reply to his Parliamentary Question on 8 May that no payment had been made in this case because no application had been received.

In the intervening period and following contact by my Department with the person concerned, an application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received with accompanying medical evidence relating to the late submission of the application. Having considered this evidence, it was decided to accept the late application on an exceptional basis. Payment under the Single Payment Scheme will issue shortly to the nominated bank account.

There is no record of an AEOS application from the person named.

Departmental Reports

197. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within her Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports. [28169/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has not completed any such exercises as described by the Deputy. However, a Value for Money Policy Review has commenced on a number of schemes funded by the Youth Affairs Unit within my Department. It is expected that the report of the Value for Money Review will be available by the end of 2013.

Preschool Services

198. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children in Dublin currently availing of the free preschool year; and the number of children availing of the scheme in each year since the establishment of the scheme. [28344/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The free Pre-School Year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme was introduced in January 2010 and provides a free pre-school year to all eligible children in the year before commencing primary school. In line with the Programme for Government, my Department has made a significant commitment to maintaining this universal programme.

Approximately 53,000 children, or 83% of the eligible cohort, availed of the programme in the first “short year”. In 2010/2011, the first full year of the programme, in the region of 63,000 children, that is approximately 94% of the eligible cohort, availed of the free pre-school provision. In 2011/2012, approximately 66,000, or 94% of the eligible cohort, availed of the programme. In the current pre-school year, 2012/2013, approximately 68,000 children, or 95% of the eligible cohort, are participating in the free pre-school year.

17,151 children are currently availing of the free pre-school year in Dublin.

Child Detention Centres

199. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she is satisfied with the level of security measures in place at the children detention schools in view of recent reports that a number of children have absconded from the Oberstown complex. [28345/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I can confirm that three boys currently serving a sentence of detention in Oberstown Boys School, Lusk, Co Dublin absconded from custody on the night of Monday, 3 June 2013.

I am advised that in line with standard operational protocols, detailed descriptions and photographs of the three boys concerned were notified by Oberstown Boys School to an Garda Síochána. As of Tuesday, 10 June, two of the boys involved had been apprehended by the Garda authorities and returned to Oberstown Boys School.

The Director of Oberstown Boys School has provided an initial report to the Oberstown Board of Management and the Irish Youth Justice Service, which is based in my Department, on this incident. This report is currently being assessed.

At this juncture, I have asked the Irish Youth Justice Service to convey my concern at this incident to management in Oberstown Boys School and the Oberstown Board of Management. I understand that some immediate actions have been implemented and, following consideration of the Director's report and a full review of the incident by the Oberstown Board of Management and the Irish Youth Justice Service, any further required follow up actions will be implemented by management in Oberstown Boys School to ensure that the highest possible level of security is maintained.

Health Services Provision

200. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will report on her Department's progress in establishing the National Assessment Consultation and Therapy Service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28346/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I have requested the information from the HSE and I will revert to the Deputy when this information is to hand.

Child Care Services Regulation

201. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline the changes she is proposing for the regulation of childcare provided here including the reform of the inspection system the linkage of grants and subsidies to the quality of childcare provided, the implementation of a sanction regime and the provision of significant investment in the National Early Years Strategy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28350/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): Under the Child Care (Preschool Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006, the inspection of preschools is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

It is important to realise that inspections alone are not the answer to improving quality. What is required is a multifaceted approach, and since this Government came to office we have been working to ensure issues relating to child protection and welfare are put front and centre. The establishment of a Department of Children and Youth Affairs was recognition of the huge body of work which needs to be done in this area.

As Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, driving the early childhood care and education quality agenda is one of my key objectives. I believe we can achieve this objective by taking a number of steps in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, including the adaptation of the existing preschool inspection system to provide a more comprehensive and broader-based inspection regime for preschools, moving to a greater focus on outcomes for children.

In support of this, a Joint Pilot Inspection of Early Years Services was carried out by Inspectors from the HSE and the Department of Education and Skills between September 2011 and May 2012. This pilot will inform the proactive approach being taken.

The Programme for Government includes a commitment to improve the quality of the free Preschool Year and, by extension, the quality of all early childhood care and education, through the implementation of standards and by reviewing training options for the workforce.

This commitment has always been a key priority for me.

This is why my Department and I have been progressing work on Ireland's first-ever Early Years Strategy and this why we have been working on a comprehensive Preschool Quality Agenda.

