

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 5, inclusive, answered orally.

Agrifood Sector Issues

6. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress made to date on joint agricultural development and agribusiness investments in Ethiopia and Ireland, other opportunities being explored for agribusiness in Africa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53133/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland has strong links with Ethiopia which have been developed over many years. Eighty five percent (85%) of employment in Ethiopia is currently provided by agriculture, therefore it is clear that the continued development of sustainable agriculture production systems and the development of a vibrant agri-food industry in Ethiopia represent huge opportunities to provide food and livelihood security for many millions of Ethiopians.

In this regard I believe that Ireland's agri-food sector has a role to play in assisting Ethiopia reach its full potential. During the 3rd Africa Ireland Economic Forum, held in Dublin in October this year, I met my counterpart from Ethiopia, Mr. Tefera Derbew, to discuss current developments in the agri-food sectors in Ireland and Ethiopia. At this meeting we signed a joint Statement of Intent which encourages enhanced cooperation between Ireland and Ethiopia in the areas of agriculture, in particular continued cooperation in the areas of Agricultural Research and Training.

In follow up to this at the end of October 2013 Teagasc signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research which provides for further close collaboration between the two bodies.

Ethiopia is one of nine Key Partner Countries for Ireland's overseas aid programme administered by Irish Aid. In 2012, Irish Aid's bilateral programme spending in Ethiopia was **€26 million**. Irish Aid also provided funding to agencies including Concern, Goal, Self Help Africa, Trócaire and UN organisations in Ethiopia, bringing our total funding for Ethiopia to over **€32 million**.

In addition as the Deputy may be aware in 2012 the Tanaiste and I launched the Africa Agri-food Development Fund (AADF). The Fund aims to develop partnerships between the Irish Agri-Food Sector and African countries to support sustainable growth of the local food industry, build markets for local produce and support mutual trade between Ireland and Africa.

One project which has received funding from the Fund is MaGrow, a technology which uses magnetic inserts to improve spraying/irrigation equipment used for crop spraying. The project aims to develop a manufacturing facilities and jobs in both Ireland and Ethiopia. To date AADF funding has been approved for the start-up phase of the project which includes a comprehensive business plan and production of prototype to be followed by field trials in Ethiopia. AADF funding will also be considered the further stages of the project.

I will continue to encourage Irish private sector agri-food enterprises to look at the potential of Africa in the coming years to develop cooperation and trade.

Questions Nos. 7 to 10, inclusive, answered orally.

Food Harvest 2020 Strategy

11. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which the objectives set in the context of Food Harvest 2020 are being met to date; his expectations in this regard in the medium to long term; the extent to which he envisages greater opportunities for Irish and European food producers in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53069/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am confident that the industry developed targets set out in Food Harvest 2020 are achievable and can be met. The main targets in the Food Harvest report are by 2020 to increase the value of:

- Primary output in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector by 33%;
- Value added production by 40%;
- Agriculture, food (including seafood) and drink exports by 42%;

In addition, a 50% increase in milk production and a 78% increase in the volume of aquaculture production is envisaged.

Progress on these targets and the 215 recommendations in the Food Harvest report are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Food Harvest High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC). The HLIC, which I chair, consists of the senior officials of all state agencies involved in the agriculture, food and fisheries sector. Their third report “*Milestones for Success 2013*”, published in September, showed that the sector had achieved growth in excess of 25% (primary production), 20% (value-added) and 13% (exports) by the end of 2012, compared to the baseline period.

The CAP and CFP reforms, concluded during the Irish EU Presidency, provide a sound policy framework for the sustainable development of the agri-food and fisheries sector to 2020 and beyond. A range of State-led measures targeted at improving competitiveness and sustainability have been implemented, for example Enterprise Ireland’s *Lean Business* offer, the Teagasc/Farmer’s Journal *BETTER Beef Farms*; and Bord Bia’s *Origin Green* and *Food Works* initiatives.

Strong industry support and buy-in for the Food Harvest targets and vision is critical to success. Industry investment in processing, innovation and developing new markets proves the confidence, drive and ambition of Irish food companies. At primary level, farmers have shown an increased focus on efficiency and sustainability.

Opportunities exist to increase our exports to countries such as China, Russia, Africa, South

East Asia and the Middle East, as demonstrated during my recent trade mission to the Gulf States. In addition, there will be opportunities arising for increased market access from the negotiation of Free Trade Agreements with Canada, USA, India, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam. I therefore believe that the agri-food and fisheries sector is well placed to meet the Food Harvest targets, and to make a substantial contribution to Ireland's export-led economic recovery.

Aquaculture Licences Applications

12. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason for delay in processing licences for oyster and salmon farmers whose livelihood is threatened by lack of current, appropriate licensing. [53106/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The delay in processing these applications has arisen for a number of reasons, primarily the location of aquaculture operations in Natura 2000 areas.

The European Court of Justice declared in case C418/04 that, by failing to take all the measures necessary to comply with Article 6(3) of Directive 92/43 (Habitats Directive) in respect of authorisation of aquaculture programmes, Ireland had failed to fulfil its obligations under that Directive.

In the negotiations to address the judgment a process was agreed with the European Commission which would lead to full compliance by Ireland with the relevant EU Directives. This process includes the following steps:

- a detailed data collection in 91 Bays/Estuaries;
- detailed analysis of raw data collected;
- setting of Conservation Objectives by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in respect of each site;
- carrying out Appropriate Assessments of each licence application/fishery plan against the detailed Conservation Objectives set; and
- determination of Licences/Fisheries on the basis of the Appropriate Assessment and other relevant factors.

The data collection programme is substantially complete. Analysis of the data, together with the setting of appropriate conservation objectives by the NPWS, will enable all new, renewal and review applications to be appropriately assessed for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. This work represents a significant financial, administrative and scientific investment by the State in resolving this issue.

Conservation objectives had been set in relation to a significant number of bays and Appropriate Assessments have been carried in five bays (Castlemaine, Dundalk, Lough Swilly, Donegal Bay and Roaringwater). I am pleased to inform the Deputy that as a result of the above process I have made aquaculture licence Determinations in respect of applications in Castlemaine. A number of licensing determinations in respect of Roaringwater Bay have been made and others are imminent at this time.

My Department continues to make every effort to expedite the determination of aquaculture licence applications having regard to the need to comply with all relevant national and EU legislation.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

13. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will amend the system in his Department to facilitate the release of 75% of rural environment protection scheme and agri-environment option scheme payments to all farmers in December and not hold up payments until the whole file is completed as any retention will be deducted from the remaining 25%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53108/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Area-based schemes under the Rural Development Programme, 2007-13, are subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications, including cross checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, to be completed before payments can issue. These rigorous procedures, together with on-farm inspections, apply to a number of scheme payments including the Rural Environment Protection Scheme (REPS) and the Agri-environment Options Scheme (AEOS), and are necessary to ensure that applications meet the scheme conditions and cross-compliance requirements.

All of the 29,253 REPS 4 and the 13,746 AEOS 1 and 2 applicants who are eligible to receive a payment in 2013 have to be subjected to a full administrative check before the first phase of payment (75%) can be released. All of these administrative checks have been completed and payments commenced in November and will issue on a continuous basis until all payments are complete. In a certain number of cases the administrative checks raised issues and queries which require detailed examination. Department staff are working to resolve these as quickly as possible. Many of these cases, will, however, require the applicants' to supply further information such as soil tests before payment can issue.

The LPIS Review exercise which will be completed shortly, resulted in area changes for some applicants, but has not held up the 75% payment in respect of either the REPS or the AEOS schemes and any impacts are being taken into account at either the 75% or 25% payment stage. The balancing payment of 25% is issued when all of the required control inspections are completed which is again laid out in the EU governing regulations. It is anticipated that these balancing payments will commence in mid December for all of those applicants whose files are in order. A total of €148 m will be spent on REPS and €51m on AEOS by the end of the year, in accordance with the budget allocation for these schemes.

Bord na gCon Remit

14. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken to address issues of concern regarding corporate governance in the Irish Greyhound Board; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53074/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Bord na gCon is a commercial state body, established under the Greyhound Industry Act, 1958, to control greyhound racing and to improve and develop the greyhound industry. Operational matters are the responsibility of its board and CEO.

The Board is also responsible for ensuring that the organisation has systems and procedures in place to ensure adherence to best practice in regard to corporate governance. Bord na gCon is required to act in accordance with its statutory obligations, the "*Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*" and with Government policy.

As Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine I am responsible for appointing the Chair-

man of Board na gCon. The position of Chairman of Board na gCon was vacated on 16 February 2011 following the retirement of the then Chairman. Recognising the importance of the role of Chairman, one of my earliest decisions, taken shortly after my appointment as Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine was, on 12 April 2011, to appoint the current Chairman.

In terms of oversight, my Department monitors the compliance of Bord na gCon with its responsibilities in a number of ways, including by meeting with Bord na gCon at least bi-annually to discuss matters of mutual interest, and obtain assurance in relation to compliance with corporate governance standards. Issues arising from this forum are dealt with as required.

In addition, the Chairman of Bord na gCon, in accordance with the paragraph 13.1 of the “*Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*” is required to submit a comprehensive report covering a wide range of governance issues and confirms the Group’s compliance with the Code. Any non-compliances must be explained, if they arise, and the appropriate corrective actions outlined.

In relation to governance, Bord na gCon is required to have an Internal Auditor and an Internal Audit Committee and fulfils this requirement.

Furthermore, the Annual Report and Accounts of Bord na gCon are independently audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The Comptroller and Auditor General reports by exception if the statement of internal financial control does not reflect Bord na gCon’s compliance with the “*Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies*”. Officials from my Department examine the Annual Reports, the C&AGs report, the Chairman’s Report to the Minister (referred to above) and instigate follow-up action as appropriate.

On the basis of a model adopted with a number of agencies under the aegis of my Department, including Coillte, BIM and HRI, I recently announced my intention to commission a review of Bord Na gCon.

This review is being undertaken to ensure that the governance and administrative structures supporting the industry remain appropriate and fully effective in the modern operating environment. It will assess the current legislative framework, governance structures, the structure and size of the board, and a number of other matters.

Tenders for the review were sought through a public procurement process, a preferred bidder has been identified and I am happy to report that it is expected that the contract will be signed shortly.

Fish Quotas

15. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will indicate his intended position at the December Fisheries Council meeting in relation to member states that do not catch their total allowable catch in the nephrod fishery in Irish waters; and his views that it is sustainable that member states that are not active in a fishery should continue to receive a total allowable catch. [53135/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The annual fishing opportunities for the Community’s fishing fleets are traditionally agreed at the December Fisheries Council. This year, the arrangements for 2014 are due to be negotiated at the Council scheduled for 16th, 17th and 18th December. The levels of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and the quotas for Ireland will again be determined at that meeting following negotiations with Member States and the EU Commission.

The process of preparing for the Council has been under way since the publication of de-

tailed proposals for TACs and quotas of key stocks of interest to Ireland on 30 October. The Commissions' proposal for Nephrops in the Irish Sea was, however, only received on 22 November. In preparing for the Council I have engaged in consultations, with the assistance of the Marine Institute and BIM, with the industry and other stakeholders here in Ireland as well as with other Member States in regard to stocks of common interest. I have also had direct engagement with the authorities in the UK, which involves Northern Ireland. The latter are particularly important when it comes to nephrops. There have also been protracted discussions in Brussels and these have continued this week in preparation for Council next week.

The Commission's proposals are based on formal advice received from ICES, the independent international body with responsibility for advising on the state of fish stocks. It also takes account of the views of the (STECF) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, which gives the Commission its views on the economic, technical and social impacts of the scientific advice.

Specifically with regard to nephrops, Ireland has stocks in both Area VI and Area VII. The latter is of vital importance to the Irish fishing industry and Commission proposal on the table is for a cut of 24% on the 2013 quota. In financial terms this would cost the Irish fleet over €10 million. The proposal appears to be based on a narrow interpretation of the ICES advice and does not take into consideration the fact that traditionally landings are significantly below the TAC. This is the second most important fishery to Ireland after mackerel, and I am not accepting such a drastic and unwarranted cut.

Under utilisation of quotas by some Member States is a fact, the effect of which is that actual landings have been at or below the scientific advice for a number of years. Given this, and allied with the over restrictive interpretation of the advice, reducing the TAC as proposed by the Commission is, in my view, unnecessary and overly precautionary. I will work closely with my UK colleagues to make the strongest possible case in order that the proposed level of reduction is not implemented.

International Agreements

16. Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in relation to the recent meeting of the EU Committee of Permanent Representatives where the majority of EU member states consented to send a letter to the EU Parliament to ask its consent for the conclusion of the protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and Morocco, if his attention has been drawn to the social, political and economic consequences this protocol will have for Western Sahara, and particularly the issue of problematic fishing practices by Spanish fleets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [48869/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine(Deputy Simon Coveney): Ireland has always been a firm supporter of the right to self-determination of the people of the Western Sahara and the Irish Government remains firmly committed to this principal. When the process on the new agreement began and the Commission was seeking a mandate, Ireland sought that any agreement should be more transparent and should include clearer geographic reporting on the benefits of the Agreement in the Western Sahara.

Ireland considers that the new agreement addresses concerns raised. We welcome the introduction of provisions to the Protocol on the planning and reporting duties of Morocco in respect of the regional distribution of funds, especially with regard to the expected economic and social benefits and the geographical distribution of these benefits.

Ireland has joined with like minded Member States, and has asked the Commission to inform the Council comprehensively and regularly on the returns received by the West Saharan

population as a result of the agreement. It must be ensured that the West Saharan Sahrawi population is also given an appropriate stake, and a stake that is in line with their interests, in the financial resources ensuing from the agreement. The EU Commission has also advised that it considered that the agreements is consistent with the reform of the external dimension of the EU Common Fisheries Policy in that it places strong emphasis on scientific advice, economic profitability, good governance and respect of international law. EU Fishing activity is restricted to the surplus resources in all fisheries thus ensuring sustainability of the fish stocks.

Ireland joined with Germany and Austria in a Statement emphasising the importance of having regard to human rights & self determination in terms of the implementation of the agreement. The European Parliament voted on Tuesday on the Conclusion of the Protocol with 310 votes in favour, 204 votes against, 49 abstentions. It is expected that the Protocol will be adopted by Council in the near future.

Plant Science

17. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken for developing plant science here. [52921/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The reply is as follows.

Research

My Department remains committed to funding plant science through our competitive funding programmes: Stimulus and CoFoRD (Competitive Forest Research for Development Programme). My Department's industry derived strategic research agenda called 'Stimulating Sustainable Agricultural Production through Research and Innovation' contains a dedicated chapter on Crops (tillage) and a section on grassland management and breeding and, almost exclusively, this agenda informed the content of the Department's last two research calls. Furthermore, a strategic research agenda on Forestry research is nearing completion which will focus on all aspects of forestry research including tree breeding.

Cereals

The Irish tillage sector has benefitted significantly from developments in plant science in recent years. Over the last thirty years or so the average commercial gains in the yield of cereals on Irish farms has been between 1% and 2% annually. Half of this gain has been due to the selection of superior varieties for Irish conditions through intensive testing in my Department's Crop Evaluation Programme. Cereal yields here are now among the best in the world.

The same intensity of progress in the sphere of plant science has taken place in Irish grassland production. Some of the most successful grasses used in our high performing pastures have been bred by Teagasc and there are further improved varieties, uniquely suited to our conditions, in the pipeline.

Potatoes

Ireland has enjoyed much success both here and abroad in producing new improved potato varieties. Teagasc is the main potato breeder in Ireland and its breeding programme has been particularly successful. In its partnership with Irish Potato Marketing, 39 varieties have been released and at least 25 of these are still being marketed commercially in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. The variety Rooster, released in 1990 and probably the best-known of the Teagasc-bred varieties, now accounts for 56% of the total potato area grown in Ireland

Horticulture

In the horticultural area, the bulk of work in the development of plant science occurs in either Teagasc or the various Universities. The Teagasc research programme in this area is mainly concentrated on the management, screening and evaluation of a range of ornamental species for suitability as cut foliage.

Forestry

In partnership with a number of other organisations, my Department also supports the forest genetic resources aspects of plant science through grant aid funding for the work of Teagasc on the improvement of alder and birch, the work of the *Future Trees Trust* on the improvement of ash, birch, oak, Spanish chestnut and sycamore and the involvement in the work of the European Network on Forest Genetic Resources.

Teagasc

Teagasc have a group of plant scientists and biotechnologists based at Oak Park in Carlow, employing the latest plant science technologies for the improvement of crops for Irish agriculture, with the work targeted at those likely to have the biggest impact on the agricultural sector with a view to supporting the objectives of Food Harvest 2020. Currently the work is focussed on; the development of genomic selection in Perennial Ryegrass, improving disease resistance in cereals, accelerating the rate of genetic improvement in potatoes through the development of marker assisted selection and the production of biomass from marginal lands.

Common Agricultural Policy Negotiations

18. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will make an announcement in relation to Pillar 1 of the EU Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020; when he will convey details of the selected options under Pillar 1 of the CAP to the EU; if the level of national co-funding for Pillar 2 will be announced at that time; the percentage of Pillar 2 funding it is proposed to spend on Leader type actions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53075/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In respect of Pillar 1 of the CAP I initiated a process of consultation in July 2013 with all relevant stakeholders and interested parties to ascertain their views on the most appropriate application of the Direct Payments Regulation in Ireland. I and my officials are currently giving careful consideration to all of the responses. I hope to be in a position to make decisions across the range of alternatives by the end of 2013. In general, Member States are required to notify Commission about decisions by 31 August 2014.

As regards Pillar 2, work on the development of the next rural development programme is already well under way. An initial consultation process was launched in 2012, and written submissions were received from over 80 stakeholders. These submissions have been analysed by the Department and have fed into the development of SWOT and needs analyses. A second consultation was held in July 2013, where stakeholders attended a full day workshop. Based on the outcome of these processes, the drafting of a new programme is being advanced by the Department, and it is intended that further stakeholder consultation will form part of this.

A general co-financing rate of 53% is set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation but this rate may rise to a maximum of 80% for measures such as farm and business development, co-operation activities, and LEADER projects. Environmental type measures may be

co-funded up to 75%. The total Exchequer funding that will be required to draw down the available EAFRD funding will depend on the types of measures to be included in the new Rural Development Programme and on the co-financing rates specific to these measures.

While final decisions in relation to what measures are to be included in the new RDP have not yet been made, my Department is in ongoing contact with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the overall financing that will be required and also with the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to the level of EAFRD funding to be reserved for LEADER under the new RDP. I expect to make decisions in relation to the measures to be supported under the new RDP by the end of this year, and to submit a draft programme to the Commission in early 2014.

Fish Quotas

19. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the EU calculation of fishing quotas is not supported by adequate research and that in these circumstances the calculations of maximum sustainable yields is unreliable; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53107/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The annual fishing opportunities for the Community's fishing fleets are traditionally agreed at the December Fisheries Council. This year, the arrangements for 2013 are due to be negotiated at the Council scheduled for 16 and 17 December. The levels of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and the quotas for Ireland will again be determined at that meeting following negotiations with Member States and the EU Commission. The Fisheries Council will also decide on the fishing effort, which determines days spent at sea, available for the Irish fleet in the Irish Sea and off the north-west coast for 2014.

The Commission's proposals are based on formal advice received from ICES, the independent international body with responsibility for advising on the state of fish stocks. It also takes account of the views of the (STECF) Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries, which gives the Commission its views on the economic, technical and social impacts of the scientific advice. .

As a general principal, Ireland is committed to having Total Allowable Catches set at levels that can produce Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015, where possible and by 2020 at the latest. This is consistent with the newly reformed Common Fisheries Policy. A core objective of the Common Fisheries Policy is to ensure exploitation of living aquatic resources that provides sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions". Under the ongoing reform of the CFP, the goal of attaining fishing mortality rates that are consistent with delivering maximum sustainable yield by 2015 has been set. While achieving this through the regulation of catches (TACs) may be relatively straight-forward in the context of a single species fishery; in multi-gear, multi-species and multi-fleet fisheries using single species, TAC constraints are complex and challenging.

The basis for Ireland's assessment of the biological impacts of the Commission's proposal for fixing 2014 fishing opportunities is the Stock Book. The Stock Book is produced annually by the Marine Institute and provides up to date scientific information, including ICES advice, on the state of the fisheries resources exploited by the Irish fleet. The Stock Book has been published by the Marine Institute since 1993 and has evolved considerably in that time period. It continues to evolve in a changing fisheries advisory environment.

Data collection and evaluation to support the advice provides is collected by Ireland and other Member States involved in a fishery. I consider that the EU should support increased

funding for data collection and I am strongly pursuing increased EU funding for this area under the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund currently under negotiation at EU level.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

20. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the mapping of forage hectares will be completed for Irish farmers; his views that these annual mapping issues are causing a lot of concern to farmers; if he acknowledges that some lands in REP scheme or agri-environmental schemes over a number of years are liable to become overgrown and lead to penalties under overdeclaration rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53140/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Payments to farmers under EU Direct Schemes amount to over €1.5 billion annually. Approximately 130,000 farmers benefit from these schemes and these supports will continue under the next CAP, recently agreed by the Irish Presidency. Financial controls are operated by the EU Commission on the management of EU funded schemes paid out by Member States as part of the Clearance of Accounts process. If the Commission believes the scheme does not fully adhere to EU regulations, a financial correction can be imposed. The EU Commission has been auditing schemes in operation in Ireland over a five year period and has concluded that some farmers have declared land eligible and sought payment on land that contains ineligible features such as houses, farmyards, roads, rivers, scrub etc. This has occurred under all land based schemes including REPS. Cognisance is, however, taken where lower stocking rates apply under certain agri-environmental schemes.

At a meeting between the Department of Agriculture and the EU Commission in July 2013, the Commission indicated that this practice of claiming on ineligible features has to be regularised, to avoid Ireland being significantly penalised by the Commission. In order to avoid a significant financial correction, which would see the overall Single Farm Payment Scheme reduced for all farmers, including those fully compliant with the scheme, a review of land eligibility has been undertaken by my Department, this review will be completed within the next few weeks.

As part of that review, 950,000 eligible land parcels (belonging to approximately 130,000 farmers) are being examined; ineligible features have been identified in some cases (a minority) in the context of the 2013 payment scheme. In the vast majority of cases, it does not appear that farmers have over-claimed and most farmers have applied the rules correctly. While it is not possible until the review is complete to provide final figures on over-claims by farmers, it is clear that over 90% of the farmers reviewed to date have either no reduction or a very minimal reduction.