We have identified a number of key areas of action which I believe need to be considered and addressed as a matter of urgency. These include introducing a registration system for all preschool services; taking steps to make the inspection system more consistent and more robust; publishing inspection reports on-line as soon as possible; ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to findings of non-compliance; increasing and widening the sanctions which can be taken for non-compliance.

Registration of all childcare providers

Work is already underway in the Child and Family Services area of the Health Service Executive (HSE) to introduce a registration system for preschool services. I understand this system will be in place for new services from the end of this year and will be phased in for existing services thereafter. This is an important development because it will move services from the current position, where they are required to notify the Preschool Inspectorate of their intention to open, to a requirement to be inspected and found satisfactory, before being permitted to open. All preschool services are currently required to pay an annual fee to the HSE of between €40 and €80. I am looking at increasing this fee. The additional funds raised will assist in improving inspection and supports for quality improvement.

Publication of Inspection Reports

Parents will rightly demand and expect the highest standards and this will be a key factor in driving change in the sector. Publishing inspection reports is an essential step in ensuring high standards and accountability. All new inspection reports will be made available on-line from the HSE as a matter of urgency. All current inspection reports will be made available on-line in 2014.

Taking steps to make the inspection system more consistent and more robust

We are working on developing a more robust, consistent and regular inspection system. There has been a significant programme of work underway in the HSE over the past year to develop a single, consistent national inspection service (as opposed to 37 different local systems).

We propose moving to a position where there is consistent and assured national target rate for the frequency of inspection of preschool services, while ensuring capacity for prioritisation based on risk assessment. The HSE is currently reviewing the regional spread of inspectors with a view to identifying whether either additional resources or redeployment of existing inspectors is required to achieve this.

Building on this work, officials of my Department and the Department of Education and Skills have been examining options to incrementally develop a more comprehensive and broader-based inspection regime for preschools; moving away from a narrow focus on compliance, and leading to a greater focus on children's outcomes, including educational development and child well-being. This work is being informed by the findings of the recent Joint Pilot Inspection carried out in a small number of settings by Inspectors from the Health Service Executive and the Department of Education and Skills.

Ensuring appropriate action is taken in response to findings of non-compliance

We are working to ensure consistent action is taken in response to findings of non-compliance. There must be a follow-through on inspections. Clearly, services which are found to be in serious breach of the Regulations will face closure and prosecution. It is proposed to develop a protocol with the Preschool Inspectorate which will take a calibrated approach and which will enable more decisive action to be taken in response to non-compliance.

Increased Sanctions for non-compliance

My Department will also be undertaking a review of the penalties currently in place for breach of the Child Care (No. 2) Regulations 2006, as provided for under the Child Care Act 1991. The review will look at increasing the range and severity of the existing penalties including the actions which can be taken by Inspectors without recourse to court prosecution, as is currently the case.

Child Protection Issues

202. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the Reception and Integration Agency's child protection policy is based on centre staff who are not RIA employees relaying a concern to the designated child protection staff member rather than the families communicating their concerns directly to the Health Service Executive or an independent body; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28393/13]

203. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if her attention has been drawn to the circumstances whereby the vast majority of parents in direct provision do not know their children's rights and therefore do not know when their rights are violated in accordance with Children First guidelines and that they are afraid to make referrals because they may face repercussions such as transfers from one accommodation centre to another that is equally child unfriendly; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [28394/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): I propose to take Questions Nos. 202 and 203 together.

In the first instance, I would like to clarify that the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) is a functional unit of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS), a division of the Department of Justice and Equality. RIA is charged with providing accommodation and ancillary services to asylum seekers, that is, adults and their children, under the Direct Provision system while their applications for asylum are processed. I am advised that Direct Provision centres are monitored three times a year, twice by Department of Justice staff and once by an external company.

The revised Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children was published in July, 2011. The Guidance deals with the recognition, reporting and management of child welfare and safety concerns. It sets out a number of key messages relating to the duty to protect children and support their welfare. The scope of Children First extends beyond the reporting of suspected neglect, abuse and welfare concerns. It emphasises the importance of multidisciplinary, inter-agency working in the management of such concerns. Key to this is the sharing of information between agencies and disciplines in the best interests of children and the need for full co-operation to ensure better outcomes. It is important to stress that Children First was never intended to set out standards for care or enumerate the rights of children in Direct Provision facilities.

The HSE has advised me that concerns about the welfare, safety or well-being of a child in Direct Provision are reported to the HSE Children and Family Services, in line with Children First. Referrals include welfare concerns such as a parent being hospitalised, parental illness, a child being left unsupervised by an adult or mental health concerns regarding the parent, while a smaller number would relate to child protection concerns.