As the review progresses, letters are issuing to farmers indicating that there is a discrepancy with regard to their eligible land declared and the farmers in question are being offered a desk review (within the Department) of the decision in the first instance and an independent review if they are not satisfied with that outcome. An independent review panel is being chaired by Pádraig Gibbons and will deal with appeals in an efficient and timely manner to avoid any undue delay to the processing of payments.

It is important to note that while this review is underway, payments to farmers under the Single Farm Payment Scheme and the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme are on track and on a par with 2012. A 50% advance payment issued under the Single Farm Payment scheme to farmers in October and 120,000 farmers were paid their SPS balancing payment this week amounting to

€560m. To date, almost €1.4 billion has been paid to farmers under the two schemes.

EU Funding

21. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will commit himself to matching funding, 50-50, for Pillar 2 schemes under the Common Agricultural Policy. [53109/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The European Council agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) provides some €313m per year, or a total of €2.19bn, for Ireland under Pillar 2 of the CAP for the period 2014 – 2020.

A general EU co-financing rate of 53% is set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation but this rate may rise to a maximum of 80% for measures such as farm and business development, co-operation activities, and LEADER projects. Environmental type measures may be co-funded up to 75%. The total Exchequer funding that will be required to draw down the available European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding will depend on the types of measures included in the new Rural Development Programme and on the co-financing rates applied to these measures.

There are a number of conditions attached to Ireland's allocation of €313 million per annum. The draft Regulation provides that at least 5% of EAFRD funding must be reserved for LEADER while the draft Common Provisions Regulation provides that 6% of EAFRD funding must be set aside to a national performance reserve.

The funding set aside to the performance reserve will be allocated to each Member State following a performance review in 2019. Finally, the draft Rural Development Regulation sets out that 30% of the total EAFRD amount must be reserved for environmental operations and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Work is currently ongoing in my Department to design the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the period from 2014 – 2020. In designing the new RDP, my Department must take account of the range of requirements set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation and the need to support key policy aims for the agri-food sector in the light of the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. In undertaking this work, a number of ex-ante analyses are being undertaken and a public consultation process has also taken place. As part of this process, I have met with a number of stakeholders, including the Irish Farmers Association.

While final decisions in relation to what measures are to be included in the new RDP have not yet been made, my Department is in ongoing contact with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the overall financing that will be required. I expect to make decisions in relation to the measures to be supported under the new RDP by the end of this year, and to submit a draft programme to the Commission in early 2014.

Food Exports

22. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which new markets for Irish food products have been entered into in recent times with particular reference to countries outside the European Union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53070/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In line with the Food Harvest 2020 strategy, export led growth in agri-food and related sectors, is being ac-

tively pursued in my Department. This strategic approach has resulted in the following specific new market openings in 2013:

- UAE opened for sheep-meat;
- Libya opened for livestock;
- Australia opened for pigmeat;
- Iran opened for beef;
- GCC lifted the ban on imports of beef and sheep-meat;
- Canada opened for Sheepmeat;
- China opened for Salmon;
- Japan opened for beef.

The most recent announcement of the opening of the Japanese market to Irish beef is very significant not only in terms of the potential of up to €15 million in exports, but also from a reputational point of view, particularly in the Asian region.

My recent trade mission to the Gulf States of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates also yielded productive outcomes particularly for dairy products, food ingredients, agri-services and the equine sector.

I also led trade missions to US in 2013, where exports of agri-food to the US have increased from €406 million in 2010 to €518 million in 2012 and to Switzerland where exports have increased from €29 million to €38 million in this period. Following intensive lobbying, the US published its BSE rule which is a first step in moving to opening the US market to exports of Irish beef. This is now being followed up at official level to ensure that Irish beef can be exported as soon as the market reopens in 2014.

All of these efforts should of course be viewed in the context of the continued growth in the performance of our actual exports. Exports of food and drinks rose by 2% in 2012 to over €9 billion. They are showing a further 6.5% increase in the first nine months of 2013. Asian markets accounted for over 5% of exports in 2012. In China alone, we have seen our exports increase from €167 million in 2010 to €323 million in 2012, an increase of 93%. And these increases are continuing into 2013.

Russia is also showing dramatic growth as a market as is the continent of Africa where there is strong potential for increased exports. We now export over €500 million in agri-food to Africa. Nigeria, South Africa, Senegal, Algeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are our key markets.

Farm Inspections

23. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will publish the inspection penalty rate for randomised on-farm inspections; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [52932/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department, in the context of delivering the Single Payment Scheme, Disadvantaged Areas' Scheme and other area related schemes, is required to carry out an annual round of inspections covering both the eligibility of the land declared to draw down payments and also cross compliance

aspects, to ensure adherence with EU regulatory requirements in the areas of public, animal and plant health, environment and animal welfare and ensuring that the farm is maintained in good agricultural and environmental condition. These inspections are a necessary requirement to draw down approximately €1.7 billion of EU funds annually and to avoid EU disallowances, My Department must therefore ensure that these inspections are conducted in full accordance with the legislative provisions.

Land eligibility checks must be carried out on at least 5% of applicants. These checks are carried out to verify that the actual area claimed in the application form corresponds to the area farmed by the farmer and to ensure that any ineligible land or features are not included for aid purposes. My Department has made every effort to respond to concerns about the impact of on-the-ground inspections on farmers and arising from this around 75% of these inspections are initially carried out without the need for a farm visit, as the information needed is acquired using the technique of remote sensing via satellite.

The rate of inspections for cross-compliance is 1% of applicants to whom the Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) and Good Agricultural Condition (GAEC) apply. However, 3% of farmers must be inspected under the bovine identification and registration requirements, while 3% of sheep/goat farmers must be inspected covering 5% of the flock. In addition, since 2010, my Department undertakes Nitrates inspections under the Good Agricultural Practice (GAP) regulations on behalf of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, on an inter-agency basis.

The governing EU regulations require that the selection of cases for inspection is undertaken by means of a risk analysis process. The cases are selected on the basis of relevant risk criteria, as well as on a random basis. Furthermore, in order to ensure the continued effectiveness of the risk analysis process, my Department is required to assess and update the process on an annual basis.

The following table details the number of holdings selected on a random basis for land eligibility and cross compliance inspections in 2012 under the Single Payment and Disadvantaged Areas' Schemes and for the Nitrates GAP inspections and the number of those cases that incurred a financial penalty following these inspections.

| Inspection Category | No. of Holdings Selected Randomly | No. of Holdings with Financial Penalty | % of Holdings with Financial Penalty |
|---|--|---|---|
| Land Eligibility Inspections | 1,419 | 169 | 11.9% |
| Cross Compliance Inspections (incl. Animal IDR) | 1,657 | 309 | 18.6% |
| Nitrates GAP Inspections | 324 | 74 | 22.8% |

EU Funding

24. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if funding will remain available under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development for the rural broadband scheme should suitable projects be identified between now and the end of 2014; if areas are identified as not receiving an adequate service; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [53137/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the current Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013, a Rural Broadband Scheme (RBS) was launched in 2011 in recognition of the fact that, despite the widespread availability of broadband throughout Ireland, there still remained individual premises that were unable to receive a service. This Scheme was aimed at making a basic broadband service available to un-served premises in rural areas, not already covered by the National Broadband Scheme. An amount of €13,413,000 of funding from the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) was allocated to the scheme which came within the remit of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources.

During the scheme development process existing commercial internet service providers indicated their ability to provide a broadband service to almost all of the qualifying applicants under the scheme. Consequently there has been no need for any disbursement of public money and no related draw-down of EU funding was necessary. The EAFRD funding originally made available for this scheme has since been re-allocated to other qualifying measures under the RDP.

In relation to the new RDP for the period 2014-2020, work is currently ongoing in my Department to design the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the period from 2014 – 2020. In designing the new RDP, my Department must take account of the range of requirements set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation and the need to support key policy aims for the agri-food sector in the light of the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. In undertaking this work, a number of ex-ante analyses are being undertaken and a public consultation process has also taken place.

I expect to make decisions in relation to the measures to be supported under the new RDP by the end of this year, and to submit a draft programme to the Commission in early 2014.

Land Issues

25. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps being taken to support young farmers, farm restructuring, transfer of farmland and competitiveness; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53142/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are a number of measures in place in my Department where the issues of supporting young farmers, farm restructuring, the transfer of farmland and competitiveness are being addressed.

Firstly, in relation to Pillar 1 there are several innovative features of the new Common Agricultural Policy, including support for young farmers. This is incorporated in two elements of the new Direct Payment Regulation, namely the ‘Young Farmers Scheme’ and the ‘National Reserve’. The essential purpose of the Young Farmers Scheme and the National Reserve is to assist young farmers in the initial stages of establishing a farming enterprise in their own name and to encourage generational renewal. I expect to make decision on the implementation of Pillar 1 reforms by the end of this year.

On the taxation side, I have had on-going contact with the Minister for Finance in order to make progressive amendments to support young farmers and to facilitate land mobility. This is reflected in a number of measures introduced and maintained over the course of recent Budgets, including:

- Retirement relief on Capital Gains Tax where an individual over 55 years disposes of some or all of his land once certain criteria are met. A number of changes have been made to this relief in recent budgets;

- Reductions in stamp duty rates for land transfers in recent budgets;

- 100% stock relief on income tax for young trained farmers.

Finally, the development of a new Rural Development Plan (RDP) for the period 2014-2020 represents an opportunity to further develop a comprehensive set of measures that will seek to address the issues outlined by the Deputy. Work on the design of the next RDP is well underway. In designing the new RDP, my Department must take account of the range of requirements set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation and the need to support key policy aim for the agri food sector in light of the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. I expect to make decisions in relation to the measures to be supported under the new RDP by the end of this year, and to submit a draft programme to the Commission in early 2014.

Departmental Staff Recruitment

26. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will consider increasing the number of staff to facilitate appropriate assessment for oyster farm licensing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53145/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The majority of areas for which oyster licences are sought are designated Special Areas of Conservation and/or Special Protection Areas under the EU Birds Directive (Natura 2000 sites).

To ensure compliance with the Birds and Habitats Directives, all applications in 'Natura 2000 areas' are required to be appropriately assessed. This has required the putting in place of a significant work programme which has considerable time and resource implications. An additional factor is that all aquaculture applications now undergo Environmental Impact pre-screening assessment which requires significant input from my Department's scientific and technical advisors. My Department, in conjunction with the Marine Institute and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is engaged in a comprehensive programme to gather the necessary baseline data appropriate to the conservation objectives of 'Natura 2000' areas. This data collection programme is substantially complete. Analysis of the data, together with the setting of appropriate conservation objectives by the NPWS, will enable all new, renewal and review applications to be appropriately assessed for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

It is expected that successful completion of the Appropriate Assessment process will facilitate a significant increase in the number of licence determinations. In the region of 45 aquaculture licences have issued this year in respect of Castlemaine. A number of licensing determinations in respect of Roaringwater Bay have been made and others are imminent at this time.

The Appropriate Assessment process represents a significant financial, administrative and scientific investment by the State in resolving this issue. My Department continues to make every effort to expedite the determination of all aquaculture applications having regard to the complexities of each case and the need to comply fully with all national and EU legislation. I am also satisfied that the resources available to my Department are sufficient to achieve this outcome.

Parking Charges

27. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding his proposal to introduce paid parking at Howth harbour. [52930/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The House will be aware that I have been considering introducing a charge for parking facilities within Howth Fishery Harbour Centre for some time:

- to assist in operating Howth Fishery Harbour Centre on a financially-sound basis;
- to provide a source of revenue for further investment in Fishery Harbour Centre facilities;
- as part of an overall traffic management plan; and
- in order to maximise the return on this significant State asset.

There is a broad range of factors to consider in coming to a decision; first and foremost Howth Fishery Harbour Centre is a working fishery harbour, one of 6 Fishery Harbour Centres in the State.

Funding for operating, management and development costs of the Fishery Harbour Centres is a major consideration for my Department. Maximising potential income, and ensuring that the Fishery Harbour Centres are run on a financially-sound basis, is extremely important.

Uniquely among Fishery Harbour Centres, a wide range of groups use the parking facilities of Howth Fishery Harbour – harbour business customers, yacht club members, sport fishermen, Dart users, tourists, walkers and many others.

I am well aware of and acknowledge the concerns of local residents and user groups and Deputy Broughan and the House can rest assured that I will take appropriate account of their views in coming to my decision. I can also assure the harbour users in Howth that I am committed to continuing investment in and development of Howth Harbour going forward.

Departmental Reports

28. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will publish the findings of the review conducted into Coillte initiated in 2010; his plans for the future of the organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53144/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Coillte has been the subject of a number of reviews over the last number of years. The review of Coillte, to which the Deputy refers, is one which was undertaken on foot of a commitment in the previous Government's Renewed Programme for Government. It is not my intention to publish the outcome of that review, as that particular review exercise was superseded by the analysis undertaken on foot of the Government Decisions in 2012 in relation to the sale of state assets which encompassed Coillte.

This analysis, undertaken by NewERA, Coillte, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and my Department, in relation to a proposed sale of Coillte harvesting rights was quite extensive and formed the basis for the Government's Decision in June of this year that it was not the appropriate time to proceed with the sale of harvesting rights and that the current focus must be on the restructuring of Coillte, overseen by NewERA and the relevant stakeholder Departments. I would like to stress that this particular analysis not only involved financial calcula-

tions associated with the sale process but also the possible impact on the timber industry, public access to recreational land, environmental and social impacts and consequential implications for the company.

My plans for the future of Coillte will be informed by the progress on the restructuring of the company. As I mentioned, a restructuring of Coillte is currently being undertaken on foot of the Government Decision in June and the Government will consider all the options to maximise value from Coillte when the restructuring is complete at the end of next year. Another factor to inform my plans for the company will be the outcome of the current analysis evaluating how to give effect to a beneficial merger of Coillte with Bord na Móna to create a streamlined and refocused commercial state company operating in the bio-energy and forestry sectors, as committed to in the Programme for Government.

As part of that exercise, NewERA is currently undertaking a financial evaluation on behalf of the relevant Government Departments, namely my Department, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. This financial evaluation is being finalised after which the Departments will consider its findings. It is intended that a recommendation will be brought to Government on the matter shortly thereafter.

I am cognisant of the important role Coillte plays within the forestry sector. Coillte, as the State forestry company, manages an estate of over 440,000 hectares, the bulk of which is under forestry. It is currently the main supplier of sawlog to the timber processing sector. Coillte Management, at its recent meeting with the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, gave a comprehensive overview of its activities, its performance in 2012 and its outlook for this year.

Departmental Schemes

29. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to introduce a scheme to deal with unwanted horses and equines around the State to ease the burden on animal welfare groups that are inundated with rescues and the costs involved in dealing with abandoned animals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53139/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is keeping the horse welfare situation under review and, in particular, the need for additional welfare measures. However, there is no evidence of a major welfare problem in the horse sector at present due to the relatively high level of horse slaughterings this year and the very good weather well into the Autumn, which has created a very favourable fodder situation.

My Department, in conjunction with the local authorities and the Gardai are adopting a pro-active approach in relation to welfare issues in the horse sector and this has reduced the numbers of abandoned horses throughout the country particularly in urban areas. The Deputy may be aware that, in recent weeks, 82 horses were seized in the Cork city area. While a small number of horses had to be euthanized on welfare grounds, the majority that were seized are being re-homed with the assistance of welfare groups and or are being moved to registered equine premises and have received passports and microchips in accordance with regulations. Furthermore, last week, my Department engaged with the local authority and An Garda Síochána in a similar proactive manner in County Wicklow.

My Department devotes considerable resources to issues relating to the welfare of animals including horses. To date this year, my Department has paid some €2.5m to the Local Authorities under the Control of Horses Act to enable them to deal with stray and unwanted horses. My Department also provides considerable financial support to animal welfare organisations to

assist them in the delivery of animal care and welfare services. In 2012, this funding came to a total of €1,365,000 to some 140 organisations. I plan to make an allocation in respect of 2014 shortly.

In conclusion, I can assure the Deputy that my Department will continue to work with local authorities and Gardai in other areas if similar cases occur and intervention is required. I urge the public to continue to avail of the Animal Welfare Helpline in operation by my Department, to report instances where animal welfare may be compromised on 1850 211 990.

Fisheries Offences

30. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of inspections and detentions of Dutch pelagic fishing vessels that have taken place in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53136/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Control of the fishing within Ireland's Exclusive Fisheries Zone is a matter for the Irish control authorities. Under the Sea Fisheries and Maritime Jurisdiction Act, 2006, operational issues concerning sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) and the Naval Service. The prosecution of fisheries infringements are carried out on behalf of the State by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In October 2009, the EU adopted a new regulation dealing with fisheries controls in the EU. Council Regulation 1224/2009 establishes a Community control system for ensuring compliance with the rules of the common fisheries policy. Control and inspection is now focused where it is most effective through an approach based on systematic risk analysis. Inspection procedures are standardised and harmonised for all stages in the market chain, including transport and marketing. This new control regulation complements the IUU fishing regulation Council Regulation 1005/2008 which establishes a Community system to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. These regulations were introduced so that there is a common EU level playing field and to provide for effective range of controls across EU waters. It applies to fishing activities in Community waters as well those carried out by Community fishing in the maritime waters under the jurisdiction or sovereignty of third countries and of the high seas. The focus of the control regulation is to create a level playing field which is necessary to give confidence to the industry so that they understand that all community vessels and third country vessels operating in EU waters are subject to the same level of control, and that there is equality of treatment for all vessels no matter where they operate.

As part of this common approach provided for in the Control regulation, I will shortly introduce a statutory instrument to provide for a points system which will apply to license holders of fishing vessels when a serious infringements of the Common Fisheries Policy is detected within the Exclusive Fishery Limits of the State.

The accumulation of points for persistent serious infringements of the Common Fisheries Policy will lead to the suspension of a sea fishing boat license for a period from 2 months to one year. In extreme cases persistent serious fisheries infringements could lead to a permanent withdrawal of a license.

I am confident that this measure which is confined to serious infringement combined with the deterrent level of sanctions for such serious offences will help address persistent overfishing by all vessels operating in rich fishing grounds around Ireland.

Finally, as I advised the Seanad recently, I intend to introduce a fixed penalty notice system, modelled on the points system for traffic offences, for minor fishery offences in the near future.

Herd Numbers

31. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if his attention has been drawn to the current reduction in the number of suckler cows and the 7.5% reduction in calves registered, down by 65,000, compared to 2012 levels; and his views that the annual replacement rate needed to maintain the national suckler herd will be achieved. [53110/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am fully aware of the issues facing beef producers at present, and despite the budgetary constraints in which I and other Ministers must operate, I recently announced a package of Budget measures designed to assist in improving the long-term profitability of a vulnerable sector that is particularly reliant on direct payments. While suckler cow numbers have remained relatively stable since payments were decoupled from production in January 2005, my Department monitors the composition and strength of the national herd on an ongoing basis. Calf registrations are subject to cyclical fluctuations as a contracting suckler herd causes an upturn in confidence, carcass values and margins encouraging renewed investment and restocking by producers.

Challenging production conditions over the last two years undoubtedly impacted on the size of the beef cow herd and this may result in a diminution in overall suckler cow numbers. The data referred to by the Deputy covers the first 9 months of the year but it will not be possible to quantify the full extent of any reduction until the publication of data on the final outturn for the year. The annual replacement rate depends on the number of heifers calving each year and this data too, along with underlying trends, will be considered by my Department after full year data becomes available.

As evidence of my commitment to the future of beef production, I can point to a number of targeted structural supports that I have put in place to enable the industry to meet future market requirements and the targets set out in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. In particular, the Beef Genomics Scheme (BGS), which is specifically aimed at suckler farmers, will initiate the process of building a genetic database for the beef sector that will position Ireland as a global leader in beef genetics and ultimately lead to a more efficient and profitable farm sector.

With a total fund of €23 million, the BGS will provide participants with a payment of €40 per calf subject to an overall scheme limit. I have already indicated that in order to be eligible for entry into the BGS, a farmer must also join the Beef Data Programme (BDP) and I expect to announce full operational details of the new scheme early in 2014.

In addition to the BGS, a further €10 million in funding will be disbursed under the Beef Data Programme (BDP) in 2014. The objectives of the BDP are to improve the genetic quality of the national suckler herd through the collection of essential breeding and production information and to stimulate improvements in the competitiveness and output quality of the Irish beef industry. The Programme, which attracted some 34,000 applications in 2013, assists farmers to improve the quality of their livestock by maintaining crucial data flows to ICBF that in turn will generate further advances in cattle breeding at a national level. Farmers in the BDP will qualify for a further €20 per calf up to a maximum of 20 calves. Taken in conjunction with the BGS, suckler farmers will receive a payment of up to €60 per calf in 2014. A payment model based on calves rather than cows sends a strong signal to the sector that supports are aimed at rewarding farmer efficiency and improved technical performance.

In addition to the BGS and the BDP, a further allocation of €5 million has been earmarked for the continuation of the Beef Technology Adoption Programme (BTAP) in 2014. Last year, some 5,500 farmers each received an annual payment of €925 in relation to their participation

in the first year of the BTAP. In total, these measures, added to residual payments under the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme, amount to an investment of €40m in this strategically important sector in 2014.

Animal Welfare

32. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken to deal with some recent shocking cases of animal cruelty, neglect and abandonment; and if he is satisfied that the relevant authorities have sufficient resources to ensure compliance with the new Animal Health and Welfare Bill. [52922/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Recent issues in relation to abuses of animal welfare, particularly in the case of horses, highlight the need for intervention before animal welfare is threatened. My Department, in conjunction with the local authorities and the Garda are adopting a pro-active approach in relation to animal welfare and, in recent weeks have seized 82 horses in the Cork city area. While a small number of horses had to be euthanised on welfare grounds, the majority that were seized are being re-homed with the assistance of welfare groups and or are being moved to registered equine premises and have received passports and microchips in accordance with regulations. Last week, my Department engaged with the local authority and An Garda Síochána in a similar proactive manner in County Wicklow.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department will continue to work with local authorities and gardaí in other areas if similar cases occur and intervention is required. I urge the public to continue to avail of the Animal Welfare Helpline in operation by my Department, to report instances where animal welfare may be compromised on 1850 211 990.

In relation to resources, considerable manpower within my Department is devoted to issues relating to the welfare of animals. Under the new Act, provision is made for situations where Local Authorities may be required to offer their assistance. There are, of course, many organisations involved in the animal welfare area and my Department is finalising a series of Service Agreements with a number of these to operate under the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013. These service agreements will confer statutory powers to NGO personnel to enforce certain parts of the Animal Health & Welfare Act 2013. This will enable such persons to carry out their duties in a more effective manner. My Department also provides considerable financial support to these organisations to assist them in the delivery of animal care and welfare services. In 2012, this funding came to a total of €1,365,000 to some 140 organisations. The funding arrangements are kept under review on an annual basis. In conjunction with these awards, I introduced a new Code of Practice for welfare organisations which aims to promote sound welfare and management practices to assist organisations achieve high standards of animal welfare. This Code of Practice is available on my Department's website at <http://www.agriculture.gov.ie/animalhealthwelfare/animalwelfare>. I plan to make an allocation in respect of work to be carried out in 2014 shortly.