There is a specific unit within RIA -the Child and Family Services Unit - whose role is to manage, deliver, co-ordinate, monitor and plan all matters relating to child and family services for all asylum seekers residing in the direct provision system. This unit also links, where necessary, directly with an Garda Síochána.

I would like to assure the Deputy that I have had ongoing contact with my colleague, the Minister for Justice and Law Reform and that senior officials within my Department have engaged with the HSE, to ensure that children who residing in Direct Provision are afforded the same levels of welfare and protection that their counterparts in the wider community are afforded.

Mental Health Services Provision

204. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reform the law and policy on involuntary psychiatric admission; if will outline any recent changes in this area; the legislation that currently applies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28125/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The legislation which governs the involuntary admission of patients to approved centres is the Mental Health Act 2001. This Act is being reviewed at present in line with the commitment contained in the Programme for Government to review the Act “informed by human rights standards and in consultation with service users, carers and other stakeholders”. The Government and I attach great importance to this review.

In June 2011, I established a Steering Group to oversee the first part of the review. The terms of reference for this phase required the Steering Group to review the provisions of the Act having regard to its general operation since its commencement and to take into account the extend

to which the recommendations of 'A Vision for Change' could or should be underpinned by legislation and the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with disabilities. The Interim Report of the Steering Group on the Review of the Mental Health Act 2001 was published on 21 June 2012 and is available on my Department's website (www.doh.ie). The recommendations of the Interim Review have been well received by key stakeholders and fully endorsed the rights based approach to mental health law in addition to supporting the objectives of 'A Vision for Change' especially in relation to the promotion of community based mental health services. Changes to limit the number of people detained and to improve procedures and safeguards regarding their detention were also recommended and the need to strengthen provisions relating to children was also emphasised.

In August last year, I announced the membership of an Expert Group to carry out the second and substantive phase of the review which is principally tasked with fleshing out the Steering Group recommendations. The Group is comprised of 15 people in total and includes expertise from a range of professionals and key stakeholder organisations.

The Expert Group has met on a number of occasions since its formation and is continuing its deliberations. It is expected that the review will be completed this year.

Medical Aids and Appliances Provision

205. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the referral for orthotic shoes in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry. [28127/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The Health Service Executive provides health and personal services such as those referred to by the Deputy. Accordingly the Department has asked the HSE to reply directly to you in relation to the individual you have outlined.

Orthodontic Services Provision

206. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when orthodontic treatment will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28141/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to patients with greatest needs. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Orthodontic Services Provision

207. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when orthodontic treatment will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28142/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to patients based on their level of clinical need. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined against a set of clinical guidelines and priority is given to

patients with greatest needs. The HSE has been asked to examine the specific query raised by the Deputy and to reply to him as soon as possible.

Patient Transport Provision

208. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the mini-bus ambulance from west Wicklow bringing people daily to various hospital appointments in Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28166/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Patient transport is the responsibility of the HSE. However, people attending outpatient and hospital appointments are, in general, expected to make their own travel arrangements, using private or scheduled public transport. The exceptions are for dialysis, cancer (radiotherapy and chemotherapy) and post-operative transplant patients, where transport may be provided. In these cases, the patient's appointment or treatment should be directly related to the treatment.

Transport may also be provided where, in the clinician's view, the patient would be unable to make the journey without clinical assistance or where the patient must be transported on a stretcher.

Following implementation of the HSE's non-ambulance patient transport policy, responsibility for the arrangement and provision of non-ambulance transport has moved from the HSE National Ambulance Service to local health offices in each region. If a patient or his or her clinician considers that transport is required, the local health office should be contacted.

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.

Departmental Reports

209. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will set out the value for money reports and the Focused Policy Assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28176/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The information requested by the Deputy will be collated and forwarded to him as soon as it is available.

Home Care Packages

210. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health in view of the soon to be published new tender for home care services and with regard to a recently published report quantifying savings of €48 million for 2014 available through more open and transparent commissioning of home care, if he will confirm if he is planning to instruct the Health Service Executive to expand the extent of the tender to include all home care packages and the part of home help hours not done internally by the HSE in order to achieve these savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28182/13]

211. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if instead of trying to cut the number of home support hours available as was announced and reversed in the Budget, if he

is implementing reforms and efficiencies in tendering and outsourcing that could reduce the cost of the service by 30% as outlined in a recently published report quantifying savings of €48 million for 2014 available through more open and transparent commissioning of home care, thereby increasing the hours that could be delivered under existing budgets; if he will use the current review of the tender process for home care services to realise these savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28183/13]

212. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the actions he has taken in realising cost savings and expenditure reduction in the home help and home care package budgets through reform of tender process as outlined in a recently published report quantifying savings of €48 million for 2014 available through more open and transparent commissioning of home care in order to provide services to as many persons as possible; if he will use the current review of the tender process for home care services to realise these savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28184/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 to 212, inclusive, together.

Recent years have been very challenging for the health services. Facing difficult choices, the Government has set as its priority the aim of maintaining services to the greatest extent possible within the resources available. In line with the Programme for Government, the Department is working closely with the Health Services Executive on reforming the way health services are funded and delivered to achieve greater productivity and more cost-effective services.

In relation to Home Support Services, I would like to reassure the Deputy that the HSE has committed in its National Service Plan 2013 to maintaining the home help and home care package services at levels planned for in 2012.

The Procurement Process for the Home Care Package Scheme referred to by the Deputy and introduced in 2012 established minimum standard levels with which successful tenderers must comply. The HSE is currently considering its approach to the next home care procurement process and the timing for same. In this regard, it has established a forum to consult with representatives of service providers.

Future tenders for home care will focus on improving standards across the home care sector, providing quality care for vulnerable clients, taking account of existing contracts, and obtaining value for the resources available for the service.

Hospital Accommodation Provision

213. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health his plans to tackle the number of delayed discharges in hospitals here, which in April stood at 658 nationwide and at 98 in Cork; if he will consider making more home care packages available to help reduce the number of persons waiting in hospital beds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28185/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Mobility Allowance Decision

214. **Deputy Derek Nolan** asked the Minister for Health the amount the new mobility al-

lowance and motorised transport grant scheme will cost if the alternative scheme is put in place before the present mobility allowance and motorised transport grant scheme is rescinded; if it will be available to persons over 65 years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28204/13]

216. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the progress made by the review group advising his Department in relation to the effects of the decision to abolish the mobility allowance and the motorised transport grant; if a new scheme will be introduced before these schemes are ended; the interim arrangements he will put in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28207/13]

217. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health the progress on an alternative scheme to the mobility allowance scheme and motorised transport grant (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28250/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I propose to take Questions Nos. 214, 216 and 217 together.

The Government decided yesterday to extend payments of Mobility Allowance to those currently in receipt for a further number of months, pending establishment of new statutory provisions to support the mobility needs of people with severe disabilities. The Government is very conscious of the needs of people with a disability who have relied on individual payments of Mobility Allowance to support their independence and will take all of this into consideration when making a decision on future arrangements.

Following detailed consideration of the Interim Report of the Review Group the Government has decided that new statutory provisions will be established to provide individual payments to people with severe disabilities who require additional income to address the costs of their mobility needs. The Government has agreed that an inter-departmental group, chaired by the Department of the Taoiseach, will now be asked to develop detailed proposals for the operation of the new scheme or schemes, including eligibility criteria, costs and administrative arrangements, and it should report back to Government by October.

The Government has agreed that payments should temporarily continue to be made by the HSE to those persons currently in receipt of the Mobility Allowance for a further number of months, pending the commencement of new statutory provisions, on the basis that this would prevent hardship, and, on an interim basis, alleviate stress, anxiety and uncertainty among a vulnerable group in society.

The existing position regarding the Motorised Transport Grant remains as before, i.e. the scheme remains closed. The inter-departmental group will examine this issue as part of its considerations of how future statutory arrangements should operate. The existing funding of €10.6m per annum remains committed to support the mobility needs of people with severe disabilities.

Medical Card Reviews

215. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite a medical card review in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28206/13]

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.

The Health Service Executive operates the General Medical Services scheme, which includes medical cards and GP visit cards, under the Health Act 1970, as amended. It has established a dedicated contact service for members of the Oireachtas specifically for queries relating to medical cards and GP visit cards, which the Deputy may wish to use for an earlier response. Contact information has recently reissued to Oireachtas members.

Questions Nos. 216 and 217 answered with Question No. 214.