Food Marketing Programme

33. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the various visits undertaken since 2013, including the Japan visit, that have promoted Irish food and agricultural produce, agreements and developments to date in accessing those markets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53143/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the second half of 2013 I undertook trade promotion and inward investment visits to Switzerland, the United States, the Gulf States and Japan. These resulted in the following developments in ac-

cess to these markets. Japan announced the opening of its market to Irish beef. This is a very prestigious market worth some €12 to €15 million annually. In regard to the United States, my trade visit was focused on Foreign Direct Investment and I had a number of meetings with key companies in this regard. Following intensive lobbying, the US published its BSE rule which is a first step in moving to opening the US market to exports of Irish beef. This is now being followed up at official level to ensure that Irish beef can be exported as soon as the market re-opens in 2014.

My visit to the Gulf States of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates was also very productive with the following specific outcomes:

- The Irish Dairy Board announcement of a €20m investment in a Saudi Dairy company AL Wazeen which will result in the importation of significant volumes of Irish milk powders to Saudi and the production of approximately 20,000 t of a 'white cheese' specific to the region, using new technology developed by Teagasc;

- The opening of the Kerry Food and Ingredients development centre in UAE which will cater for the specific consumer demands and tastes in the Middle East, North Africa and Turkish markets;

- A €5m contract signed by Biotecter for water analysis equipment;

- A total of €2.3 million was spent in the recent Goffs' sales following my trade mission which related to Qatari and UAE purchases of thoroughbred horses;

- Announcement of a joint race with the Jabel Ali Race course;

In addition, during the trade mission, a number of Irish suppliers obtained product listings in an additional leading retailer in UAE and Bord Bia announced the opening of new offices in Dubai to support Irish food companies exporting to the UAE. I also hosted a week-long incoming visit from the Vietnamese Minister for Agriculture during which we agreed to develop a Memorandum on cooperation that I hope will be signed in the near future and earlier this month the first meeting of the working group on beef market access with China took place in Beijing.

Of course my promotion of Irish agri-food exports did not just start in 2013. Arising from ongoing efforts, the opening of the following markets was secured in 2013:

- UAE opened for sheep-meat;
- Libya opened for livestock;
- Australia opened for pigmeat;
- Iran opened for beef;
- GCC ban lifted for beef and sheep-meat;
- Canada market opened for Sheep-meat;
- Japan opened for beef;
- China opened for Salmon.

Organic Farming

34. **Deputy Thomas Pringle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to use the new Common Agricultural Policy measures to increase the area of land in use

for organic farming; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53138/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I believe that the proposals presented by the European Commission in the CAP reform package are very positive in relation to the Organic Sector. For the first time in the Common Agricultural Policy there are provisions set out under Article 30 of the current draft Rural Development Regulation to support the conversion to or the maintenance of Organic Farming practices and methods. The greening provisions of the Direct Payments Regulation also recognise the important contribution made by organic farming.

Preparatory work for the next Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014 – 2020 is well underway and the question of a new organic scheme is being considered in that context. Under the draft Rural Development Regulation, my Department must undertake an ex ante evaluation, a public consultation, a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) a needs assessment, a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and an appropriate assessment (AA) in developing our Rural Development Programme. An independent evaluator has been contracted to prepare the ex-ante evaluation report, SEA and AA and to advise on the SWOT analysis.

An initial consultation process was launched in 2012, and written submissions were received from over 80 stakeholders. These submissions have been analysed by my Department and have fed into the development of the SWOT and needs analyses. A second consultation was held in July, where stakeholders attended a full day workshop on the draft SWOT and needs analyses. Based on the outcome of these processes, the drafting of a new programme is being advanced in my Department, and it is intended that further stakeholder consultation will form part of this.

Food Exports

35. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the progress made during the trade visit to Nigeria in agribusiness potential, given that some of the fastest growing states in the world are in Africa; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53134/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The trade mission to Nigeria took place from 13 to 15 November last. It was organised by Enterprise Ireland and led by my colleague Minister of State for Trade and Development, Joe Costello. The visit was part of a wider programme that also encompassed South Africa. The overall aim of the visit was to develop trade in this important emerging market in Africa. Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 160 million people, approximately half the population of the United States and has a GDP rate of increase of 7% per annum.

Irish food and drink exports to Africa were €526 million for 2012, representing an increase of 7.3% on the 2011 figure of €490million. The main components of the trade are Dairy Ingredients (Skimmed Milk Powder and Whole Milk Powder), Pelagic fish and Beverages. Nigeria is by far the largest market accounting for €170million: dairy exports reached €100million and seafood €68 million and it is becoming a hub for Irish companies wanting to expand their exports into the ECOWAS economic bloc. Bord Bia participated in the trade visit with a view to supporting Irish companies already present in this market, identifying new business opportunities, assisting Irish industry regarding certain export constraints and endorsing the Kerry Group during their official opening of a new office in Lagos.

Overseas Development Aid Expenditure

36. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the total amount spent to date in 2013 by Irish Aid in order to reduce poverty and hunger, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where the needs are greatest and by supporting long-term development and providing humanitarian assistance in over 80 countries, on behalf of the Irish people; the total amount spent by Irish Aid through private sector companies; the total number of private sector companies in receipt of payments from Irish Aid; the total amount spent by Irish Aid through private sector companies based here; the total number of such companies; the total amount spent by Irish Aid through private sector companies not based here; the total number of such companies; and if he will provide the information in tabular form. [53644/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Joe Costello): Ireland's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget for 2013 is €622m, of which €497m is managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade under *Vote 27 International Co-operation*, with the remainder comprising eligible funding by other Government Departments as well as Ireland's share of the EU Development Co-operation budget. A full spend against Vote 27 is anticipated for 2013. Ireland's ODA programme, which is known as Irish Aid, is primarily delivered, at the local level, in the form of grants to and through a number of trusted partners. These include UN, EU and other multilateral and international organisations, governments in developing countries, Irish and international non-governmental organisations, public sector bodies and missionaries. The aid programme is not delivered through any private sector companies based in Ireland. Some specialised technical expertise or similar capacities, not available within my Department, are purchased in Ireland and in Partner Countries from individual experts or experts working as part of private sector companies. This includes consultancy services such as independent audit, evaluation and project management. It is anticipated that expenditure on the latter will amount to about €365,000 in 2013. Following an open and competitive tendering process, the Irish Embassy in Kampala recently directly engaged the services of a project management company to oversee all aspects of the construction of a number of schools in the remote Karamoja region of Uganda. This project, which has just commenced, will run until 2016 and has a total budget of €11.4 million.

All funding managed by Irish Aid is fully untied, meaning that it is given without any stipulation that goods or services must be purchased by the recipient country or organisation from Ireland or from a limited selection of sources. As would be expected, the Department's Development Co-operation Division and the Missions in our Partner Countries make a large number of payments annually in connection with the rental and maintenance of premises and the purchase of goods and services. It would be inordinately time-consuming to compile information on the number of private sector companies that received payments from Vote 27 in 2013. A detailed statistical analysis of programme expenditure each year is contained in annual reports published on the Irish Aid website: www.irishaid.ie.

Property Taxation Collection

37. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Finance the number of house owners who applied to have their local property tax deducted from their social welfare payments but cannot avail of this option because their personal income is too low and they may not have been advised of this and now find themselves in arrears, through no fault of their own, with their local property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53490/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that liable persons for more than 15,000 residential properties opted to pay their 2013 Local Property Tax (LPT) by way of deduction at source from a Department of Social

Protection payment. The Commissioners have confirmed that in the majority of cases deductions from Department of Social Protection payments have already commenced and over €1.2m has been collected by Revenue to date. I am also advised that in approximately 1,400 cases the instruction to deduct at source from Department of Social Protection payments, which is an automated process, was not successful for a variety of reasons, including because the wrong scheme was selected by the property owner.

It is estimated that a small subset of these cases would be where the deduction of LPT from the relevant payment could not be finalised as it would have reduced the property owner's personal rate payment to below €186 per week. This amount is equivalent to the weekly rate of supplementary welfare allowance and section 92 of the Finance (Local Property Tax) Act 2012 (as amended) precludes the Department of Social Protection from reducing a property owner's personal rate payment to below this amount. I am further advised that, where this has arisen, Revenue has already been in contact with a number of these individuals to agree alternative payment arrangements and is in the process of contacting the remainder.

As to whether property owners were advised about the possible impact of the €186 threshold on their LPT deductions, I am advised that the LPT information guide, which was sent to all property owners in March/April 2013, outlined the various payment options available and specifically advised property owners that deduction of LPT from their Department of Social Protection payment cannot reduce their personal rate payment to less than €186 per week. Furthermore, the Frequently Asked Questions section on the Revenue website outlined the possible implications of choosing this payment option and advised owners that they should satisfy themselves that the weekly deductions of LPT from their Department of Social Protection payment would meet their 2013 LPT liability by the end of 2013. Where the scheme chosen would not allow the LPT to be paid in full by the end of the year, owners were advised to choose a different payment method, or alternatively, to consider deferring the charge, where they established that they met the qualifying conditions for deferral. I understand that this issue was also dealt with by Revenue spokespeople who took part in a large number of national and local radio interviews between March and May this year.

I am advised by the Commissioners that where a property owner discovers that deduction of LPT from their Department of Social Protection scheme is not possible on account of the €186 threshold, they should contact the LPT Branch helpline on 1890 200 255 to make alternative arrangements for paying the 2013 tax, or to confirm if they are eligible to defer the charge. In this respect, the Commissioners advise that where an owner-occupier's only source of income is their Department of Social Protection payment, they would be eligible to defer payment of the tax. Full details on deferring payment of LPT are available on the Revenue website.

Tobacco Smuggling

38. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Finance the current legal penalties for the sale of contraband cigarettes; and if it is his intention to significantly increase those penalties in line with the United Kingdom and other jurisdictions, in view of the fact that a single large container load of contraband may cost the State up to €3 million in excise revenue foregone. [53512/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the fines that apply for an offence of evasion, or attempted evasion of excise duty on excisable products, including cigarettes, were increased substantially in the Finance Acts 2008 and 2010. The penalty in the case of a summary conviction for the smuggling or illegal sale of unstamped tobacco products is now a fine of €5,000, or a term of imprisonment not exceeding

12 months, or both a fine and a term of imprisonment. In the case of a conviction on indictment, the fine was increased ten-fold in 2010 and the Court may now impose a fine not exceeding €126,970, or a term of imprisonment of up to five years, or both a fine and imprisonment. Where the value of the excisable goods concerned in an indictable smuggling offence exceed €250,000, including the tax payable, the Court may impose a fine three times the value of the goods. In the case of a conviction on indictment for an offence concerning a container load of cigarettes, the Courts would therefore have the option of imposing a fine up to three times the tax paid value of the cigarettes. The current penalties for excise offences are very significant, but I will continue to keep them under review.

Currency Circulation

39. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance when a decision will be taken on the possible elimination of one and two cent coins; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53399/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Central Bank ran a Rounding Trial on 1c and 2c coins in Wexford from 16 September to 17 November 2013 in accordance with a recommendation of the National Payments Plan approved by Government earlier this year. The results of that trial are under review; a report on the basis of the pilot project will be reviewed by the Steering Committee, which will report to Government through my Department. A Government decision informed by that report will follow.

Departmental Funding

40. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Finance the funding East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd has received from his Department in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53406/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): No funding has been received by the East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd from my Department in 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013.

Tax Code

41. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if changes are permitted to a relevant tax to ensure employment opportunities are not prevented (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53431/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the relevant taxes referred to by the Deputy are Customs Duties and VAT at Import. It is not open to Revenue to vary the rate of tax/duty involved. Additionally, while certain reliefs and exemptions apply in respect of both of these taxes/duties, none apply in the scenario outlined by the Deputy.

Property Taxation Collection

42. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will send the local property tax bill to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [53436/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am informed by Revenue that a key aspect of the work undertaken in regard to Local Property Tax (LPT) was the development of a comprehensive register of residential properties in the State. During the building of the Property Register some matching difficulties were encountered when consolidating the various

Government and non-Government data sources used, and in a small number of cases the linkage of properties to their relevant owners was not correct.

As part of its comprehensive LPT communications strategy, Revenue clearly stated that errors in the compilation of the Property Register were inevitable given the scale of the task and requested that anybody who received incorrect information in regard to their properties make contact via the LPT Helpline as soon as possible. Revenue stressed that non-engagement would lead to individuals being incorrectly made liable for LPT and as a consequence prone to enforcement activity, including mandatory deduction at source from salary or certain Government payments or pensions.

In regard to the case to which the Deputy refers, an LPT Return in respect of 2013 incorrectly issued to the daughter of the person in question in March 2013. The Return was subsequently sent back to Revenue indicating that she (the daughter) was 'not the liable owner', but no details were provided confirming the identity of the correct owner. The daughter also returned a compliance reminder letter that issued to her on 18 October again stating that she was 'not the liable owner' and also again making no reference to the correct owner.

Revenue has confirmed to me that it has recently made contact with the person to confirm the liable person in respect of the property in question and on the basis of the conversation has removed the daughter from the Property Register. The person is now correctly linked to the property and has also selected her payment options in respect of both 2013 and 2014.

EU-IMF Programme of Support

43. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance the position regarding the exit from the bailout (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53439/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): At the outset it should be noted that the exit from the EU-IMF Programme of Assistance without a precautionary credit line will have no bearing on whether a bank is likely to be bailed in or not in the future.

The rules relating to bail-in are set out in the proposed EU Directive on Bank Recovery and Resolution (BRRD), which is currently at an advanced stage of negotiation with the European Parliament. The BRRD proposal provides a common framework of rules and powers to help EU countries manage arrangements to deal with failing banks at national level as well as cross-border banks, whilst preserving essential bank operations and minimising taxpayers' exposure to losses.

There are three pillars to the BRRD framework to facilitate a range of appropriate actions by authorities:

- Preparatory and preventative measures including reinforced supervision and robust recovery and resolution planning for major institutions;
- Early intervention which would include supervisory powers, implementing recovery plans and appointing a special manager; and
- Resolution tools including sale of business, bridge bank and asset separation tools and also the use of bail-in mechanisms.

The BRRD will apply to all 28 Member States and will ensure that losses incurred by a credit institution are allocated to its shareholders and creditors in accordance with a pre-defined

hierarchy of claims. This is an important means of ensuring that a bank's losses are absorbed by those who fund its activities and not taxpayers.

The proposed directive also includes a proposal for a resolution fund. This fund can be used for operational purposes, such as the provision of capital to a bridge bank and in some cases it can be used to provide solvency support to an institution in resolution. The resolution fund would be funded by the wider banking industry and in a banking union context this will be set up at a European level, thereby increasing the amount of funding available.

In relation to the events in Cyprus earlier this year, I have said before that it was an exceptional case which took place in the absence of a clearly defined resolution regime. The BRRD now addresses this and provides for a common framework for resolution for all EU Member States. This therefore should reduce ad-hoc solutions to bank crises going forward.

Tax Reliefs Application

44. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to reinstate tax relief at source on health insurance policies, in view of the fact that many customers will be forced to cancel their policies as a result of changes announced in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53440/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The position is as I stated in my Budget day speech, that from 16 October 2013, tax relief for medical insurance premiums has been restricted to the first €1,000 per adult and the first €500 per child insured. Any portion of premium paid in excess of these ceilings will no longer qualify for tax relief. The current system of income tax relief for medical insurance premiums is provided at source at the standard rate of income tax. Therefore, the State was paying 20% of the cost of all medical insurance premiums.

The cost of Income Tax relief in respect of medical insurance has increased significantly in recent years, estimated at €404 million in 2011, €448 million in 2012 and €500 million in 2013. Despite the increasing cost of the relief, the numbers insured are estimated to have reduced by approximately 170,000 over the same period, while at the same time the level of medical cover has decreased on some policies. Against this background the increase in costs is unsustainable. If the relief were to remain unchanged and the trend was to continue, the cost would increase to approximately €1 billion by 2020.

Currently, the tax system is supporting those who can afford private medical insurance to the level of half a billion euros per annum. Effectively that means that those taxpayers who could never afford private health insurance, or who have had to give up their policies due to personal circumstances, are providing financial support via the tax system to those individuals who can afford such insurance.

It should be noted that the Commission on Taxation in its 2009 report recommended the retention of medical insurance relief but that it should be limited. The introduction of an upper ceiling on the amount of medical insurance premiums that will qualify for tax relief achieves this recommendation.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that based on 2012 data, the most up to date data available, it is estimated that up to 577,000 policy holders, which provide cover for 1.1 million individuals, may be affected by this measure. The Revenue estimate is based on an analysis carried out on the annual returns and the gross premium prices (i.e. before tax relief at source is applied) submitted by the Health Insurers in respect of the 2012 tax year. However, it

should be noted that many will only be affected marginally, depending on the cost of the policies that individuals purchase.

The new ceilings will ensure continuing support via the tax system for those who purchase medical insurance policies, while reducing Exchequer exposure to more expensive policies. In addition, individuals can of course opt for less expensive policies and therefore avoid the impact of this measure entirely.

I have no plans to reverse my decision to restrict tax relief in respect of medical insurance premiums.

Revenue Commissioners Powers

45. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the basis on which the Revenue Commissioners have contacted the employers of a number of non-EU nationals employed here, in some instances for up to ten years, occasionally employed by State agencies, who are meeting their statutory requirements in respect of PRSI, income tax and all of their obligations but who, due to lack of a permit or update of residency status, are now being informed by their employer, on the instructions of the Revenue Commissioners, to the effect that their employment must cease notwithstanding the fact that many such persons hold pivotal positions in the workforce, have made a contribution to society and continue to do so; the way it has been determined that their employment is illegal but that the payment of their taxes and PRSI contributions was accepted and that subsequent employers employed such persons in good faith on the basis that they had a good employment record; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53445/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the question of whether an employee has a work permit is not relevant to the operation of the tax system and that Revenue does not advise employers to cease employing employees on the basis of their residency or work permit status. If the Deputy has information to the contrary he should forward the details to Revenue.

Pensions Levy Issues

46. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if the pension levy is here to stay or if it will end soon. [53451/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I announced in my Budget 2014 speech that the 0.6% Pension Fund Levy introduced to fund the *Jobs Initiative* in 2011 will be abolished from the 31 December 2014. I will however, introduce an additional levy on pension funds at 0.15% to, among other things, continue to help fund the *Jobs Initiative*. The additional levy, within the existing legal framework, will apply to pension fund assets in 2014 and 2015.

National Pensions Reserve Fund Investments

47. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 275 of 21 May 2013, if he will confirm that the proceeds of the sale of Bank of Ireland preference shares will accrue to the National Pension Reserve Fund, if the proceeds will then form part of the resources available for the Ireland Strategic Investment Fund which is being established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53454/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I can confirm to the Deputy that I have given instructions that the proceeds arising from the Bank of Ireland preference shares transac-

tion should remain with the National Pensions Reserve Fund for the time being. No decision has yet been made whether the proceeds will form part of the resources of the new Ireland Strategic Investment Fund. Further consideration will be given as to how best to utilise the proceeds having regard to the NTMA's debt management plan and the future profile of our cash balances.

Fuel Prices

48. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Finance his views regarding the cost of kerosene and gas-oil supplied as home heating fuel; if it has increased or decreased during the years 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; the reasons for any increase or decrease; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53466/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As Minister for Finance I have no jurisdiction or control over market pricing of fuel. I have responsibility only for the tax element of fuels.

Mortgage Repayments Issues

49. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Finance the protection afforded to persons in mortgage difficulties due to sudden unemployment who request to have their mortgage put on an interest only payment plan, but instead their mortgage provider places them on a more expensive loan and cancels their mortgage protection without their consent; if the consumer protection code obliges banks to provide a full and transparent explanation for their decisions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53492/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Deputy will be aware that the Code of Conduct on Mortgage Arrears (CCMA) sets out requirements for mortgage lenders dealing with borrowers facing or in mortgage arrears. The CCMA provides a strong consumer protection framework to ensure that borrowers struggling to keep up mortgage repayments are treated in a fair and transparent manner by their lender, and that long term resolution is sought by lenders with each of their borrowers. The CCMA sets out the framework that lenders must use when dealing with borrowers in mortgage arrears or in pre-arrears. This framework is known as the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process (MARP) which sets out the steps which lenders must follow:

- Step 1: Communicate with borrower;
- Step 2: Gather financial information;
- Step 3: Assess the borrowers circumstances; and
- Step 4: Propose a resolution.

In order to determine which options for alternative repayment arrangements are viable for each particular case, a lender must explore all of the options for alternative repayment arrangements offered by that lender having assessed the borrower's financial circumstances (through a Standard Financial Statement). Such alternative repayment arrangements may include:

- an interest-only arrangement for a period of time
- extending the term of the mortgage
- adding the arrears and interest to the mortgage, so that they are collected over the remaining term

- splitting the mortgage into an affordable loan and a remaining balance which is set aside to a later date

While lenders must consider such arrangements, they are not obliged to offer such an arrangement. If a borrower is offered an alternative repayment arrangement, the lender must give the borrower a clear explanation of the proposed arrangement and how it works, including the reason why the lender considers it to be appropriate for the borrower. The lender must also provide the borrower with the advantages of the offer and explain any disadvantages.

If the lender is not offering the borrower any alternative repayment arrangement, they must give the reasons why in writing. The lender must also inform the borrower that a copy of the most recent Standard Financial Statement (SFS) is available on request, and provide the borrower with details, in writing of:

- other options available
- borrowers right to make an appeal to the lender's internal Appeals Board
- the website of the Insolvency Service of Ireland

The same information must be given to the borrower if he/she does not accept the alternative repayment arrangement offered to by the lender.

If a borrower is not happy with the way that their lender is dealing with them or if they think they are not complying with the CCMA, the borrower can make a complaint to their lender.

Borrowers can also make an appeal to the lender's Appeals Board if they are not happy with the alternative repayment arrangement offered or if they believe they have been wrongly classified as not co-operating.

Ultimately, if the borrower is not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal/complaint made to the lender they can refer the matter to the Financial Services Ombudsman (FSO). Further information on how to make a complaint to the FSO is available at www.financialombudsman.ie.