Accident and Emergency Services Provision

218. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health his policy regarding the State paying for hospital bills when Republic of Ireland patients present at a Northern Ireland Hospital for treatment for an injury incurred in the Republic but where the patient presents at a Northern Ireland Hospital due to the fact that it is the closest and quickest in order to receive required emergency treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28321/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): The HSE provides emergency services to everyone living in Ireland and patients who fall ill or sustain an injury in Ireland should avail of emergency services in this jurisdiction. The Emergency Health Insurance Card (EHIC) provides for patients who fall ill or sustain an injury while travelling/visiting another EU/EEA country but the scenario described in the question raised by the Deputy does not appear to reflect this situation and therefore the EHIC cannot be used to cover the costs. Patients who choose to present at services in another jurisdiction (Northern Ireland) will be liable for the costs of any and all treatment provided. In emergency situation, patients should dial the emergency response number (999) to avail of assistance from the emergency services.

Hospital Waiting Lists

219. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath will be given an appointment for orthopaedic care. [28354/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The National Waiting List Management Policy, *A standardised approach to managing scheduled care treatment for in-patient, day case and planned procedures, January 2013*, has been developed to ensure that all administrative, managerial and clinical staff follow an agreed national minimum standard for the management and administration of waiting lists for scheduled care. This policy, which has recently been adopted by the HSE, sets out the processes that hospitals are to implement to manage waiting lists.

In relation to this particular query raised by the Deputy, I have asked the Health Service Executive to investigate the situation and respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Hospital Services

220. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 853 of 11 January 2012, the progress that has been made in developing a designated stroke unit at Cork University Hospital; if this unit is still to be located in Ward 3A and if not its expected location; when he expects the stroke unit to be opened and fully operational; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28355/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, the Deputy will receive a reply directly from the HSE.

Hospital Services

221. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 853 of 11 January 2012, if he is concerned at the impact of delays in opening a dedicated stroke unit at Cork University Hospital in view of the fact that a properly staffed unit could reduce stroke deaths by 20%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28356/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As this is a service matter, the Deputy will receive a reply directly from the HSE.

Hospital Staff Recruitment

222. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 853 of 11 January 2012, if all the necessary staff (details supplied) have now been recruited; the position which still have to be filled; the timescales for recruitment of any outstanding staff; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28357/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): In relation to the particular query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in this matter.

Care of the Elderly

223. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a forum on long-term care of the elderly led by his Department is to be established in response to a request from the private and voluntary nursing homes sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28358/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I refer the Deputy to my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 674 of 28 May 2013. The position remains unchanged.

Nursing Staff Recruitment

224. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if there are plans to begin the recruitment of nursing staff at Cork University Hospital, Mid-Western Regional Hospital or other general and maternity hospitals in the Health Service Executive south or HSE west region; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28392/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Subject to overall parameters set by Government, the Health Service Executive has the responsibility for determining the composition of its staffing complement. I have asked the Executive to arrange to have the matter investigated and to have a reply issued directly to the Deputy.

Penalty Point System

225. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on whether penalty points should be introduced for driving with bald, effectively illegal tyres; which is already an offence and is the number one fail item in the National Car Test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28139/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am considering extending the list of road traffic offences to which fixed charge notices and penalty points apply. My Department will shortly convene a meeting with a group of relevant stakeholders, such as the Gardaí and the RSA, to discuss, and recommend to me, the offences that might appropriately be added to the fixed charge/penalty points system.

Legal provision already exists, under Section 54(d) of the Road Traffic Act 2010, for making the use of a vehicle with defective or worn tyres a penalty points offence with 2 points awarded on the payment of a fixed charge and 4 points on conviction in Court. I will consider commencing this section of the Act when I have heard from the group.

Regulation 16 of the Road Traffic (Construction, Equipment and Use of Vehicles) Regulations 1963 (S.I. No. 190 of 1963), as amended, sets out the legislative requirements for tyres on mechanically propelled vehicles and it is an offence under the Road Traffic Acts to use a mechanically propelled vehicle in a public place which does not comply with those requirements.

Road Improvement Schemes

226. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will request the National Roads Authority to provide funding as a matter of priority for a section of the Ring of Kerry, from Caherciveen town to Deelis Bridge (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28143/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned. Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for the NRA in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NRA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

Departmental Reports

227. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will set out the value for money reports and the focused policy assessments carried out within his Department since March 2011; the actions that have been taken to implement such reports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28181/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Value-for-Money and Policy Reviews were completed for the Marine Survey Office, the Irish Coast Guard, and Iarnród Éireann's Third Railway Safety Programme in 2012. Arising from the previous round of Reviews, a report on the Rural Transport Programme was published in January 2012. The Value for Money reviews into the Coast Guard and Marine Surveying functions of the Depart-

ment were undertaken by independent consultants Fisher Associates and published on the Department's website. A supplementary review on Coast Guard operations was undertaken earlier this year. The Reviews identified issues which need to be addressed in Ireland's maritime transport safety and marine emergency response regimes.