In addition, the Government has also provided an enhanced range of information and guidance services for mortgage holders including a dedicated information website www.keeping-ourhome.ie, a mortgage arrears information and advice helpline (phone number: 0761 07 4050), and a dedicated "one to one" independent financial advice service from accountants for a borrower who has been provided a long term mortgage restructure offer by their lender.

Credit Unions

50. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Finance the negotiations that are taking place in relation to the Newbridge Credit Union premises; the person who has ownership of the credit union premises; if he will give an undertaking that nothing further will be done with the premises, without the expressed consent of the majority of those persons who funded the construction and development of the building; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53496/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): All assets and liabilities, excluding the premises, of Newbridge Credit Union Ltd were transferred to permanent tsb on 10 November 2013, under the Central Bank and Credit Institutions (Resolution) Act 2011. I agreed to the Governor's request for a financial incentive of up to €53.9m to be paid from the Credit Institutions Resolution Fund to support the transfer. Under section 46(6) of the Act, the amount of any

financial incentive provided is a debt due and owing to the Central Bank for the account of the Resolution Fund by the transferor, in this case Newbridge Credit Union Ltd.

I have been informed by the Central Bank that it will be applying to the High Court for the appointment of a liquidator to Newbridge Credit Union Ltd shortly. I would expect that the freehold title of the premises, which is currently owned by Newbridge Credit Union Ltd will be sold by the liquidator to a third party as part of the liquidation process.

The sale proceeds generated (net of expenses) in due course will be paid by Newbridge Credit Union Ltd to the Resolution Fund in accordance with Section 46(6) of the Central Bank and Credit Institutions (Resolution) Act 2011.

Tax Code

51. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the correct level of PAYE-PRSI-tax and other deductions applicable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53542/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a Tax Credit Certificate incorporating amended tax credits and USC details issued to the person and the person's employer on 27 November 2013. Based on details currently available the correct tax credits have been granted and on this basis the correct PAYE, PRSI and USC should be deducted by the person's employer. If the person concerned believes that additional tax credits are due, he should contact Kildare Revenue District.

Tax Code

52. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Finance the correct income tax payable-credits-deductions in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53543/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have written to the person concerned on 11 July 2013 and on 16 October 2013, for the relevant details so that the correct tax credits could be assigned to the person concerned. A further request for this information issued on 10 December. While awaiting a reply the single persons tax credit and PAYE tax credit have been allotted to the person concerned. These credits have been reduced by taxable income received from Department of Social Protection. The relevant Tax Credit Certificate issued on 16 October 2013.

State Savings Schemes

53. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance the background regarding the lowering of interest rates by the National Treasury Management Agency for An Post savings products; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53607/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): State Savings is the brand name used by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) to describe the State's personal savings products issued by the Minister for Finance acting through the NTMA. An Post is the NTMA's selling agent for these investments. All State Savings money is part of the sovereign debt of Ireland which is managed by the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA).

The NTMA keeps the suite of State Savings products and the interest rates paid on them under constant review. These new interest rates announced by the NTMA on 8 December 2013 reflect the reductions in interest rates in the savings market and in sovereign bond yields generally.

The newly announced reduction in interest rates should also be of benefit to Exchequer finances through lowering the cost of servicing the National Debt. The Government's objective is to raise money to fund the Exchequer at the lowest cost to the taxpayer while remaining competitive in the prevailing market conditions.

The interest rates on State Savings products take account of the greater flexibility and certainty of return which these products offer, especially in the case of encashment before the normal maturity date as compared to, for example, Government Bonds. The State Savings rates also reflect the fact that these products are largely exempt from DIRT.

Irish savers continue to be very supportive of the Government in its task of borrowing money to fund the Exchequer and the State Savings products remain an important source of this funding. In 2012, individuals provided the Government with net funding through the range of State Savings products of over €2 billion and between January 2013 and end-November 2013 the net funds received from State Savings products was €1.7 billion.

Residential Property Market

54. Deputy Terence Flanagan asked the Minister for Finance the measures in place to prevent investors from creating a new bubble in the residential property market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53612/13]

55. Deputy Terence Flanagan asked the Minister for Finance the direction he has given to the banks to stop them encouraging investors to buy residential property; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53613/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 54 and 55 together.

Poor regulatory oversight of the activities of the banking sector has been identified as a key contributing factor to the difficulties faced by the country in the last number of years including the necessity for the external assistance programme which will conclude shortly.

The Deputy has identified specific concerns in relation to the potential for renewed activity by investors, facilitated by the banking sector in the residential property market. However, as Minister for Finance, I do not set commercial policy for individual banks, nor does the Central Bank. In a supervisory capacity, the Central Bank oversees and reviews bank practices and regulatory adherence.

The Deputy will be aware that this Government has undertaken a number of significant reforms in order to strengthen the regulatory framework for the financial services sector and to respond to shortcomings identified during the financial crisis.

The Central Bank (Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2013 was passed this year which enhances the Central Bank's regulatory powers, drawing on the lessons of the recent past. It strengthens the ability of the Central Bank to impose and supervise compliance with regulatory requirements and to undertake timely prudential interventions. The Act also provides the Central Bank with greater access to information and analysis and underpins the credible enforce-

ment of Irish financial services legislation in line with international best practice.

This Government has also implemented a series of measures which reflect the important role that the banking sector has to play in supplying credit and in doing so to support economic growth in the economy. As shareholders in the main banks, the Government's objective is to ensure that they are managed commercially so as to create and protect value for the taxpayer but also to ensure that they supply the credit lines necessary to sustain and grow the economy.

I am satisfied that the Central Bank is monitoring lending decisions of the banks. Among the applicants for mortgage credit, I understand that investors, who are already active and welcome in the market, do not necessarily compete for the same property types as borrowers of residential mortgages. As I have said recently, in the context of rising rents particularly in urban areas, new mortgage products targeted at the buy to let sector may assist in stabilising the situation and alleviating problems in the rental market. Many of the generous tax incentives that promoted activity in this area contributing to the previous difficulties are no longer available. It should also be noted that some of the investors are coming to the market as cash buyers and credit from the financial institutions is not an issue for these parties.

The Deputy can be assured that this is an area which the Department and the Central Bank will continue to monitor closely.

Bank Debt Restructuring

56. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his plans to get a deal on bank debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53615/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Government has worked hard to reduce the burden of the banking-related debt. In February 2013 the arrangements that replaced the promissory note resulted in significant benefits to the State including spreading the cost of the Promissory Notes from a weighted average life of c.7-8 years to c.34-35 years at a lower funding cost for the State, resulting in significant annual interest savings.

The State has now recouped a net positive cash return of circa €1.1 billion from its overall investment and support to Bank of Ireland. Therefore there is no question of the State seeking to recoup the monies invested in that institution via retrospective recapitalisation or other means.

AIB is forecasting that it will deliver a profit in 2014 which would likely increase investor interest in the bank.

As the Deputy is aware, on 20 June 2013 the Eurogroup of Euro-area Finance Ministers agreed to consider retrospective recapitalisation of banks on a case-by-case basis once the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) direct recapitalisation instrument enters into force. This also provides a potential mechanism for Ireland to recoup some of the funds it placed in the banks following the onset of the banking crisis. I do not want to tie the future of the banks or the banking system solely to the ESM as the outcome in relation to Bank of Ireland has demonstrated that further more attractive options may become available to the State. However, it is important that the option of access to the ESM is in place.

Pension Provisions

57. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Ques-

tion No. 37 of 4 December 2013, if he will confirm that, as a result of changes to be made arising from the Finance (No.2) Bill, high-earning public sector employees with defined benefit pension entitlements will now be treated more favourably for SFT tax purposes than their private sector counterparts who choose to commute part of their pension for a lump sum. [53621/13]

58. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance further to Parliamentary Question No. 37 of 4 December 2013, if he will confirm that two high earning workers approaching retirement with identical benefits at retirement but where one is a high earning public sector worker and one is a high earning private sector worker (details supplied) will be treated very differently for tax purposes as a result of changes being introduced by him in the recent Finance Bill; if the Attorney General's office was made aware of this specific discriminatory effect of the Bill before the Bill was passed by that office; and if not the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53622/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 57 and 58 together.

As Questions 57 and 58 both relate to the changes to the Standard Fund Threshold (SFT) regime introduced in Finance (No.2) Bill 2013, I propose to reply to them together.

At the outset, I want to reject the suggestion in these questions that changes being made in the Finance Bill will favour, and indeed are designed to favour, higher earning public sector employees in defined benefit pension schemes as compared to equivalent higher earning private sector employees in similar schemes. This is not the case.

As indicated in my response to Parliamentary Question No. 37 of 4 December 2013, it had come to the attention of the Revenue Commissioners that pension advisors and administrators had been interpreting the current SFT provisions in a manner that allowed the capital value of defined benefit pension arrangements with discretionary lump sum commutation rights to be calculated incorrectly at the point of retirement and not in accordance with the intention of the legislation. In light of that, one of the amendments to the SFT regime made in the Finance Bill is solely for the purposes of putting beyond doubt how the capital value of pension rights under such arrangements is to be determined.

This issue has to be looked at within the broad framework of the SFT regime as a whole. In that regard, the approach to calculating the capital value of defined benefit pension rights is best understood in the context of the Personal Fund Threshold (PFT) concept. The PFT concept allows individuals with pension rights valued in excess of the new lower SFT limit of €2m on 1 January 2014 to protect or "grandfather" those rights against any risk of chargeable excess tax when the pension is eventually drawn down.

The method of calculation of the PFT requires the capital value of defined benefit pension rights, where there is a discretionary lump sum commutation option (as in most private sector schemes), to be based on the annual amount of pension which the scheme would pay on 1 January 2014 (calculated in accordance with the requirements of the legislation) and before any commutation. This works to the advantage of the individual concerned as it maximises the amount of pension rights that are protected.

This is best illustrated by way of a simple example. Say on 1 January 2014 a private sector defined benefit scheme, with optional commutation rights, would pay a gross pension before commutation of €110,000 per annum. The capital value of those pension rights for PFT purposes is then €2.2m (i.e. €110k x 20). However, if the capital value of the rights were required to be calculated on the assumption that, on 1 January 2014, the individual fully exercised his rights to commute the pension up to the maximum allowable lump sum (using the same com-

mutation factor of 9:1 as used in the example in the details supplied) the capital value for PFT purposes would then be €1.898m (i.e. a pension of €82,500 x 20 + a lump sum of €248,000). So the individual would not qualify for a PFT in the first place and the capital value limit of his or her pension rights at the point of retirement would then be the SFT limit of €2m.

Having calculated the PFT on the basis of the gross annual pension payable, it would be inconsistent, and would undermine the whole purpose of the SFT regime, to then afford the same individual the capacity to minimise the capital value of those rights at the point of retirement by permitting the calculation to be based on the capital value of the post-commutation pension added to the cash value of the lump sum. This inconsistency, if left unaddressed, would become even more pronounced now that the SFT regime is moving from a fixed conversion factor of 20:1 to a range of age-related factors which range as high as 37:1 where retirement takes place at age 50. Conceivably, €1 of pension accrued before 1 January 2014 which should have a capital value of €20 for chargeable excess purposes would be valued at just €9, based on a 9:1 conversion factor, and equally €1 of pension accrued after 1 January 2014 which should have a capital value of €37 for chargeable excess purposes, would also be valued at just €9 based on the same conversion factor.

The fact is that the SFT regime includes different methods of calculating both a PFT and the corresponding capital value of pension rights at the point of retirement for different types of pension arrangements and different types of pension benefits. But it equally seeks to ensure that it compares like with like and that similar pension arrangements with similar pension benefits are valued in a consistent manner. To repeat what I stated in my answer to the earlier Parliamentary Question, the same approach to the calculation of the capital value of defined benefit pension entitlements with optional commutation rights at the point of retirement applies whether or not an individual has a PFT, as it would be incongruous and indeed would give rise to more concrete claims of discrimination and special treatment, if the method of calculation for schemes of a similar kind was to vary depending on whether an individual had a PFT or not.

As regards, the particular hypothetical example which the Deputy included in the details supplied with Parliamentary Question No. 58, I would make the following observations. Firstly, the question itself implies that the scenario outlined in the example will arise as soon as the revised SFT regime comes into play from 1 January, but it is clear from the example that this cannot be the situation. The example is predicated on an age-related factor of 30 (applicable at age 60) applying to the whole of the annual pension benefits accrued at the point of retirement. By implication, this means that the individuals concerned would commence accruing benefits under their respective public and private sector schemes after 1 January 2014, as any rights accrued up to that date are automatically “grandfathered” using a factor of 20.

The example implies that a highly paid individual in the private sector who is a member of a defined benefit pension arrangement with optional lump sum commutation rights and, presumably, with knowledge of the SFT regime and how it could affect him or her would, nonetheless, continue to accrue pension benefits over their career in the fashion implied, regardless, and take no remedial action. Clearly this would not happen. Any individual in this situation would act rationally and stop accruing pension benefits and negotiate alternative immediate taxable compensation with their employer instead.

All the indications are that the pension funds of highly paid private sector individuals are being actively managed in this way with a view to avoiding a chargeable excess and the penal tax charges that go with it. This, of course, is how the SFT regime is intended to operate so as to restrict the capacity of higher earners to fund or accrue large pensions through tax-subsidised sources. By imposing penal tax charges on the value of retirement benefits above set limits when they are drawn down, it discourages the building up of large pension funds in the first

place. Unlike highly paid private sector individuals who have the capacity to act to manage their pension funds with a view to avoiding a chargeable excess, the position for equivalent highly paid public servants is that the penal tax charge cannot be prevented as they have no means of ceasing to accrue benefits under their schemes in order to prevent a breach of the SFT or PFT, as appropriate.

Mortgage Schemes

59. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the latest developments of multiple domestic Irish Banks restarting buy to let mortgage lending including a new non-banking firm (details supplied) entering the market; if he is monitoring the extent to which these mortgages are being loaned geographically in Ireland and that there is no disproportionate concentration of lending into the rising Dublin housing market; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53623/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy may be aware, there are signs of rising demand for rental properties through increased rents, in some urban centres. Increased lending in the buy to let sector where the business case is evident can address a particular problem and help stabilise rents.

The Central Bank, as part of its regulatory function will have a key role in monitoring the activities and attendant risks in this area.

Mortgage Schemes

60. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if he is concerned about the decision of a company (details supplied) to renege on its original plan to offer up to €300 million in new Irish mortgages; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53624/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): In the first instance, as the Deputy can appreciate, in relation to the company referred to and indeed any company considering entering or expanding in the Irish market, this represents a commercial decision for the company involved.

Mortgage lending decisions must be undertaken on a sustainable and prudential basis by financial institutions and conform fully to the regulatory requirements, both in relation to the financial institution itself, and also with regard to the safeguarding of the borrower's interests. The Central Bank has advised me that it does not comment on commercial decisions or set commercial policy of individual firms. In a supervisory capacity, the Central Bank oversees and reviews bank practices and regulatory adherence.

Government policy is to promote competition in the banking area as this provides choice and options to the consumer and businesses.

Mortgage Debt

61. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance if any assessment has been undertaken on the total outstanding mortgage debt secured on residences here that was sought by creditors in ongoing proceedings before the Courts in advance of the enactment of the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Bill 2013; the total outstanding mortgage debt secured on residences that was sought by creditors in proceedings before the courts since the enactment of the Land and Conveyancing Law Bill 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53625/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): The Land and Conveyancing Law Re-

form Bill was enacted in July 2013. In its quarterly mortgage arrears and repossession statistics, the Central Bank publishes data on, inter alia, the initiation of legal proceedings to enforce the debt/security on a primary dwelling mortgage by mortgage lenders regulated by the Central Bank. In the year to end June 2013, this data indicates that legal proceedings were issued in respect of 525 mortgage accounts, and in the quarter ending September 2013 such proceedings were issued in a further 1,830 cases. The Central Bank has informed me that information on the level of debt associated with these particular cases is not available.

It should be noted that this data refers only to legal proceedings initiated by lenders. However, I have indicated previously, that the issuance of legal letters by banks cannot in itself be considered to be a sustainable solution under the MART process for a person in mortgage difficulty. Effective engagement between borrower and lender or the utilisation of the new insolvency frameworks may eventually lead to a solution other than repossession even after a case has commenced in the legal system.

Banking Sector Issues

62. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if Bank of Ireland has commissioned a third party organisation to conduct a customer satisfaction survey of the bank's customers who are experiencing difficulties with their mortgage; if the bank has the authority from customers to pass on their confidential details to a third party in this manner; if he will specify the purpose of the survey; if any data protection issues arise; his views on whether he believes it is appropriate for those in mortgage arrears to have their information passed on by the bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53635/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As specified in the relationship framework agreement between my Department and Bank of Ireland, it is the Board of the Bank who make decisions regarding day to day operational issues of the Bank.

I must re-iterate that the Bank's policy in relation to operations is a matter for the management and board of the institution. I have no role in the day-to-day commercial and operational decisions of the bank, which include this matter. These decisions are taken by the board and management of the institution.

Notwithstanding the fact that the State is a minority shareholder in the institution, I must ensure that the bank is run on a commercial, cost effective and independent basis to ensure the value of the bank as an asset to the State, as per the Memorandum on Economic and Financial Policies agreed with the EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF.

The Bank has kindly supplied the following response to the Deputy's question:-

"Bank of Ireland conducts on-going customer research to increase our understanding of customer needs and to gain feedback on the products and services we provide. All such research is carried out in compliance with all relevant codes and standards. The output of all research is confidential to the BOI group and is used continuously by the bank to improve our customer's experiences and the services that we offer."

Banking Sector Investigations

63. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance in respect of each of the banks in which the State holds shares, if the banks have conducted any internal investigation into their lending practices prior to the economic crash in 2008, including for example, instances where money was advanced to customers prior to loan documentation being signed,

loan documentation being inadequate and remaining unsigned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53636/13]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan): As the Deputy will be aware since 2008 the banks in question have been subject to the 2011 PCAR and the recently completed Balance Sheet Assessment. Both of these exercises were conducted by the CBI and outside consultants and included a data integrity verification analysis that would have looked at the quality of the loan file data and documentation including security. Separately the banks are also subject to periodic file reviews by the Central Bank of Ireland and by their auditors as part of the statutory audit process.

It should also be noted that details in relation to the banks' Risk Management Frameworks and governance are outlined in their respective Annual Financial Reports. The banks are required to review their lending policies and practices on an on-going basis and have made material changes to them since 2008. This includes a comprehensive and coherent suite of frameworks, policies, procedures and standards covering business and financial planning, corporate governance and risk management. The banks have a Group Risk Appetite Statement and a suite of Credit Policies which are reviewed annually and are subject to robust governance.

Finally I would point out that as part of the EU restructuring plan process, all three banks had to submit an analysis of what led to each bank's difficulties in recent years, together with an explanation of what has been done to rectify these errors so as to ensure that they do not recur again in the future.

Apprenticeship Programmes

64. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if she will consider introducing a scheme to support businesses in providing internships or apprenticeships specifically to early school leavers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53632/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon): My Department provides education and training programmes directed at unemployed young early school leavers aged 15-21 through Youthreach and Community Training Centre Programmes. They offer participants the opportunity to identify and pursue viable options within adult life and provide them with opportunities for personal and social development education and training while pursuing nationally accredited qualifications. Participation can last between one and two years.

Apprenticeship is open to participants aged 16 and over with a Junior Certificate. The State funds the provision of the off-the-job phases of apprenticeship and pays training allowances to apprentices during those phases. My Department is currently in the process of carrying out a comprehensive review of the Apprenticeship System. An independent Apprenticeship Review Group was established earlier this year and it is expected that the Review Group will produce recommendations to my Department by the end of the year.

School Enrolments

65. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has considered the introduction of PPS numbers on enrolment forms for schools as part of his new reforms in the area of admissions so as to assist in managing supply and demand and in order to minimise the practice of place-blocking where parents place their children on multiple school enrolment lists. [53401/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that I have recently published a draft General Scheme for an Education (Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 as well as draft regulations for discussion ahead of enacting legislation. The aim of these proposals is to ensure that the way schools decide on applications for enrolment is structured, fair and transparent. I have referred the draft General Scheme and draft regulations to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection, to allow a full public discussion of the proposed legislative framework, including inputs from parents and the education partners.

I hope the Committee will give this early consideration so that we can proceed to the next stage of legislation as soon as possible.

Summer Works Scheme Applications

66. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide clarification in respect of an application for funding by a school (details supplied) in County Limerick under the summer works scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53402/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): An application to provide outside shelters on the grounds of the school to which the Deputy refers is eligible for funding under the Summer Works Scheme (category 10 - external environment).

Commensurate with the level of funding available for the Scheme, applications are assessed on a top down basis in accordance with the prioritisation criteria outlined in the Circular accompanying the Scheme.

The closing date for receipt of applications under the Summer Works Scheme 2014 was 10th December 2013.

Book Rental Scheme

67. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the book loan scheme that he recently announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53449/13]

68. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if schools who have previously been operating a book loan scheme will be eligible for financial support under the book loan scheme he recently announced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53450/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 and 68 together.

The Deputy will be aware from Budget 2014 that additional funding has been provided which will involve an investment of €15m to support the establishment of book rental schemes in primary schools that do not currently operate them. The Department will provide €5m in seed capital per annum over a three year period to such schools. I want to achieve a position where every primary schools has a book rental schemes in operation in the 2014/2015 school year.

The Department will be contacting primary schools that do not currently operate a book rental scheme early in the New Year to advise them of the application process. To qualify for seed capital funding, schools will have to undertake to establish a book rental scheme from September 2014 and in return the Department will commit to the provision of such funding in 2014, 2015 and 2016. This scheme will be confined to primary schools that do not currently operate

such a scheme. To extend it to all schools would mean that the funding available to each school would be diluted to such an extent as to have little impact. I wholeheartedly commend schools that have established book rental schemes to date. However, I regret that they will not be eligible to apply for funding under this scheme. I can confirm to the Deputy that the Department will continue to provide a book grant to all primary schools. This grant, which provided €7m to primary schools in 2013, can be utilised for the purposes of updating or expanding a school's book rental scheme.

Student Grant Scheme Eligibility

69. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grants that are available for students attending colleges of further education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53462/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The main financial support available to students attending further education is my Department's Student Grant Scheme. Under the student grant scheme, eligible candidates may receive funding provided they are attending an approved course at an approved institution and meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those which relate to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means.

The BTEA is a second chance education opportunities scheme designed to enable participation in second and third level education by allowing eligible people on certain social welfare payments to continue to receive a payment while pursuing an approved full-time education course that leads to a higher qualification than that already held.

Eligibility for the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) and associated payments is determined and administered by the Department of Social Protection.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) provides funding to both further and higher education institutions for the provision of services and supports for full-time students with disabilities. The Fund aims to ensure that students can participate fully in their academic programmes and are not disadvantaged by reason of a disability.