I informed the Government that I would consider the reviews and prepare an action plan to address the issues and deficiencies identified. I emphasised that responding to the Reviews provides a valuable opportunity to create more efficient and effective maritime safety regulatory arrangements and emergency response services. It is also important to recognise that resources available are very limited and must be deployed on a prioritised basis as effectively and efficiently as possible to address the most urgent needs. My Department's response to the Reviews is nearing completion and I expect to finalise the Action Plan very shortly.

The Report on the Mid-Term Review of Iarnród Eireann's Third Railway Safety Programme was completed by Risk Solutions in October 2012. It is expected that the report will be published on the Department's website shortly. It concludes that rail safety performance has improved and that rail safety risk compares favourably with that in other European countries. The report makes a wide range of recommendations on matters such as future governance issues and investment levels. A Working Group has been established in the Department to agree a Railway Assets Renewal programme, which will take into account the conclusions and recommendations of the Review.

The Value for Money and Policy Review of the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) was published in January 2012. Responsibility for the RTP was transferred to the National Transport Authority (NTA) in April 2012. Since then, the NTA has been working on implementing the recommendations of the Report. The Minister of State will shortly announce the restructuring of the RTP. This will have the effect of addressing many of the issues raised by the Value for Money Report.

For further information, I refer the Deputy to the following links for the full reports.

http://www.dttas.ie/upload/general/13551-MSO_VALUE_FOR_MONEY_REVIEW_APRIL_2012-0.PDF

http://www.dttas.ie/upload/general/13550-IRCG_VALUE_FOR_MONEY_REVIEW_APRIL_2012-0.PDF

http://www.transport.ie/upload/general/13464-20110630_VFM_FINAL_REPORT-0.PDF

Regional Road Network

228. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if an application for funding been received from Laois County Council in respect of a project (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28209/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities own resources supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of works to be funded from State road grants is also a matter for the local authority.

No application for funding for traffic calming works on the R639 entering Durrow has been

received in my Department from Laois County Council. It is open to the Council to fund these works from its Discretionary Grant or from its own resources.

Capital Expenditure Programme Issues

229. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will include social clauses for the long-term unemployed in the transport projects announced as part of the €150 million extra in capital expenditure for 2013 and 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28255/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): I am broadly supportive of a 'social clause' that would result in more local residents and people from the Live Register being employed on Government capital projects. Work is being done on this matter on a 'whole of government' level. As the Deputy will understand, there may be issues with competition, the European internal market and other legal issues. Moreover, it is not straightforward. For example, a construction contractor may have five people working for them who will lose their jobs if they do not get a new contract. There is a risk that they could all lose their jobs if, for example, the contract they might have won was given to another contractor willing to take one person on from the Live Register. Rather than reducing the Live Register, it might just result in more employment churn if the clause is not well designed.

With regard to local and regional roads, the improvement and maintenance of such roads is the statutory responsibility of each local authority, in accordance with the provisions of Section 13 of the Roads Act 1993. Works on those roads are funded from local authorities' own resources supplemented by State road grants. As a result of this recent initiative I am in a position to allocate an extra €50 million in 2013 for the maintenance and rehabilitation of road surfaces on regional and local roads. The selection of individual schemes to be funded from this additional allocation is a matter for the relevant local authority.

With regard to national roads, 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. I understand that the National Development Finance Agency is reviewing the potential for including social clauses in future PPP projects.

Tax Code

230. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is working with the Department of Finance to retain the current 9% VAT rate in the tourism sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28265/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I am very conscious that the tourism and hospitality industry would like to see the rate continued through 2014 and beyond. I am also conscious that it has been estimated by the Department of Finance that the VAT reduction costs the Exchequer €350 million a year. In that context, I am supportive of retaining a reduced rate, but that can only be justified on the basis of clear evidence of the impact of the reduction.

As the Deputy is aware, taxation policy is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Finance.

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Departmental Bodies

231. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree of transparency sought and detail given to him and his Department following inquiries and request for information regarding exceptional costs, if any, regarding a matter (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [28267/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Sports Council, which is funded by my Department, is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the allocation of funding for the National Governing Bodies of Sport and associated governance procedures. The funding provided by the Council to the organisation mentioned by the Deputy is ring-fenced for the non-professional elements of the sport and is mainly focused on programmes aimed at increasing participation.

I have referred the Deputy's question to the Irish Sports Council for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.