A claim under the Fund is made on behalf of an eligible student by their college following an assessment of need. Applications cannot be made directly to the Fund by students. Colleges are also responsible for the management of the funding approved for eligible students.

The Fund for Students with Disabilities is managed by the HEA on behalf of my Department.

School Closures

70. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools that have closed in County Donegal as a result of the revised schedule; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53488/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The staffing schedule is the mechanism used for allocating mainstream teaching posts to all schools. It operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location. It currently operates on the basis of a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 28 pupils with lower thresholds for DEIS Band 1 schools. As part of the Budget 2012 decisions, there is a phased increase in the number of pupils required to gain and retain a classroom teaching post in small primary schools with four teachers or less. The first phase of the budget measure took effect from September 2012. The final phase of the budget measure takes effect from Septem-

ber 2014.

An appeals process is available to small schools which have had their staff number reduced as a result of the budget measure. A school with four classroom teachers or less which is losing a teacher or failed to gain an additional teacher as a result of the Budget 2012 measure can submit an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board. Details on the appeals process are published annually as part of the Staffing Schedule for allocating teaching posts to schools. The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

There have been no school closures in Co. Donegal as a result of the implementation of the Budget 2012 decision.

Book Rental Scheme

71. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the terms of the proposed book rental scheme; if he will give consideration to the concerns of a school which has already taken the initiative in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53494/13]

76. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the book rental grant scheme. [53619/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): I propose to take Questions Nos. 71 and 76 together.

The Deputies will be aware from Budget 2014 that additional funding has been provided which will involve an investment of €15m to support the establishment of book rental schemes in primary schools that do not currently operate them. The Department will provide €5m in seed capital per annum over a three year period to such schools. I want to achieve a position where every primary schools has a book rental schemes in operation in the 2014/2015 school year. The Department will be contacting primary schools that do not currently operate a book rental scheme early in the New Year to advise them of the application process. To qualify for seed capital funding, schools will have to undertake to establish a book rental scheme from September 2014 and in return the Department will commit to the provision of such funding in 2014, 2015 and 2016. This scheme will be confined to primary schools that do not currently operate such a scheme. To extend it to all schools would mean that the funding available to each school would be diluted to such an extent as to have little impact. I wholeheartedly commend schools that have established book rental schemes to date. However, I regret that they will not be eligible to apply for funding under this scheme. I can confirm to the Deputies that the Department will continue to provide a book grant to all primary schools. This grant, which provided €7m to primary schools in 2013, can be utilised for the purposes of updating or expanding a school's book rental scheme.

School Placement

72. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will indicate, notwithstanding his previous replies to related questions, the extent to which it has been brought to his attention that a number of children who may have been expelled from their second level schools or who may not be able to obtain a place in such schools convenient to their residential location may find themselves unable to complete their second level education, notwithstanding the efforts of the National Educational Welfare Board, thereby depriving them of ever having an opportunity to complete their second level education; the number of such cases now emerging; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53541/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Deputy will be aware that the selection and enrollment of pupils is the responsibility of the individual school.

My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can between them cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area.

It is my firm view that all schools should be inclusive. In that regard, The Deputy will also be aware that I have recently published a draft General Scheme for an Education(Admission to Schools) Bill, 2013 as well as draft regulations for discussion ahead of enacting legislation. The aim of these proposals is to ensure that the way schools decide on applications is structured, fair and transparent. I have referred the draft General Scheme and draft regulations to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Social Protection, to allow a full public discussion of the proposed legislative framework, including inputs from parents and education partners.

I hope the Committee will give this early consideration so that we can proceed to the next stage of legislation as soon as possible.

The other issues raised by the Deputy are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Teachers' Remuneration

73. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of entitlement which becomes available to a permanent teacher who has worked through sick leave; if the limit of 365 days of paid sick leave in any four-year period still applies or has been reduced; if he will provide full details of the entitlement to continuing salary during the sick leave period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53591/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The terms of the sick leave scheme for Registered Teachers in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools is set out by my Department in circular letter 0060/2010. This circular were agreed under the auspices of the Teachers' Conciliation Council, a body established in accordance with the terms of the Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme for Teachers. The Council is composed of representatives of the teacher representative bodies, school management, the Department of Education and Skills and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, chaired by an official of the Labour Relations Commission. In accordance with this circular a teacher who is absent from duty because of personal illness may retain eligibility for incremental salary in respect of a maximum of 365 days of absence in any period of four consecutive years of teaching service.

Early Child Care Education Issues

74. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if pupils attending a pre-school ASDI class for three to five year olds should be added on to the register in primary schools; if pupils attending pre-school ASD classes are to be included in the NEWB returns; and his plans to issue a circular regarding pre-school ASD classes clarifying such matters and also including length of day. [53603/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Early Intervention Classes for Autism are established in primary schools by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE). The classes are part of the schools and pupils enrolled in these classes are included on the school roll.

My Department's policy is to facilitate the enrolment of pupils with autism in Early Intervention classes in primary schools from the age of three years. While I do not propose to issue a circular prescribing the length of the school day for children under the age of 4 years, schools are expected to comply with rules already in place which provide for the length of the school day for infant classes in primary schools.

I wish to advise the Deputy that NEWB returns are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Fee Paying Schools

75. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a breakdown of taxpayer funding paid to fee paying schools over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53606/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of gross salary paid to teachers, Special Needs Assistants and Clerical Officers in fee paying schools is set out in the attached table. The information in respect of capital expenditure is being assimilated and will be forwarded to the Deputy.

ALL FEE PAYING SCHOOLS GROSS SALARY COSTS 2008 - 2009 SCHOOL YEAR

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60030V | Blackrock College | Blackrock | Co Dublin | 3,899,336.00 | 45,401.92 | 25,536.75 |
| 60040B | Willow Park School | Rock Road | Blackrock | 723,964.00 | - | 25,536.75 |
| 60090Q | Rathdown School | Glenageary | Co Dublin | 1,327,810.00 | - | - |
| 60100Q | Castleknock College | Castleknock | Dublin 15 | 2,333,168.00 | - | 81,705.43 |
| 60120W | Mount Sackville Secondary School | Chapelizod | Dublin 20 | 2,291,927.00 | - | 95,047.97 |
| 60130C | Loreto Abbey Secondary School | Dalkey | Co Dublin | 2,607,773.00 | - | - |
| 60140F | Mount Anville Secondary School | Mount Anville Rd | Dublin 14 | 2,358,225.00 | - | - |
| 60160L | Notre Dame Secondary School | Upper Churchtown Road | Dublin 14 | 760,635.00 | - | - |
| 60180R | Christian Brothers College | Monkstown Park | Dun Laoghaire | 2,302,291.00 | - | 47,741.51 |
| 60240J | Loreto College Foxrock | Foxrock | Dublin 18 | 2,343,564.00 | 34,566.14 | 25,468.49 |
| 60250M | Holy Child Secondary School | Military Road | Killiney | 1,156,980.00 | - | - |
| 60260P | St Joseph Of Cluny | Bellevue Park | Ballinacree Rd | 1,472,599.00 | - | 59,053.15 |
| 60272W | The Kings Hospital | Palmerstown | Dublin 20 | 2,858,723.00 | 43,956.75 | 22,987.33 |
| 60320H | St Columba's College | Whitechurch | Dublin 16 | 1,195,302.00 | - | 26,447.26 |
| 60321J | Rockbrook Park School | Edmondstown Road | Rathfarnham | 657,076.00 | - | - |
| 60340N | Loreto High School | Beaufort | Grange Rd | 2,395,414.00 | - | 57,087.95 |
| 60381E | Sutton Park School | St Fintans Road | Sutton | 1,601,205.00 | - | - |
| 60520P | Belvedere College S.J | 6 Great Denmark Street | Dublin 1 | 4,123,102.00 | 45,401.92 | 42,278.38 |
| 60530S | Gonzaga College | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 2,373,391.00 | - | - |
| 60540V | Catholic University School | 89 Lower Leeson Street | Dublin 2 | 1,739,724.00 | - | - |
| 60560E | St Marys College | Rathmines | Dublin 6 | 1,638,512.00 | - | 17,245.71 |
| 60561G | St Michaels College | Ailesbury Road | Dublin 4 | 2,653,530.00 | - | 25,468.49 |
| 60570H | Terenure College | Templeogue Road | Terenure | 2,992,277.00 | - | - |
| 60590N | St Conleths College | 28 Clyde Road | Ballsbridge | 1,121,895.00 | - | - |
| 60630W | St Killians Deutsche School | Roebuck Road Clonskeagh | Dublin 14 | 1,537,526.00 | - | - |
| 60640C | Sandford Park School Ltd | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 1,311,865.00 | - | 25,468.49 |
| 60650F | St Andrews College | Boosterstown Ave | Blackrock | 4,006,962.00 | - | 106,836.50 |
| 60660I | St Patricks Cathedral G.S | St Patricks Close | Dublin 8 | 920,764.00 | - | - |
| 60670L | The High School | Zion Road | Rathgar | 2,818,268.00 | - | 80,890.51 |
| 60820E | Loreto College | 53 St Stephens Green | Dublin 2 | 2,103,139.00 | - | - |
| 60892G | The Teresian School | 12 Stillorgan Road | Donnybrook | 683,280.00 | - | - |
| 60910F | Alexandra College | Milltown | Dublin 6 | 2,273,379.00 | 39,422.27 | - |
| 60930L | Rosemont School | Temple Road | Blackrock | 322,616.00 | - | - |
| 61010U | Wesley College | Ballinteer | Dublin 16 | 3,548,802.00 | - | 110,899.47 |
| 61020A | Stratford College | 1 Zion Road Rathgar | Dublin 6 | 936,527.00 | - | 27,749.82 |

Questions - Written Answers

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 61080S | Royal School Cavan | College Street | Cavan | 1,273,783.00 | - | 82,096.90 |
| 61570M | Kilkenny College | Castlecomer Road | Kilkenny | 3,442,492.00 | 45,401.92 | 27,737.18 |
| 61680T | Newbridge College | Newbridge | Co. Kildare | 3,030,499.00 | - | 60,420.67 |
| 61720F | Clongowes Wood College | Naas | Co Kildare | 1,672,862.00 | - | - |
| 61811I | St Gerard's School | Thornhill Road | Bray | 1,646,852.00 | - | - |
| 62060R | Bandon Grammar School | Bandon | Co Cork | 2,223,688.00 | - | 33,345.08 |
| 62370J | Midleton College | Midleton | Co Cork | 1,549,229.00 | - | - |
| 62520C | Christian Brothers College | Sidney Hill | Wellington Road | 3,378,493.00 | - | 6,306.41 |
| 62570R | Presentation Brothers College | The Mardyke | Cork | 2,756,210.00 | - | - |
| 62690E | Scoil Mhuire | 2 Sidney Place | Wellington Road | 1,422,421.00 | - | - |
| 63300Q | Wilson's Hospital School | Multyfarnham | Co Westmeath | 2,055,875.00 | - | - |
| 63870L | Drogheda Grammar School | Mornington Rd | Drogheda | 1,655,205.00 | - | 50,932.20 |
| 63920A | Dundalk Grammar School | Dundalk | Co Louth | 2,571,172.00 | - | 26,325.32 |
| 64150F | Glenstal Abbey School | Murroe | Co Limerick | 867,496.00 | - | - |
| 64310B | Villiers Secondary School | North Circular Road | Limerick | 2,466,319.00 | - | 27,639.84 |
| 64420I | Franciscan College | Gormanstown | Co Meath | 1,790,638.00 | - | - |
| 64830E | Monaghan Collegiate School | Corlatt | Monaghan | 1,033,758.00 | - | 58,859.02 |
| 65010R | Newtown School | Waterford | Co. Waterford | 1,362,064.00 | - | - |
| 65190W | Sligo Grammar School | The Mall | Sligo | 1,972,642.00 | - | 31,828.55 |
| 65410K | Cistercian College | Roscrea | Co. Tipperary | 1,194,069.00 | 39,422.27 | - |
| 68071G | St John Scottus Secondary School | 74/76 Morehampton Road Donnybrook | Dublin 4 | 780,201.00 | - | - |
| | | | Total | 109,537,519.00 | 293,573.19 | 1,308,941.13 |

ALL FEE PAYING SCHOOLS GROSS SALARY COSTS 2009 - 2010 SCHOOL YEAR

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60030V | Blackrock College | Blackrock | Co Dublin | 3,725,286.00 | 43,507.19 | 25,720.51 |
| 60040B | Willow Park School | Rock Road | Blackrock | 658,837.00 | - | - |
| 60090Q | Rathdown School | Glenageary | Co Dublin | 1,673,077.00 | - | 28,346.74 |
| 60100Q | Castleknock College | Castleknock | Dublin 15 | 2,167,839.00 | - | 100,283.08 |
| 60120W | Mount Sackville Secondary School | Chapelizod | Dublin 20 | 2,122,472.00 | - | 114,672.93 |
| 60130C | Loreto Abbey Secondary School | Dalkey | Co Dublin | 2,209,201.00 | - | - |
| 60140F | Mount Anville Secondary School | Mount Anville Rd | Dublin 14 | 2,417,591.00 | - | 34,590.54 |
| 60160L | Notre Dame Secondary School | Upper Churchtown Road | Dublin 14 | 1,092,559.00 | - | 24,349.16 |
| 60180R | Christian Brothers College | Monkstown Park | Dun Laoghaire | 2,103,960.00 | - | 44,905.16 |
| 60240J | Loreto College Foxrock | Foxrock | Dublin 18 | 2,271,460.00 | 35,403.22 | 53,559.81 |
| 60250M | Holy Child Secondary School | Military Road | Killiney | 1,072,877.00 | - | - |
| 60260P | St Joseph Of Cluny | Bellevue Park | Ballinacree Rd | 1,609,055.00 | - | 82,643.13 |
| 60272W | The Kings Hospital | Palmerstown | Dublin 20 | 2,707,942.00 | 42,259.09 | 24,484.19 |
| 60320H | St Columba's College | Whitechurch | Dublin 16 | 1,180,725.00 | - | 44,631.64 |
| 60321J | Rockbrook Park School | Edmondstown Road | Rathfarnham | 550,208.00 | - | - |
| 60340N | Loreto High School | Beaufort | Grange Rd | 2,553,628.00 | - | 31,517.52 |
| 60381E | Sutton Park School | St Fintans Road | Sutton | 1,906,316.00 | - | 28,649.01 |
| 60520P | Belvedere College S.J | 6 Great Denmark Street | Dublin 1 | 3,767,182.00 | 43,631.91 | 48,877.08 |
| 60530S | Gonzaga College | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 2,433,989.00 | - | - |

12 December 2013

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60540V | Catholic University School | 89 Lower Leeson Street | Dublin 2 | 1,860,187.00 | - | - |
| 60560E | St Marys College | Rathmines | Dublin 6 | 1,794,786.00 | - | - |
| 60561G | St Michaels College | Ailesbury Road | Dublin 4 | 2,047,334.00 | - | 25,720.51 |
| 60570H | Terenure College | Templeogue Road | Terenure | 3,212,454.00 | - | 23,448.68 |
| 60590N | St Conleths College | 28 Clyde Road | Ballsbridge | 1,065,488.00 | - | - |
| 60630W | St Killians Deutsche School | Roebuck Road Clonskeagh | Dublin 14 | 1,591,628.00 | - | - |
| 60640C | Sandford Park School Ltd | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 1,098,309.00 | - | 25,647.42 |
| 60650F | St Andrews College | Boooterstown Ave | Blackrock | 3,964,820.00 | - | 111,645.73 |
| 60660I | St Patricks Cathedral G.S | St Patricks Close | Dublin 8 | 551,195.00 | - | - |
| 60670L | The High School | Zion Road | Rathgar | 3,010,056.00 | - | 79,065.87 |
| 60820E | Loreto College | 53 St Stephens Green | Dublin 2 | 2,167,643.00 | - | - |
| 60892G | The Teresian School | 12 Stillorgan Road | Donnybrook | 759,349.00 | - | - |
| 60910F | Alexandra College | Milltown | Dublin 6 | 2,251,027.00 | 37,842.40 | 30,028.07 |
| 60930L | Rosemont School | Temple Road | Blackrock | 429,723.00 | - | - |
| 61010U | Wesley College | Ballinteer | Dublin 16 | 3,256,848.00 | - | 111,325.28 |
| 61020A | Stratford College | 1 Zion Road Rathgar | Dublin 6 | 806,677.00 | - | 27,851.87 |
| 61080S | Royal School Cavan | College Street | Cavan | 1,177,581.00 | - | 101,056.05 |
| 61570M | Kilkenny College | Castlecomer Road | Kilkenny | 3,223,984.00 | 43,631.91 | 91,141.08 |
| 61680T | Newbridge College | Newbridge | Co. Kildare | 3,078,601.00 | - | 94,528.79 |
| 61720F | Clongowes Wood College | Naas | Co Kildare | 1,701,254.00 | - | - |
| 61811I | St Gerard's School | Thornhill Road | Bray | 1,597,234.00 | - | - |
| 62060R | Bandon Grammar School | Bandon | Co Cork | 2,563,140.00 | - | 59,893.29 |
| 62370J | Middleton College | Middleton | Co Cork | 1,358,415.00 | - | - |
| 62520C | Christian Brothers College | Sidney Hill | Wellington Road | 3,247,047.00 | - | 7,610.02 |
| 62570R | Presentation Brothers College | The Mardyke | Cork | 2,748,322.00 | - | - |
| 62690E | Scoil Mhuire | 2 Sidney Place | Wellington Road | 1,617,659.00 | - | - |
| 63300Q | Wilson's Hospital School | Multyfarnham | Co Westmeath | 1,754,164.00 | - | - |
| 63870L | Drogheda Grammar School | Mornington Rd | Drogheda | 1,531,236.00 | - | 74,748.28 |
| 63920A | Dundalk Grammar School | Dundalk | Co Louth | 2,551,058.00 | - | - |
| 64150F | Glenstal Abbey School | Murroe | Co Limerick | 746,596.00 | - | 22,907.74 |
| 64310B | Villiers Secondary School | North Circular Road | Limerick | 2,519,792.00 | - | 55,477.46 |
| 64420I | Franciscan College | Gormanstown | Co Meath | 1,790,066.00 | - | - |
| 64830E | Monaghan Collegiate School | Corlatt | Monaghan | 1,292,271.00 | - | 101,491.62 |
| 65010R | Newtown School | Waterford | Co. Waterford | 1,339,441.00 | - | - |
| 65190W | Sligo Grammar School | The Mall | Sligo | 1,803,897.00 | - | 31,801.10 |
| 65410K | Cistercian College | Roscrea | Co. Tipperary | 1,335,054.00 | 37,950.70 | - |
| 68071G | St John Scottus Secondary School | 74/76 Morehampton Road Donneybrook | Dublin 4 | ,766.00 | - | 23,931.09 |
| | | | Total | 107,861,306.00 | 284,226.42 | 1,786,550.45 |

ALL FEE PAYING SCHOOLS GROSS SALARY COSTS 2010 - 2011 SCHOOL YEAR

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60030V | Blackrock College | Blackrock | Co Dublin | 3,642,890.00 | 42,741.14 | 51,503.65 |
| 60040B | Willow Park School | Rock Road | Blackrock | 694,016.00 | - | 25,142.77 |
| 60090Q | Rathdown School | Glenageary | Co Dublin | 1,453,090.00 | - | - |
| 60100Q | Castleknock College | Castleknock | Dublin 15 | 2,001,778.00 | - | 93,767.64 |

Questions - Written Answers

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60120W | Mount Sackville Secondary School | Chapelizod | Dublin 20 | 2,456,494.00 | - | 139,551.48 |
| 60130C | Loreto Abbey Secondary School | Dalkey | Co Dublin | 2,185,046.00 | - | 24,050.31 |
| 60140F | Mount Anville Secondary School | Mount Anville Rd | Dublin 14 | 2,386,526.00 | - | 23,712.38 |
| 60160L | Notre Dame Secondary School | Upper Churchtown Road | Dublin 14 | 1,051,253.00 | - | 23,044.54 |
| 60180R | Christian Brothers College | Monkstown Park | Dun Laoghaire | 2,111,816.00 | - | 75,942.73 |
| 60240J | Loreto College Foxrock | Foxrock | Dublin 18 | 2,197,514.00 | 35,807.26 | 54,870.26 |
| 60250M | Holy Child Secondary School | Military Road | Killiney | 1,400,298.00 | - | - |
| 60260P | St Joseph Of Cluny | Bellevue Park | Ballinclea Rd | 1,353,976.00 | - | 77,921.10 |
| 60272W | The Kings Hospital | Palmerstown | Dublin 20 | 2,839,828.00 | 41,511.21 | 25,143.92 |
| 60320H | St Columba's College | Whitechurch | Dublin 16 | 1,222,868.00 | - | 51,231.59 |
| 60321J | Rockbrook Park School | Edmondstown Road | Rathfarnham | 464,571.00 | - | - |
| 60340N | Loreto High School | Beaufort | Grange Rd | 2,147,262.00 | - | 57,322.45 |
| 60381E | Sutton Park School | St Fintans Road | Sutton | 1,738,233.00 | - | 53,760.35 |
| 60520P | Belvedere College S.J | 6 Great Denmark Street | Dublin 1 | 3,739,093.00 | 42,741.14 | 72,045.48 |
| 60530S | Gonzaga College | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 2,222,214.00 | - | - |
| 60540V | Catholic University School | 89 Lower Leeson Street | Dublin 2 | 1,706,010.00 | - | - |
| 60560E | St Marys College | Rathmines | Dublin 6 | 1,578,355.00 | - | - |
| 60561G | St Michaels College | Ailesbury Road | Dublin 4 | 2,040,260.00 | - | 26,357.90 |
| 60570H | Terenure College | Templeogue Road | Terenure | 2,931,407.00 | - | 48,380.54 |
| 60590N | St Conleths College | 28 Clyde Road | Ballsbridge | 1,064,581.00 | - | - |
| 60630W | St Killians Deutsche School | Roebuck Road Clonskeagh | Dublin 14 | 1,640,787.00 | - | - |
| 60640C | Sandford Park School Ltd | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 1,170,392.00 | - | 26,357.90 |
| 60650F | St Andrews College | Boooterstown Ave | Blackrock | 3,789,612.00 | - | 150,269.52 |
| 60660I | St Patricks Cathedral G.S | St Patricks Close | Dublin 8 | 588,814.00 | - | - |
| 60670L | The High School | Zion Road | Rathgar | 3,170,717.00 | - | 81,136.77 |
| 60820E | Loreto College | 53 St Stephens Green | Dublin 2 | 1,912,625.00 | - | 48,321.08 |
| 60892G | The Teresian School | 12 Stillorgan Road | Donnybrook | 763,132.00 | - | - |
| 60910F | Alexandra College | Milltown | Dublin 6 | 1,893,896.00 | 37,210.16 | 27,732.89 |
| 60930L | Rosemont School | Temple Road | Blackrock | 349,540.00 | - | - |
| 61010U | Wesley College | Ballinteer | Dublin 16 | 3,251,277.00 | - | 113,937.24 |
| 61020A | Stratford College | 1 Zion Road Rathgar | Dublin 6 | 1,010,022.00 | - | 57,048.46 |
| 61080S | Royal School Cavan | College Street | Cavan | 1,033,232.00 | - | 75,747.18 |
| 61570M | Kilkenny College | Castlecomer Road | Kilkenny | 3,104,946.00 | 42,741.14 | 28,509.39 |
| 61680T | Newbridge College | Newbridge | Co. Kildare | 3,286,722.00 | - | 34,464.29 |
| 61720F | Clongowes Wood College | Naas | Co Kildare | 1,747,940.00 | - | - |
| 61811I | St Gerard's School | Thornhill Road | Bray | 1,768,269.00 | - | - |
| 62060R | Bandon Grammar School | Bandon | Co Cork | 2,249,480.00 | - | 120,940.49 |
| 62370J | Midleton College | Midleton | Co Cork | 1,470,038.00 | - | 23,044.54 |
| 62520C | Christian Brothers College | Sidney Hill | Wellington Road | 3,301,735.00 | - | 7,838.85 |
| 62570R | Presentation Brothers College | The Mardyke | Cork | 2,690,131.00 | - | - |
| 62690E | Scoil Mhuire | 2 Sidney Place | Wellington Road | 1,510,900.00 | - | - |
| 63300Q | Wilson's Hospital School | Multyfarnham | Co Westmeath | 1,632,878.00 | - | 20,886.09 |
| 63870L | Drogheda Grammar School | Mornington Rd | Drogheda | 1,490,922.00 | - | 153,654.15 |
| 63920A | Dundalk Grammar School | Dundalk | Co Louth | 2,253,019.00 | - | 28,470.31 |
| 64150F | Glenstal Abbey School | Murroe | Co Limerick | 939,133.00 | - | 17,144.96 |
| 64310B | Villiers Secondary School | North Circular Road | Limerick | 2,249,798.00 | - | 37,908.08 |

12 December 2013

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 64420I | Franciscan College | Gormanstown | Co Meath | 1,796,503.00 | - | - |
| 64830E | Monaghan Collegiate School | Corlatt | Monaghan | 1,172,997.00 | - | 72,887.77 |
| 65010R | Newtown School | Waterford | Co. Waterford | 1,454,801.00 | - | - |
| 65190W | Sligo Grammar School | The Mall | Sligo | 1,945,440.00 | - | 53,813.14 |
| 65410K | Cistercian College | Roscrea | Co. Tipperary | 1,232,375.00 | 37,210.16 | - |
| 68071G | St John Scottus Secondary School | 74/76 Morehampton Road Donnybrook | Dublin 4 | 683,249.00 | - | 26,010.12 |
| | | | Total | 105,184,701.00 | 279,962.21 | 2,129,872.31 |

ALL FEE PAYING SCHOOLS GROSS SALARY COSTS 2011 - 2012 SCHOOL YEAR

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60030V | Blackrock College | Blackrock | Co Dublin | 3,609,626 | 46,028.92 | 55829.410 |
| 60040B | Willow Park School | Rock Road | Blackrock | 719,082 | | 28523.290 |
| 60090Q | Rathdown School | Glenageary | Co Dublin | 1,215,893 | | |
| 60100Q | Castleknock College | Castleknock | Dublin 15 | 2,030,911 | | 90637.40 |
| 60120W | Mount Sackville Secondary School | Chapelizod | Dublin 20 | 2,164,592 | | 82749.640 |
| 60130C | Loreto Abbey Secondary School | Dalkey | Co Dublin | 2,253,333 | | |
| 60140F | Mount Anville Secondary School | Mount Anville Rd | Dublin 14 | 2,185,699 | | 24603.450 |
| 60160L | Notre Dame Secondary School | Upper Churchtown Road | Dublin 14 | 881,003 | | 25147.510 |
| 60180R | Christian Brothers College | Monkstown Park | Dun Laoghaire | 1,875,882 | | 53120.390 |
| 60240J | Loreto College Foxrock | Foxrock | Dublin 18 | 2,316,373 | 38,674.37 | 59244.670 |
| 60250M | Holy Child Secondary School | Military Road | Killiney | 1,160,710 | | |
| 60260P | St Joseph Of Cluny | Bellevue Park | Ballinclea Rd | 1,585,224 | | 85650.950 |
| 60272W | The Kings Hospital | Palmerstown | Dublin 20 | 2,764,880 | 46,028.92 | 70749.220 |
| 60320H | St Columba's College | Whitechurch | Dublin 16 | 1,141,795 | | 157949.790 |
| 60321J | Rockbrook Park School | Edmondstown Road | Rathfarnham | 517,587 | | 30221.840 |
| 60340N | Loreto High School | Beaufort | Grange Rd | 2,270,912 | | 34447.890 |
| 60381E | Sutton Park School | St Fintans Road | Sutton | 1,274,097 | | 25487.650 |
| 60520P | Belvedere College S.J | 6 Great Denmark Street | Dublin 1 | 3,582,705 | 46,028.92 | 75754.530 |
| 60530S | Gonzaga College | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 2,123,784 | | |
| 60540V | Catholic University School | 89 Lower Leeson Street | Dublin 2 | 1,559,083 | | |
| 60560E | St Marys College | Rathmines | Dublin 6 | 1,603,798 | | |
| 60561G | St Michaels College | Ailesbury Road | Dublin 4 | 2,150,542 | | 28526.280 |
| 60570H | Terenure College | Templeogue Road | Terenure | 2,652,641 | | 34121.850 |
| 60590N | St Conleths College | 28 Clyde Road | Ballsbridge | 985,050 | | |
| 60630W | St Killians Deutsche School | Roebuck Road Clonskeagh | Dublin 14 | 1,326,042 | | |
| 60640C | Sandford Park School Ltd | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 984,064 | | 28526.280 |
| 60650F | St Andrews College | Boosterstown Ave | Blackrock | 4,080,264 | | 135833.010 |
| 60660I | St Patricks Cathedral G.S | St Patricks Close | Dublin 8 | 688,574 | | |
| 60670L | The High School | Zion Road | Rathgar | 2,794,519 | | 87647.20 |
| 60820E | Loreto College | 53 St Stephens Green | Dublin 2 | 2,078,547 | | 29647.410 |
| 60892G | The Teresian School | 12 Stillorgan Road | Donnybrook | 793,129 | | |
| 60910F | Alexandra College | Milltown | Dublin 6 | 2,127,316 | 40,072.48 | 31564.590 |
| 60930L | Rosemont School | Temple Road | Blackrock | 357,498 | | |
| 61010U | Wesley College | Ballinteer | Dublin 16 | 3,326,240 | | 122795.080 |
| 61020A | Stratford College | 1 Zion Road Rathgar | Dublin 6 | 817,642 | | 30741.520 |
| 61080S | Royal School Cavan | College Street | Cavan | 1,116,738 | | 115051.430 |
| 61570M | Kilkenny College | Castlecomer Road | Kilkenny | 3,072,585 | 43,563.09 | 35207.990 |

Questions - Written Answers

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 61680T | Newbridge College | Newbridge | Co. Kildare | 3,019,459 | | 67472.20 |
| 61720F | Clongowes Wood College | Naas | Co Kildare | 1,675,236 | | |
| 61811I | St Gerard's School | Thornhill Road | Bray | 1,783,208 | | |
| 62060R | Bandon Grammar School | Bandon | Co Cork | 2,304,577 | | 112519.570 |
| 62370J | Midleton College | Midleton | Co Cork | 1,396,450 | | 25147.510 |
| 62520C | Christian Brothers College | Sidney Hill | Wellington Road | 2,830,443 | | 8267.730 |
| 62570R | Presentation Brothers College | The Mardyke | Cork | 2,501,965 | | |
| 62690E | Scoil Mhuire | 2 Sidney Place | Wellington Road | 1,593,748 | | 11617.370 |
| 63870L | Drogheda Grammar School | Mornington Rd | Drogheda | 1,188,149 | | 76655.560 |
| 63920A | Dundalk Grammar School | Dundalk | Co Louth | 2,138,903 | | 21482.760 |
| 64150F | Glenstal Abbey School | Murroe | Co Limerick | 773,569 | | 92.380 |
| 64310B | Villiers Secondary School | North Circular Road | Limerick | 2,299,758 | | 22932.730 |
| 64420I | Franciscan College | Gormanstown | Co Meath | 1,360,870 | | |
| 64830E | Monaghan Collegiate School | Corlatt | Monaghan | 1,139,692 | | 88159.30 |
| 65010R | Newtown School | Waterford | Co. Waterford | 1,299,574 | | |
| 65190W | Sligo Grammar School | The Mall | Sligo | 1,747,202 | | 81470.950 |
| 65410K | Cistercian College | Roscrea | Co. Tipperary | 968,886 | 40,072.48 | |
| 68071G | St John Scottus Secondary School | 74/76 Morehampton Road Donnybrook | Dublin 4 | 699,878 | | 45409.240 |
| | | | Total | 98,909,927.00 | 300,469.18 | 2,141,007.57 |

ALL FEE PAYING SCHOOLS GROSS SALARY COSTS 2012 - 2013 SCHOOL YEAR

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60030V | Blackrock College | Blackrock | Co Dublin | 3,574,169.48 | | 56,653.46 |
| 60040B | Willow Park School | Rock Road | Blackrock | 723,923.78 | - | 85,557.59 |
| 60090Q | Rathdown School | Glenageary | Co Dublin | 1,250,169.64 | - | 64,948.99 |
| 60100Q | Castleknock College | Castleknock | Dublin 15 | 2,036,988.13 | - | 228,764.94 |
| 60120W | Mount Sackville Secondary School | Chapelizod | Dublin 20 | 2,038,983.40 | - | 115,365.43 |
| 60130C | Loreto Abbey Secondary School | Dalkey | Co Dublin | 2,258,299.33 | - | 130,540.68 |
| 60140F | Mount Anville Secondary School | Mount Anville Rd | Dublin 14 | 2,065,783.08 | - | 46,924.18 |
| 60160L | Notre Dame Secondary School | Upper Churchtown Road | Dublin 14 | 780,649.62 | - | 54,456.10 |
| 60180R | Christian Brothers College | Monkstown Park | Dun Laoghaire | 1,849,371.62 | - | 106,906.62 |
| 60240J | Loreto College Foxrock | Foxrock | Dublin 18 | 2,274,246.84 | 39,116.18 | 61,440.07 |
| 60250M | Holy Child Secondary School | Military Road | Killiney | 1,124,671.18 | - | - |
| 60260P | St Joseph Of Cluny | Bellevue Park | Ballinacree Rd | 1,446,498.60 | - | 88,976.03 |
| 60272W | The Kings Hospital | Palmerstown | Dublin 20 | 2,576,095.07 | 44,385.03 | 117,856.05 |
| 60320H | St Columba's College | Whitechurch | Dublin 16 | 1,127,676.67 | - | 173,014.47 |
| 60321J | Rockbrook Park School | Edmondstown Road | Rathfarnham | 552,371.30 | - | 55,550.66 |
| 60340N | Loreto High School | Beaufort | Grange Rd | 2,127,386.96 | - | 35,934.37 |
| 60381E | Sutton Park School | St Fintans Road | Sutton | 1,239,000.99 | - | 72,718.14 |
| 60520P | Belvedere College S.J | 6 Great Denmark Street | Dublin 1 | 3,490,248.71 | 44,385.03 | 91,829.43 |
| 60530S | Gonzaga College | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 1,961,975.07 | - | - |
| 60540V | Catholic University School | 89 Lower Leeson Street | Dublin 2 | 1,478,285.39 | - | 13,082.52 |
| 60560E | St Marys College | Rathmines | Dublin 6 | 1,563,173.90 | - | - |
| 60561G | St Michaels College | Ailesbury Road | Dublin 4 | 2,077,708.25 | - | 28,828.83 |
| 60570H | Terenure College | Templeogue Road | Terenure | 2,488,796.29 | - | 45,965.30 |
| 60590N | St Conleths College | 28 Clyde Road | Ballsbridge | 985,324.36 | - | - |

| School No. | | | School Address | Total Gross Teachers | Total Gross Clerical Officers | Total Gross SNAs |
|------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 60630W | St Killians Deutsche School | Roebuck Road Clonskeagh | Dublin 14 | 1,296,240.71 | - | - |
| 60640C | Sandford Park School Ltd | Sandford Road | Ranelagh | 982,432.43 | - | 29,638.59 |
| 60650F | St Andrews College | Boosterstown Ave | Blackrock | 3,852,325.26 | - | 154,880.01 |
| 60660I | St Patricks Cathedral G.S | St Patricks Close | Dublin 8 | 701,184.48 | - | - |
| 60670L | The High School | Zion Road | Rathgar | 2,727,525.73 | - | 123,766.50 |
| 60820E | Loreto College | 53 St Stephens Green | Dublin 2 | 1,902,046.85 | - | 56,639.42 |
| 60892G | The Teresian School | 12 Stillorgan Road | Donnybrook | 767,014.46 | - | - |
| 60910F | Alexandra College | Milltown | Dublin 6 | 2,001,064.71 | 38,641.32 | 32,523.03 |
| 60930L | Rosemont School | Temple Road | Blackrock | 372,903.91 | - | - |
| 61010U | Wesley College | Ballinteer | Dublin 16 | 3,299,870.39 | - | 126,416.55 |
| 61020A | Stratford College | 1 Zion Road Rathgar | Dublin 6 | 766,603.75 | - | 92,553.47 |
| 61080S | Royal School Cavan | College Street | Cavan | 1,029,706.94 | - | 105,854.04 |
| 61570M | Kilkenny College | Castlecomer Road | Kilkenny | 2,930,146.95 | 44,385.03 | 51,909.56 |
| 61680T | Newbridge College | Newbridge | Co. Kildare | 2,883,297.44 | - | 184,007.10 |
| 61720F | Clongowes Wood College | Naas | Co Kildare | 1,657,281.63 | - | - |
| 61811I | St Gerard's School | Thornhill Road | Bray | 1,737,140.91 | - | - |
| 62060R | Bandon Grammar School | Bandon | Co Cork | 2,263,307.09 | - | 187,248.53 |
| 62370J | Middleton College | Middleton | Co Cork | 1,409,949.26 | - | 26,261.67 |
| 62520C | Christian Brothers College | Sidney Hill | Wellington Road | 2,733,981.78 | - | 21,001.92 |
| 62570R | Presentation Brothers College | The Mardyke | Cork | 2,428,365.12 | - | - |
| 62690E | Scoil Mhuire | 2 Sidney Place | Wellington Road | 1,504,404.83 | - | 20,235.99 |
| 63300Q | Wilson's Hospital School | Multyfarnham | Co Westmeath | 1,728,289.45 | - | 26,133.81 |
| 63870L | Drogheda Grammar School | Mornington Rd | Drogheda | 1,094,271.51 | - | 73,782.89 |
| 63920A | Dundalk Grammar School | Dundalk | Co Louth | 2,111,271.40 | - | 22,553.14 |
| 64150F | Glenstal Abbey School | Murroe | Co Limerick | 745,543.17 | - | 87,922.96 |
| 64310B | Villiers Secondary School | North Circular Road | Limerick | 2,143,828.10 | - | 95,832.12 |
| 64420I | Franciscan College | Gormanstown | Co Meath | 1,307,723.87 | - | - |
| 64830E | Monaghan Collegiate School | Corlatt | Monaghan | 1,007,132.67 | - | 116,989.47 |
| 65010R | Newtown School | Waterford | Co. Waterford | 1,200,912.53 | - | - |
| 65190W | Sligo Grammar School | The Mall | Sligo | 1,640,048.18 | - | 170,717.04 |
| 65410K | Cistercian College | Roscrea | Co. Tipperary | 926,824.16 | 38,641.32 | - |
| 68071G | St. John Scottius Secondary School | 74/76 Morehampton Road Donnybrook | Dublin 4 | 736,738.87 | - | 45,464.66 |
| | | | Total | 96,981,176.20 | 249,553.91 | 3,527,646.33 |

Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 71.

Student Grant Scheme Applications

77. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when Student Universal Support Ireland will issue a decision in relation to a student grant application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53628/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): Officials in my Department have been informed by Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) that the application of the

student referred to by the Deputy, is under review and the student will be notified shortly of the outcome.

Preschool Services

78. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the role of his Department in the Government's preschool quality agenda; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53629/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): My Department is working closely with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to deliver on the Government's preschool quality agenda. This agenda includes the establishment of a national support service for the early years sector. At the moment, the supports in place for the early years sector include D/CYA funded organisations (whether wholly or partly) such as the Voluntary Childcare Organisations and the City and County Childcare Committee structures. My Department has had the experience of working across multiple organisations (funded through the D/CYA) to implement a quality improvement programme in early years service. We will be publishing the final report on this before the end of the year. The report will identify the issues that need to be addressed if a national support service is to be successful.

Through the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, my Department will also start the process of developing a practice guide which will distil the core elements of Síolta and Aistear for use, not just by early years practitioners but also, by tutors delivering further/higher education programmes.

Early Years Strategy Implementation

79. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the role of his Department in the development of the national early years strategy; the number of staff from the early years education policy unit in his Department who are involved in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53630/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The Early Years Education Policy Unit is co-located with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to ensure that policies relating to early years care and education are aligned.

My Department has agreed with the D/CYA that the Early Years Education Policy Unit will contribute as appropriate on all aspects of the Early Years Strategy relating to the Education remit.

My Department will nominate the most appropriate person from the Early Years Education Policy Unit to represent the DES on the different groups established by the D/CYA to work on Strategy and will also act as a conduit for input by other sections or agencies of the DES.

Departmental Programmes

80. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the policy programmes in his Department that cover the early years and preschool sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53631/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): In developing policies, my Department looks at the continuum of education from a child's earliest years through to pre-school, the formal education system and further/higher education/self directed learning as part of a life-long learning agenda.

Policies relating to early years and pre-school are interwoven into policies and not developed in isolation. This can be seen in the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the Inter-Cultural Education Strategy and the Traveller Education Strategy.

My Department is currently developing a National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development which includes the early years sector as a matter of course.

School Staffing

81. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding reinstating a third teacher in a school (details supplied) in County Kerry. [53638/13]

Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn): The criteria used for the allocation of teachers to primary schools is published annually on the website of the Department of Education and Skills. The key factor for determining the level of staffing resources provided at individual school level is the staffing schedule for the relevant school year and pupil enrolments on the previous 30 September.

The staffing arrangements for the 2013/14 school year (Circular 0013/2013) were published in February. The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location. It currently operates on the basis of a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 28 pupils with lower thresholds for DEIS Band 1 schools.

As part of the Budget 2012 decisions, there is a phased increase in the number of pupils required to gain and retain a classroom teaching post in small primary schools with four teachers or less. The first phase of the budget measure took effect from September 2012. The final phase of the budget measure takes effect from September 2014.

An appeals process is available to small schools which have had their staff number reduced as a result of the budget measure. A school with four classroom teachers or less which is losing a teacher or failed to gain an additional teacher as a result of the Budget 2012 measure can submit an appeal to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board.

The school referred to by the Deputy submitted an appeal under the Small Schools criteria to the Primary Staffing Appeals Board which was considered at the March meeting of the Appeals Board. The appeal was refused as it did not meet the criteria set out in the staffing schedule. The Primary Staffing Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

The Government recognises that small schools are an important part of the social fabric of rural communities. They will continue to be a feature of our education landscape. In these extremely challenging times, all public servants are being asked to deliver our public services on a reduced level of resources and teachers in small schools cannot be immune from this requirement.

Departmental Properties

82. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the

number, location and cost of premises in County Donegal that his Department rents. [53413/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): The Department of Social Protection currently occupies six premises in County Donegal that are leased by the Commissioners of Public Works. The total annual rental cost of the six premises is €91,950. The location of each premises is shown in the following table.

| Town | Address |
|------------|---|
| Ballybofey | Unit 14 and 15, The Shopping Centre, Ballybofey |
| Ballybofey | Unit 4 and 5 Dunfril House, Chestnut Road, Ballybofey |
| Dunfanaghy | Main Street, Dunfanaghy |
| Dungloe | Public Services Office, Gweedore Road, Dungloe |
| Falcarragh | Main Street, Falcarragh |
| Killybegs | Government Offices, Donegal Road, Killybegs |

Flood Prevention Measures

83. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform if he will provide a full report on all works carried out in Glanmire, County Cork since the flooding in June of 2012; the preventative measures that have been undertaken and the works that still remain outstanding, and if he will provide a timeframe for said works to be completed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53423/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes): Following flooding in Glanmire in June 2012, Cork County Council applied for funding under the Office of Public Works' (OPW) Minor Works Scheme for river cleaning works in order to provide some hydraulic improvement on the Glashaboy River. The application was approved and Cork County Council subsequently availed of funding in the amount of €32,871. The implementation of these works is a matter for Cork County Council, but it is the understanding of the OPW that the works have been completed.

The OPW and Cork County Council also agreed in 2012 that a detailed study should be undertaken with the aim of devising a comprehensive solution to the flooding problem in Glanmire. It was decided that the Council would take the lead in commissioning this study, with funding being provided by the OPW. The Council has now appointed consultants to undertake the study and to develop outline flood mitigation proposals, with a view to bringing forward a viable scheme, if such emerges, through planning, detailed design and construction.

It is expected that the study will be completed about mid-2014 which would allow a preferred scheme, subject to one emerging, to be brought forward for public consultation in late 2014. If any emerging preferred scheme is well received at public consultation stage then the detailed design could commence in the first half of 2015, with construction commencing before the end of that year, subject to the continued availability of the necessary funding. It is not possible to give a more definitive timescale at this point.

EU Funding

84. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the likely allocations for Ireland from the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund for the 2014-2020 period. [53637/13]

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin): Ireland has been allocated approximately €1bn from Structural Funds, i.e. the European Regional Develop-

ment Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF), for the 2014-2020 period. The split between the two Funds will be determined in the context of the programme planning that is currently underway.

I understand that the allocation for the European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF), for which the Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine has lead responsibility, has not yet been finalised.

Preparations for the new programming period have been underway in Ireland over the past year. This has involved public consultations as well as the preparation of needs analyses and ex-ante evaluations. The outcome of these processes will inform the preparation of the Partnership Agreement and related Operational Programmes through which EU funding will be drawn down. As regards the ERDF and ESF Programmes, the issues likely to be addressed include combatting long-term and youth unemployment and social exclusion; promoting R&D investment and the competitiveness of the business sector; and promoting an environmentally-friendly and resource efficient economy.

Departmental Agencies Staff Data

85. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a public sector organisation (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53438/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI) has 17 managers within a current total staff complement of 142.5. NSAI has reduced its headcount by 29% since 2008 and has recently been informed that it has a new target of 134 for the end of 2014.

Such reductions, at all levels of the organisation, cause difficulties. The NSAI is responding to this challenge through restructuring and, where appropriate, partnering with the private sector, as well as making essential business cases for the introduction or maintenance of critical skill sets needed to ensure that the organisation continues to properly fulfil its remit.

IDA Site Visits

86. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will provide details of the number of Industrial Development Agency visits to a business park (details supplied) in County Kildare particularly bearing in mind that it is a large National Asset Management Agency managed land bank; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53478/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): The management of IDA Ireland's property portfolio, including the purchase of land and the development of business parks is a day to day operational matter for the Agency and not one in which I have a function.

I have been informed by IDA Ireland that on average, over the last 5 years, the Agency has delivered 3-5 site visits per year to Millennium Business Park in Osberstown. In 2013, there were 2 IDA Ireland sponsored site visits by potential investors to the park.

The Agency has assured me that it will continue to promote and market the Park in Naas to overseas clients wishing to invest in Co. Kildare.

As Ireland competes for high quality investments, the concept of scale is crucial. Leading global corporations require a significant population pool, access to qualified talent, world standard physical and digital infrastructure coupled with the availability of sophisticated professional and business support services. In order to achieve economic regional development, IDA prioritises the marketing of Gateway locations within each Region as the locations of critical mass (i.e. sufficient scale of population, skills, infrastructure, companies, business services etc.) and highlights the opportunities provided by Hub locations which are within commuting distances of these Gateways. With improvements in infrastructure and investment in one town in a region it has a positive effect on other towns in the region.

The East Region, which includes Kildare, has been particularly successful in recent years in terms of attracting inward investment from FDI companies and employing 67,860 people. At present, there are 26 IDA supported companies in Co. Kildare employing 10,167 people. IDA Ireland has strong relationships with these companies and works closely with them to ensure their long term sustainability and to encourage their growth, development and continuing re-investment in their sites.

We must also remember that it is the investor in all cases who decides where to invest and an investment win for Ireland regardless of the location has to be seen as a plus for the country as a whole.

Enterprise Support Services Provision

87. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if, through his Department or any of the State agencies funded by his Department funding has being supplied to a facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53508/13]

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton): Funding assistance to business, is delivered through the Enterprise Development Agencies which operate under the aegis of my Department, particularly IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the County and City Enterprise Boards.

I have made enquires with these Agencies and I understand from IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the Kildare County Enterprise Board that they have not provided funding to the facility in question.

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

88. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an appeal to have a domiciliary care allowance approval back dated to 2012 will be expedited and approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [53403/13]

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 has decided to convene an oral hearing in this case. Every effort will be made to hear the case as quickly as possible and the appellant will be informed when arrangements for the oral hearing have been made.

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

Domiciliary Care Allowance Appeals

89. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a domiciliary care allowance will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [53404/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): An application for domiciliary care allowance was received in respect of the child concerned on 18 September 2013. This application was referred to one of the Department's Medical Assessors whose opinion was that the child was not medically eligible for the allowance. A letter issued on 7 October 2013 advising of the decision to disallow the application.

The person concerned subsequently lodged an appeal against this decision. As part of the appeal process, the case has been forwarded to another of the Department's Medical Assessors for further consideration, including a review of any new information supplied.

Upon receipt of the Medical Assessor's opinion, the case will be further examined and forwarded for consideration by the Appeals Office, if necessary.

Disability Allowance Appeals

90. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if an appeal for a disability allowance will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [53405/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the Disability Allowance appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on 12 December 2013. The person concerned has been notified of the arrangements for the hearing. An Oral Hearing in respect of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance appeal for the person concerned will take place on 12 December 2013 also.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Community Employment Schemes Funding

91. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Social Protection the funding East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd has received from her Department in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53409/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): East Clare Community Co-Operative Society Limited has received funds under the Community Services for a number of years. The funds are provided as a contribution to the management and delivery of a range of services to the community of Scarriff and its environs. The Community Services Programme requires that those in receipt of funds operate on a community business or social enterprise model. Under the terms of the Programme, East Clare Co-operative is required to generate a significant proportion of the income needed to resource and develop its services from non-public sources. Grants to beneficiaries of the CSP are paid in the form of a contribution to wages. In 2010, €41,438 was paid to the co-operative, €41,520 was paid in 2011, €43,441 in 2012 and €39,878

has been paid thus far in 2013.

State Properties

92. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason the existing FÁS premises in Gweedore, County Donegal is not used in place of rented accommodation. [53413/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Deputy will appreciate that issues relating to the number, location and cost of premises rented by the Department in County Donegal is a matter for the Office of Public Works. I will address the use of the former FÁS premises in Gweedore.

The Department's Intreo service is designed, where possible, to ensure that the individual needs of each client are assessed and provided for from one location. Intreo provides a personalised service, based on the person's individual needs, including advice on education, training and personal development opportunities, job search assistance as well as information on, and access to, a range of income supports.

To achieve the one stop shop model in Dungloe, this will involve the relocation of services from the former FÁS premises in Gweedore into Dungloe.

Disability Allowance Appeals

93. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the progress in respect of an appeal for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53429/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned was notified on 21 October 2013 by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that their disability allowance appeal was disallowed.

An Appeals Officer's decision is final and conclusive in absence of any fresh facts or evidence relevant to the period under appeal.

Question No. 94 withdrawn.

Pensions Legislation

95. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to introduce legislation on pension protection in line with other countries (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53441/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Defined benefit (DB) pension schemes in Ireland are set up and maintained by employers on a voluntary basis. There has never been a statutory obligation on employers under Irish law to contribute to their pension scheme (although schemes rules can place some level of obligation).

Most defined benefit pension schemes in Ireland were established under a trust deed. As part of the process of establishing each occupational pension scheme, an employer undertakes to be bound by the rules of the scheme and to undertake certain liabilities and duties defined therein. The position around the employers and employees contribution obligation in a trust

deed varies from deed to deed.

Employers have, by and large, made great efforts to support and deliver on the promise made to scheme members. This process is generally managed through dialogue between trustees, employers and members, where efforts are made to reach agreement regarding the steps that must be taken to secure scheme viability which may include a mix of measures such as increased employer/member contributions, longer working and amended benefits.

In developing the measures contained in the Social Welfare and Pensions Bill (No.2) 2013, significant consideration was given to imposing a statutory obligation on employers to secure a minimum level of funding before a scheme could be wound up. The advantage of placing a minimum obligation on the employer would be to reduce further the possible risk to the State and to protect the benefits of current and former schemes members. It may also prevent employers from “walking away” from defined benefit schemes and would encourage employers to ensure that the scheme is well funded and managed.

However, there are strong arguments against the introduction of an employer obligation given the uncertainties as to the overall impact and potential for unintended consequences. The introduction of employer guarantee is not a simple matter and may result increasing State involvement in sponsoring employers’ business decisions. Whilst it may improve the security of scheme members in certain circumstances, in other situations it may not. For example, in certain cases of liquidation, there may be few or no assets available once the claims of preferred and secured creditors have been met.

Imposing an obligation on an employer may be seen as unfair on employers who have voluntarily set up DB pension schemes. The previously voluntary commitments under these schemes would be made mandatory whereas there would be no corresponding obligation on employers who had set up DC schemes or had not set up any pension scheme.

To avoid debt, there is a danger that some employers with underfunded schemes may wind up the scheme in advance of completion of legislative process which, by its nature, would be complex and take some time to put in place. Experience in other countries has shown that complex ‘anti avoidance’ structures, with the requisite resources and expertise, were required to prevent employers restructuring to avoid their obligations.

Given the current economic circumstances, the imposition of significant additional costs on employers may have a counter-productive impact regarding the very viability of the business and jobs of those employed given many employers lack of capacity to absorb this extra cost. As such an obligation on an employer may threaten the companies financial stability and in some circumstances render employers insolvent. This may then impact on the companies creditors.

Internationally, “debt on employer” structures are seen as a complex measure to provide for and administer. Given the very small proportion of DB schemes here linked to employers who have a credit rating, or another reliably accurate and consistent measure of solvency, it is not the case that a workable framework to selectively apply an obligation on the employer is easily achievable. Rather, than placing an obligation on the employer to protect member benefits, the approach in the Bill is to support schemes to gradually move to more appropriate funding levels through the short, to medium to longer term using regulation and the benefits of a strengthening economy. This involves the Funding Standard and improved regulation with provisions such as restructuring of scheme benefits, the introduction of a risk reserve and the availability of sovereign annuities. The overriding priority in this area is to ensure that pensioners and members of pension schemes are protected and the future viability and sustainability of their schemes is ensured and made safer.

Pension Provisions

96. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason she is proposing to deduct from the IASS pensions of those who have worked hard and paid taxes all their lives; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53442/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): You will appreciate that it is not appropriate for me to comment on matters relating to individual pension schemes. Issues that relate to the operation of the scheme are a matter for the trustees of that scheme. The supervision of the scheme under the Pensions Act is a matter for the Pensions Board.

Pension Provisions

97. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will ensure that pensioners are given a right of audience with pension scheme trustees; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53448/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Defined benefit pension schemes in Ireland are in general set up under trust. The trustees of such pension schemes have a fiduciary duty under trust law and the Pensions Act to act in the best interest of all scheme members. In addition, the Pensions Act provides for further safeguards to protect the interest of pensioners. In the event of the wind up of a pension scheme the provision in the Pensions Act gives priority to the benefits of pensioners before any assets of the scheme are distributed to meet the liabilities of other scheme members.

The Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Bill is amending this provision to provide for a more equitable distribution of scheme funds in the event of the wind up of a scheme. This change will only impact where the scheme is underfunded. However, pensions up to €12,000 per annum will continue to retain the same level of protection as heretofore. For higher pensions, 90% of the annual amount between €12,000 and €60,000, and 80% of the annual amount over €60,000, will also have priority over the distribution of assets to other scheme beneficiaries.

The Bill also amends the Pensions Act to extend the options available to trustees of a scheme by providing for reductions of a portion of the benefits payable to pensioners. The restructure of scheme benefits under section 50 of the Pensions Act is not an arbitrary matter and must comply with the requirements of the Pensions Act and the criteria set out in statutory guidance.

Before the trustees make an application to the Board, they must consult with the employer, the scheme member, with pensioners and with the authorised trade union representing members. Trustees must undertake a comprehensive review of the scheme with a view to the long term stability and sustainability of the scheme.

In advance of any application to the Pensions Board to restructure scheme benefits, the trustees must notify, in writing, all members of the scheme including pensioners of; The circumstances giving rise to the proposed application and the reasons why the trustees believe an application is in compliance with their fiduciary duties; the proposed benefit reductions which are to apply to each category of member or other person and the reasons for treating one or more categories of member or other person differently to others; that the trustees have requested additional contributions from the employers to avoid the necessity for a reduction in benefits and the response of the employers; provide general examples of the projected impact of the reduction(s) on members using such assumptions as the actuary deems appropriate.

Members have 30 days to respond to the notification and their interests will be considered.

In the context of the current Bill, stakeholder groups including pensioner representatives were consulted last year and asked to make submission in relation to the proposed changes to the Pensions Act. The input from the stakeholders was taken into account in developing the proposals in the Bill. It would be my intention that this practice of consultation with pensioner representatives and indeed with all stakeholder representatives would continue in relation to any further consideration of changes to the Pension Act. As I said at the outset, the trustees of a defined benefit pension scheme are required under trust law to act in the best interest of all scheme members. The changes I am proposing in this Bill will enhance the ability of the trustees to protect the overall best interest of all scheme members.

Social Welfare Appeals Issues

98. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding issues raised in correspondence to her Department in respect of a person (details supplied). [53459/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at oral hearing, decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. The daughter of the person concerned wrote to the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 23 November 2013 requesting the Chief Appeals Officer to review the decision of the Appeals Officer under Section 318 of the Social Welfare Consolidation Act, 2005. The person concerned will be notified when the Section 318 review has been completed.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 99 withdrawn.

Social Welfare Fraud Investigations

100. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the steps being taken to deal with social welfare fraud; the amount that has been recovered; if targets have been met; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53472/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Programme for Government commits to a zero tolerance approach towards social welfare fraud and the Department's Fraud Initiative further articulates this overarching policy objective. A key priority is to ensure that social welfare payments are paid to those who are entitled to them and that fraudulent activity is vigorously prevented and combatted.

Over the past number of years, fraud detection and control systems have been refined and enhanced and are subject to on-going review. A range of measures are employed by the Department to ensure that social welfare fraud and abuse is minimised and that its control activity is appropriately focused. The approach taken by the Department to combat fraud is frequently reviewed and is regularly adjusted to ensure it is proportionate and is targeted on the areas of greatest risk. Actual money recovered arises where the Department raises overpayments in individual cases. Overpayments raised by the Department are categorised as 'fraud', 'non-fraud' or 'estate' cases. Fraud cases arise mainly on foot of false declarations by customers concerning their employment, income and family status. Non-fraud cases are primarily due to customer or third party error, with some due to Departmental error. Estate cases arise where undisclosed means by customers come to light after their deaths.

In 2012, a total of €97m was raised in overpayments and of this amount, €40.9m was re-

corded as attributable to fraud or suspected fraud. In 2012, a total of €53.3m was recovered. In addition, the Department's control work is measured in terms of control savings which are used as a performance indicator for year-on-year activities. Without this control work, social welfare expenditure would over time increase by this amount. Control savings do not include any cases of departmental or clerical error or any cases where the customer voluntarily told the Department of their altered means or circumstances, which resulted in a change to their rate of payment. My Department recorded control savings of €669m in 2012. In excess of €525m was recorded in respect of control savings from January to end of October 2013.

Question No. 101 withdrawn.

Farm Assist Scheme Appeals

102. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made regarding an appeal for farm assist in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53482/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all of the available evidence including that adduced at the oral hearing, has decided to disallow the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned was notified of the Appeals Officer's decision on 9 December 2013.

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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Job Initiatives

103. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she considered the local development companies who have a track record of delivery and an established network in every community as a lead partner in the roll-out of the JobPath initiative; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53485/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The Department currently has 43 contracts with Local Development Companies (LDCs) for the provision of employment services. These contracts cover the delivery of both the Local Employment Service (LES) and Job Clubs.

JobPath is the title of the Government's proposed new programme of labour market activation aimed specifically at the long-term unemployed and those most at risk of becoming long-term unemployed. JobPath will be delivered by third party providers of employment services under contract to the Department.

It is the Department's intention to issue a contract notice for the procurement of JobPath services shortly and Local Development Companies are free to participate in the procurement process.

Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

104. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the low rent allowance limits for Arklow and surrounding areas (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53493/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The purpose of the rent supple-

ment 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. There are currently approximately 80,000 rent supplement recipients for which the Government has provided over €403 million for 2013.

Revised rent limits under the rent supplement scheme came into effect from 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. The rent limits review was completed during the second quarter of this year and used a number of data sources, including that of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) which contained details of actual registered rental tenancies. As outlined by the Deputy, the Daft.ie Q3 2013 rental report records a year on year increase of 4.4% in rents in County Wicklow. There is no detailed breakdown of this figure by area within the county or by property type.

There have been increases in the maximum rent limits in some areas including Bray, Delgany and Greystones while there have been some reductions across a number of counties, including parts of County Wicklow, reflecting the conditions in the rental markets in those areas.

There are currently over 2,400 rent supplement recipients in County Wicklow. Latest figures show that there are over 580 rent supplement recipients in the Arklow area, indicating that it is possible to secure accommodation in this location within the rent limits. A search conducted on a leading property website shows that there are properties available for rent in the Arklow area within the maximum rent limits. Officials in the Department continue to examine the impact of the rent limits on those who claim rent supplement.

Department officials operating the rent supplement scheme have discretionary powers to award a supplement at a higher level in exceptional cases where it appears that the circumstances of the case so warrant. Each case is examined individually and is decided on the basis of the situation presented. In relation to the case referred to by the Deputy, the officer administering the rent supplement claim has advised that the person concerned has been requested to provide documentation in support of the request for a rent supplement above the relevant rent limit. The claim will be reviewed by the Department on receipt of this documentation.

Invalidity Pensions Data

105. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of invalidity pension claims that were awarded following appeals in 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53517/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The information requested by the Deputy in respect of invalidity pension appeals from 2008 to 2012 and to date in 2013 is contained in the table below.

A total of 1,991 invalidity pension appeals were processed during 2012. 1,509 (61.22%) of these appeals had a successful outcome for the appellant. 474 (31.41%) of the successful appeals were in fact revised decisions made by statutorily appointed deciding officers of my Department who reviewed the claim following the initial disallowance.

These revised decisions arose as a result, in many cases, of new facts or fresh evidence produced by the claimant after the original decision on his/her claim. In such cases an Appeals Officer decision was not necessary.

A total of 6,651 invalidity pension appeals have been processed to date in 2013 (to 30 November 2013). 80.47% of these (5,382) had a successful outcome for the appellant. 2,233 (41.49%) of the successful appeals were in fact revised decisions made by statutorily appointed deciding officers of my Department who reviewed the claim following the initial disallowance.

Outcome of Invalidity Pension Appeals 2008 – 2013

| - | | Decided by Ap- peals Officers | Decided by Ap- peals Officers | Decided by Ap- peals Officers |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| - | Revised Decid- ing Officers' Decisions | AppealsAllowed | AppealsPartly- Allowed | AppealsDisal- lowed |
| 2008 | 78 | 233 | 1 | 160 |
| 2009 | 82 | 243 | 1 | 136 |
| 2010 | 185 | 341 | 6 | 314 |
| 2011 | 345 | 408 | 6 | 489 |
| 2012 | 474 | 1,031 | 4 | 430 |
| 2013 (to 30/11/2013) | 2,233 | 3,132 | 17 | 1,215 |

Property Taxation Administration

106. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive a decision from the Revenue Commissioners in relation to their request for rebate regarding their local property tax under section 26 of the Property Act; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53518/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): This is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Finance.

Social Welfare Benefits Applications

107. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when basic social welfare payment will be restored in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6W; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53532/13]

108. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when rent support will be restored in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6W; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53533/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): I propose to take Questions Nos. 107 and 108 together.

The person concerned recently submitted documentation to his Social Welfare Local Office and requested to have the disallowance of his claim for jobseeker's allowance reviewed. The claim review was based on documentation received from him which addressed the issue of him genuinely seeking employment. As a result of this review his claim has now been awarded from the original date of application and an arrears payment will be available for collection on Friday 13 December 2013. The person concerned has been notified of this revised decision.

As there has now been a favourable outcome to the review of the jobseeker's allowance claim for the person concerned, his application for rent supplement will now be processed in

the normal manner.

Rent Supplement Scheme Payments

109. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of rent support applicable in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53534/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The household composition in the case of the person concerned is that of one adult and four children. According to the information available to this Department, the person concerned is required to contribute €107.00 per week towards the cost of their rent or €463.70 per month. This consists of a minimum contribution to the rent of €30.00 per week, and €77.00 per week being income the person concerned receives which is in excess of the relevant SWA rate for this family composition.

The monthly rent payable in this case is €1000.00 monthly or € 230.76 per week. The required contribution of €107.00 is deducted from the rent giving a rent supplement entitlement of €123.76 per week or €536.30 per month.

The person concerned can contact the office administering her rent supplement to seek a review of this payment if her circumstances have changed.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

110. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the correct level of jobseeker's allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53535/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of this Department the person concerned is currently in receipt of a one parent family payment at the maximum personal rate of €188.00 with an increase for four qualified children amounting to €119.20. She is also in receipt of a fuel allowance of €20.00 per week. The total entitlement in the case of the person concerned is currently €327.20 per week.

Guardian's Payment Appeals

111. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the current position in regard to request for oral hearing in respect of guardianship payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53536/13]

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 has decided to hold an oral hearing in this case on 16 December 2013. The person concerned has been 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 in relation to social welfare entitlements.

Question No. 112 withdrawn.

Employment Support Services

113. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the options available to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53539/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The person concerned has been in regular contact with the Employment Services office in Maynooth. The person concerned last met with the Case Officer on 04/12/2013 and was advised of the options available to him and placed on a waiting list for a course which is due to commence in January 2014.

Jobseeker's Allowance Eligibility

114. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Meath qualifies for jobseeker's allowance-unemployment benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53540/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): According to the records of the Department the person concerned does not currently have an entitlement to jobseeker's benefit as he does not have a social insurance contribution history.

Jobseeker's allowance is a means-tested payment payable to those who are unemployed and satisfy a means assessment in addition to a number of other qualifying conditions. According to the records of this Department there is no recent application from the person concerned for jobseeker's allowance. The person concerned can submit such an application at his local social welfare office and his entitlement to same will be examined.

Pensions Levy Issues

115. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on whether using the pension levy as the sole means in which to fulfil European Court of Justice court ruling requirements concerning insolvent pension schemes is inequitable; her views that in so far as the pension levy is a levy on private pensions and therefore the burden of meeting the State's obligations for insolvent pension schemes is being shouldered entirely by private pension schemes means that public sector schemes remain untouched; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53626/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): The application of the pension levy is a matter for the Minister for Finance.

Departmental Offices

116. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the refurbishment works at the community welfare office in Enfield, County Meath; the date on which works are scheduled for completion; the date on which she expects services for customers of her Department to be operational at this location; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53640/13]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton): Supplementary Welfare Allowance services are provided by the Department of Social Protection (DSP) from the HSE Health

Centre in Enfield. The building was vacated to allow HSE undertake refurbishment. Works are nearing completion and it is expected that the refurbished building will be ready for occupation by mid-January 2014. Once the building is reopened, DSP will, as before, provide Supplementary Welfare Allowance services at the location one day per week.

Aviation Issues

117. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if his Department is aware of the current regulatory difficulties surrounding the air strips at Inishbofin and Cleggan in Connemara; his plans to resolve these difficulties; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53505/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): The airstrips on Inishbofin and at Cleggan in Co. Galway are not open or licensed for use by the Irish Aviation Authority. Therefore, landing aircraft on the airstrips is strictly prohibited.

A decision has been made to dispose of the airstrips in view of the economic downturn, the ongoing cost of maintaining the airstrips and the unlikelihood that my Department will, at any time in the near future, have the resources to subsidise a regular air service between the island and the mainland. My Department is currently assessing the disposal options available to it and a decision in this regard will be announced in due course.

Turf Cutting Compensation Scheme Applications

118. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the position in regard to an application (details supplied) in County Kildare; the reasons it was not included in recent granted applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53425/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): An application for compensation under the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme has been received by my Department from the individual referred to in the Deputy's Question. The qualifying criteria for the cessation of turf cutting compensation scheme are that:

- The claimant must have a legal interest in one of the 53 raised bog special areas of conservation – ownership or turbary right;
- The claimant must have been the owner or entitled to exercise turbary rights on the land in question on 25 May 2010;
- The turbary 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.

Following two inspections by officials of my Department of the plot of bog in respect of which the applicant has applied for compensation, it appears that no turf has been cut on the land during the relevant five year period. My Department has indicated to the solicitor acting for the applicant that it appears that no turf has been cut on the land during the relevant five year period. The solicitor has requested that the case be reviewed by the Department and the

outcome of this review will be forwarded to the solicitor in the coming weeks.

Inland Waterways Development

119. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the cost of reopening the Ulster Canal; the number of phases involved; if an application has been made to the EU for funding; if matching funding will be made available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53443/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): As the Deputy will be aware, in July 2007, the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) agreed to proceed with the restoration of the section of the Ulster Canal between Clones and Upper Lough Erne. The then Government agreed to cover the full capital costs of the project, which were estimated at that time to be of the order of €35m. It was always the intention that the Ulster Canal project would be funded from the Waterways Ireland annual allocations, as agreed through the annual estimates processes in this jurisdiction, as well as the deliberations of NSMC in relation to annual budgets. It was a key consideration throughout the process that the Ulster Canal project would be supported by a significant level of projected income from the commercialisation of certain Waterways Ireland assets. However, the economic downturn has had a negative impact on those plans.

I am continuing to explore all possible options to advance this project within the current fiscal constraints. In this regard, I established an Inter-Agency Group on the Ulster Canal to explore ways to advance the project and to examine possible funding options for it, including existing funding streams and the leveraging of funding from other sources. This includes the exploration of any EU funding which may be potentially available. The Ulster Canal project is progressing on an incremental basis. Planning approvals have now been received for the project in both jurisdictions. Work on land maps is continuing, as is consideration of construction and other technical aspects of the project. I welcome these developments, which, I am sure the Deputy will agree, are a significant milestone for the project.

Architectural Heritage

120. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if grants are available to undertake maintenance work on a listed building (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53471/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I am currently finalising details for a new Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme, which I hope to announce shortly, to assist with works to safeguard protected structures, in private and civic ownership, protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012. An allocation of €5 million in stimulus capital has been announced in Budget 2014 for this scheme. It is intended that this scheme will leverage private capital for investment in a significant number of labour intensive, small-scale, renovation projects. Whilst the details of the scheme are yet to be announced, it is envisaged that the local government system will administer the scheme. Once the scheme is announced, the Deputy could refer to the local authority in question regarding details of potential funding for the project referred to.

Special Areas of Conservation Designation

121. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further

to Parliamentary Question No. 133 of 5 December 2013, if he will confirm when the recent study of the hen harrier population in the Mullaghareirk and Boggeragh SPA was concluded; if he will outline the findings of this study in detail and the progress made to date in respect of the threat response plan; if he will identify the personnel involved from the various agencies and Departments in devising this threat response plan; the number of meetings held to date on the matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53487/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): The process of formulating a Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 is under way. My Department has contracted a raptor specialist to undertake site and wider countryside risk assessments, informed by the identification of the current pressures and threats operating on the hen harrier population in Ireland. The specialist will also compile and analyse hen harrier related population and habitat data to help assist in our understanding of the ecological processes relating to the hen harrier. This work has been under way since the summer of this year. As the Deputy will appreciate, this kind of scientific analysis will take some time before it produces enough meaningful data for use to assist in the advancement of the process, such as allowing for the development of appropriate objectives for the Threat Response Plan.

Officials from my Department have already met with officials of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to discuss the process. The next step will be to formally establish an Inter-Departmental Working Group. My officials will be in communication with other appropriate Departments to this end shortly. Initially, the Working Group will comprise officials from those Departments, but it may be extended to include other relevant public bodies.

According to the National Hen Harrier Survey carried out during 2010 and published in 2012, hen harrier numbers in the Stack's to Mullaghareirk SPA have declined by more than 35% since the last national survey in 2005. This is contrary to the reported situation with the national population, where the total number of breeding birds recorded was broadly stable since the last national survey. However, it should be noted that the accuracy of these reported estimates of change are somewhat complicated due to increased survey effort during 2010 compared to the 2005 survey. The causes of the severe regional declines remain largely unknown, but potentially contributing factors are outlined in the survey report, including a deterioration of habitat availability and quality.

A research project concerning hen harrier in its upland breeding areas, known as PLAN-FORBIO, was completed in 2012. The full details of the findings of both studies can be accessed through the following links:

<http://www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM59.pdf>

<http://www.ucc.ie/en/planforbio/projects/henharrier/>.

Architectural Heritage

122. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if there is funding available to further restore a building of historical interest (details supplied); if he will provide details of the grant schemes available in all respects, including tax breaks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53495/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): I am currently finalising details for a new Built Heritage Jobs Leverage Scheme, which I hope to announce shortly, to assist with works to safeguard protected structures, in private and civic ownership,

protected under the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2012. An allocation of €5 million in stimulus capital has been announced in Budget 2014 for this scheme. It is intended that this scheme will leverage private capital for investment in a significant number of labour intensive, small-scale, renovation projects. Whilst the details of the scheme are yet to be announced, it is envisaged that the local government system will administer the scheme. Once the scheme is announced, the Deputy could refer to the local authority in question regarding details of potential funding for the project referred to.

Departmental Funding

123. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if, through his Department or any of the State agencies funded by it, funding has being supplied to a facility (details supplied). [53507/13]

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan): My Department has not provided funding to the facility referred to by the Deputy. I am further advised that no funding was provided to the facility in question by any of the bodies funded by my Department's vote group.

Irish Language Issues

124. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he is concerned about the resignation of the language commissioner; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53617/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley): I was informed by An Coimisinéir Teanga, Mr. Seán Ó Cuirreáin, on 4 December that he had written to the President regarding his decision to resign in February 2014, after ten years in the post and two years before his term of office expires in February 2016. An Coimisinéir Teanga made a public announcement to that effect later that day at a hearing of the Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions in the context of a discussion of his annual report for 2012. I have expressed my appreciation to An Coimisinéir Teanga, both personally and publicly, for his achievements during his time in office. As the first Coimisinéir Teanga, he established the office with a sense of vision and purpose, and the high esteem in which he is held by the Irish language and Gaeltacht community is well earned. I regret that An Coimisinéir Teanga has decided not to complete his term of office but I respect his decision in the matter.

The process of selecting a new Coimisinéir Teanga will commence shortly and the matter will be brought to Government in due course. Under section 20(3) of the Official Languages Act, the appointment of An Coimisinéir Teanga is made by the President on the advice of the Government, following a resolution passed by Dáil Éireann and by Seanad Éireann recommending the appointment of the person.

Food Security

125. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources further to his comments that Irish biofuel is from waste material and that we do not use any food crop in its manufacture, if his attention has been drawn to the inaccuracy of this statement as according to the National Oil Reserves Agency's 2012 annual report on the biofuels obligation scheme, document No. 457-X0098 rev. 2, September 2013 (details supplied), all of the 38,522,508 litres of bioethanol used in Ireland were from food crops maize, sugar cane and wheat and approximately one tenth of this, 3.8 million litres, were from Guatemalan sugar cane, all amounting to 45% of the biodiesel used in Ireland in 2012 coming from

food crops. [53491/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
I refer to the reply to Question No. 301 (53056/13) of 10 December 2013.

Departmental Funding

126. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the funding East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd. received from his Department in 2010 to 2012, inclusive, and to date in 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53408/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
My Department has not provided funding to East Clare Community Co-Op Society Limited in the years referenced by the Deputy.

Broadband Services Provision

127. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide an update regarding the roll out of broadband to rural areas in County Kildare; when it is proposed to have full broadband coverage in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53489/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):
Ireland's telecommunications market has been fully liberalised since 1999 in accordance with the requirements of binding EU Directives. The market has since developed into a well-regulated market, supporting a multiplicity of commercial operators, providing services over a diverse range of technology platforms. Details of broadband services available in each County, including County Kildare, can be found on ComReg's website at www.callcosts.ie. The State can only intervene to ensure access to broadband services in areas where the competitive market fails to deliver such services, as in the case of the National Broadband Scheme (NBS). Broadband services under the NBS are available since October 2010 from the NBS service provider, "3", to persons with a fixed residence or fixed business in the designated NBS Electoral Divisions. NBS services are available within 11 of the 90 Electoral Divisions in County Kildare.

The Government's National Broadband Plan, which I published in August 2012, aims to radically change the broadband landscape in Ireland by ensuring that high speed broadband is available to all citizens and businesses, including those in County Kildare. This will be achieved by providing:

- a policy and regulatory framework that assists in accelerating and incentivising commercial investment, and

- a State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest.

Since the publication of the Plan, investments by the commercial sector are underway and in some instances have been accelerated in both fixed line and wireless high speed broadband services. These developments have been facilitated through the implementation of measures in the National Broadband Plan, including the conclusion of ComReg's multiband spectrum auction, and the new regulatory regime for fixed line Next Generation Access and service bundles. Both of these measures are designed to incentivise the rollout of services by operators.

In tandem with these developments, intensive work is underway in my Department to prog-

ress a State-led investment to secure the countrywide introduction of next generation broadband access. In order to progress the State-led investment for areas where it is not commercial for the market to invest, a full procurement process must be designed and EU State Aids approval must be obtained. My Department is engaged in a comprehensive mapping exercise of the current and anticipated investment by the commercial sector over the coming years, the results of which will inform the areas that need to be targeted in the State-led investment as envisaged in the National Broadband Plan.

Intensive technical, financial and legal preparations, including stakeholder engagement, are ongoing. The procurement process for the approved intervention will be carried out in accordance with EU and Irish procurement rules and it is expected that it will be launched in 2014.

Through the implementation of the National Broadband Plan, I am committed to ensuring that all parts of Ireland have access to high speed broadband, with a view to ensuring that all citizens and businesses can participate fully in, and maximise the benefits of, a digitally enabled economy and society.

Industrial Disputes

128. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will bring forward legislation to ensure that essential power services can always be protected from the threat of industrial action; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53610/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): The Irish industrial relations legislative and institutional industrial relations system is framed in the particular context of, on the one hand, maintaining industrial peace and providing the State machinery to help that happen while, on the other, recognising our citizen's rights to freedom of association, trade union membership and, with the singular exceptions of those charged with preserving our security, the freedom to take industrial action. Where disputes do arise in essential services which have the potential to have a major impact on the public and the economy due to the disruption of essential services, there are expert and experienced industrial relations mechanisms of the State available to assist in the resolution of the issues. The intervention and assistance provided by the Labour Relations Commission in the ESB dispute being the most recent example.

A reliance on criminal sanctions in the sphere of industrial relations, particularly in the context of any lawful industrial action, is considered inappropriate in the context of Ireland's voluntarist industrial relations system.

Eirgrid as Transmission System Operator has statutory responsibility for managing the electricity transmission system in Ireland, and working closely with ESB Networks, manages disruptions to electricity supply. The companies have detailed operational and communications plans in place to deal with a variety of scenarios with a view to minimising disruptions and mitigating the impact of any disruption. Every effort is made to keep as many customers supplied as possible, particularly vital services and infrastructure.

In the event of significant disruptions to electricity supply, my Department would take the lead in terms of arranging for Government Departments and Agencies to be briefed by Eirgrid and ESB Networks, as the responsible agencies for managing a disruption, on the likely impacts of power disruption. This would facilitate each Department and Agency identifying the impact on their area of sectoral responsibility and responding as appropriate to manage their own particular situations through appropriate contingency plans.

Industrial Relations Issues

129. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the total number of meetings he, his special adviser or his officials have had with a person (details supplied) since March of 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53627/13]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte): Since taking office I have met with the Group Secretary and members of the ESB Group of Unions on two occasions.

Officials in my Department have, together with officials from other Government Departments, met with representatives of the ESB pension forum, including the Group Secretary of the ESB Group of Unions, on two other occasions. My special adviser was present on each occasion.

Private Residential Tenancies Board Remit

130. **Deputy Eoghan Murphy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the way he intends to protect and improve the rights of renters of residential property. [53426/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Residential Tenancies Act 2004 sets out the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants in the private rented residential sector and represented the most significant legislative reform in the private rented sector in over a century. The Act provided real security of tenure for tenants in the private rented sector for the first time and, *inter alia*, provided access for both tenants and landlords to an inexpensive, informal and independent dispute resolution process operated by the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB).

Nine years on from the passing of the Act, however, it is clear that there are aspects of the legislation that require amendment in order to improve the functioning of the rental sector. The Residential Tenancies (Amendment)(No. 2) Bill 2012 was published on 19 July 2012. The Bill builds on what has already been achieved by the 2004 Act, and by the PRTB, and is a key element in the delivery of the Government’s housing policy.

Among the main issues addressed by the amending legislation are the extension of the remit of the Residential Tenancies Act to Approved Housing Body tenancies; the Board of the PRTB to be reduced from 15 to 12 members; the separation of the governance and quasi-judicial functions of the Board; the merger of the PRTB and the Rent Tribunal; the simplification and streamlining of the mediation process and the introduction of a new procedure to enable the PRTB to deal effectively with tenants who do not pay rent during the dispute process.

While the Bill addresses a wide range of issues, there are some other aspects still under development which I hope to bring forward for consideration during the Bill’s passage through the Seanad. In particular, I am keen to progress the commitment in the Programme for Government to introduce a tenancy deposit protection scheme and I intend to provide for the establishment of such a scheme at Committee Stage of the Bill in the Seanad. The Bill is currently before the Seanad.

Private Rented Accommodation Standards

131. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of tenants of local authorities currently residing in one room bedsits

which have been in violation of the Housing Regulations of 2008 since 1 February 2013; and the amount of funds being allocated to the renovation of these properties. [53400/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): The Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008 specify requirements in relation to a range of matters in rented accommodation such as structural repair, sanitary facilities, heating, ventilation, light and the safety of gas and electrical supply. The most recent data available, from the 2011 Census, indicate that 728 properties described as bedsits were rented from a local authority representing 0.6% of the total number of local authority rented units then recorded.

All landlords have a legal obligation to ensure that their rented properties comply with these regulations. Responsibility for enforcement of the regulations, including the inspection arrangements, 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 2013, my Department allocated €3 million to local authorities towards their inspections activities.

My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing and planning statistics including details on local authority inspection activity and these data are available on my Department’s website www.environ.ie. However, data in relation to the number of ‘bedsit’ properties either in compliance with or in violation of the regulations are not compiled centrally.

Local authorities, as landlords and owners of their social housing stock, are responsible for the management, maintenance and repair of rented properties. 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, including the regeneration of large social housing estates and flat complexes and estate-wide remedial works schemes.

Building Regulations Compliance

132. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number of enforcement orders intended to achieve compliance with the building regulations fire safety issued by fire safety authorities against non-compliant builders and developers since he became Minister. [53419/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I have no function in relation to specific enforcement activity under the Fire Safety Acts or the Building Control Act under which the powers of investigation and prosecution are vested in individual local authorities acting in their capacity as Fire Authority or Building Control Authority. Neither does my Department maintain statistical records of such activity.

My Department continues to liaise with local authorities in relation to significant fire safety and building control issues, some of which have been reported in the public domain, that have arisen in a number of multi-unit developments across the country. I expect local authorities to continue to use all of the powers currently available to them to address serious building defects.

Pyrite Remediation Programme Issues

133. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the measures he proposes to adopt to recover the €10,000,000 allocated in the capital budget for remedial works to houses suffering major damage caused by pyrite from the

quarry and construction industry and the HomeBond organisation. [53420/13]

134. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will confirm if the HomeBond technical staff that inspected homes in the Dublin West constituency (details supplied) and incorrectly found that structural damage was not due to pyrite will not be involved in auditing building condition assessments under IS398-1. [53421/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 133 and 134 together.

The Pyrite Resolution Board is in discussions with HomeBond with a view to agreeing an open and transparent process for them to make a positive contribution to the implementation of a pyrite remediation scheme.

I have made my position very clear on the issue of responsibility for providing a resolution of the pyrite problem for affected homeowners. I believe that the parties identified in the report of the independent Pyrite Panel as having a direct or indirect responsibility for the pyrite problem should contribute to the resolution of the problem. It was against this background that I engaged in protracted discussions with the key stakeholders to try and put in place a framework within which those parties could bring about a resolution of the problem through an industry-led response which would include appropriate funding arrangements; regrettably, this did not prove possible. In the absence of such agreement the Government approved, in April 2013, the funding of a pyrite remediation scheme through the imposition of mandatory levies on the construction and insurance sectors. Unfortunately, due to legal difficulties it was not possible to proceed on the basis of those proposals and the Government has recently approved Exchequer funding for the scheme. The Bill to provide for the establishment of the Pyrite Resolution Board on a statutory basis and for the operation of the pyrite remediation scheme will be published in the next few days and I intend to bring it to the Oireachtas next week.

The auditing of the Building Condition Assessment process is an operational matter and as such it is a matter for the Pyrite Resolution Board to determine the appropriate process that should be put in place for this purpose.

Water Supply

135. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in view of the years that have elapsed since the original proposal to extract water from the Shannon river at Lough Derg under the water supply project, Dublin region, as put forward by Dublin City Council, if he will re-examine all options in view of the concern being expressed from the mid-west region in terms of the impact such a proposal would have on the environment of the lake, on tourism and industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53433/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): My Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 - 2013 provides for planning of a large number of schemes and contracts, including a scheme to provide a new long-term water source to service the future needs of the Greater Dublin Area. There is limited potential to abstract additional water from existing sources in the region and it is necessary to consider new options for potential long-term sources to service growth in demand in the Greater Dublin Area. Studies conducted on behalf of Dublin City Council concluded that there were two feasible options to meet the future demand requirements of the region—abstraction from the Shannon or desalination.

Further work by consultants working on behalf of the City Council, and a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposal, have identified a preferred option which involves abstraction of raw water from the River Shannon at Lough Derg and pumping the abstracted water through a new pipeline to a proposed storage reservoir in County Offaly. This plan was adopted by the City Council and during 2012 was put on display for public information in a number of local authority locations, together with a Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Since then Dublin City Council has held a competition to procure Consultants to advance the project through the planning process. Following the conclusion of a tender process Consultants were awarded the contract in September 2013. The Consultants will prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment, and deal with other statutory procedures, prior to submission of these to An Bord Pleanála for determination in due course. As with all of these statutory procedures, public consultation will be an integral part of the process. All interested parties can fully participate in that public consultation process and can raise relevant issues or concerns, on which An Bord Pleanála will adjudicate.

Housing Adaptation Grants Funding

136. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of funding that will be provided to Fingal County Council for housing adaptation grants as a result of the announcements made in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53464/13]

137. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of funding that will be provided to Dublin City Council for housing adaptation grants as a result of the announcements made in budget 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53465/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 136 and 137 together.

The Abridged Estimate for my Department, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Expenditure Report 2014, provides some €28.6 million in respect of the suite of Grants for Older People and People with a Disability. The Estimates provision will be supplemented by the recently announced €10 million in additional funding for this measure, giving an overall provision in 2014 of €38.6 million, some €4.3 million more than the initial Exchequer allocation in 2013. The increased allocation will facilitate the payment of more than 7,800 grants to assist older people and people with disabilities to remain at home for longer.

My Department also provides funding to local authorities for a range of measures to improve the quality and standard of the social housing stock, including the energy retrofitting of older properties and the provision of adaptations and extensions to meet the specific needs of tenants. An allocation of €300,000 was provided to Dublin City Council this year in respect of extensions and adaptations to tenanted properties. The allocation to Fingal County Council for this measure was €83,851.

I intend to announce details of the capital allocations under both measures to individual local authorities early in 2014.

Water and Sewerage Schemes Status

138. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will provide an update on the upgrading of the sewerage treatment

plant in Osberstown, Naas, County Kildare. [53479/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Upper Liffey Valley Sewerage Scheme (Osberstown Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Contract) is included in my Department's Water Services Investment Programme 2010 – 2013 as a scheme to start during the lifetime of the Programme.

In June 2013 I approved Kildare County Council's proposals to commence the procurement process for increasing the capacity of the treatment plant from 80,000 population equivalent (p.e.) to 130,000 p.e. I understand that the closing date for submission of tenders has passed and that the Council is assessing the tenders received with a view to getting work underway as early as possible in 2014.

Voluntary Housing Sector

139. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 27 of 5 December 2013, if he will provide a breakdown, based on each local authority administrative area, of the locations of the 25,731 units of accommodation which were provided by approved housing bodies following approval by his Department under its capital funding schemes up to the end of 2012. [53484/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): My Department's role in relation to the voluntary housing capital funding schemes relates primarily to the provision of funds to support the annual construction and housing acquisitions programmes by the sector. It is a matter for the relevant housing authority to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the schemes, and to have appropriate oversight and liaison arrangements in place for the effective administration of the schemes and for ensuring that the investment in voluntary housing is safeguarded.

At the end of 2012 a total of 25,371 units of accommodation had been provided by approved voluntary and co-operative housing bodies under my Department's capital funding schemes since the inception of the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) in 1984 and the Capital Loan and Subsidy Scheme (CLSS) in 1992.

A breakdown of the number of house completions on a county basis is not readily available for the period 1984 to 1992. Information in respect of individual CAS projects completed over that period is held on file in hard copy format only and disaggregated on the basis of the relevant approved housing body. Compilation on a county basis would require archived files to be retrieved from off-site storage facilities and would involve an inordinate amount of time and resources.

Details of overall numbers of units provided across all local authorities under the CAS scheme from its inception in 1984 to 1992, together with details of the numbers of units provided under the CAS and CLSS on a county basis from 1993 to end 2012, are set out in the following table:

| County | No. of Units CAS 1984-2012 | No. of Units CLSS 1993 - 2012 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| CAS only 1984 - 1992 | 2,691 | |
| CAS and CLSS 1993-2012 | | |
| Carlow | 187 | 254 |
| Cavan | 125 | 48 |

| County | No. of Units CAS 1984-2012 | No. of Units CLSS 1993 - 2012 |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Clare | 203 | 131 |
| Cork | 844 | 585 |
| Donegal | 533 | 420 |
| Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown | 543 | 372 |
| Fingal | 381 | 598 |
| Galway | 359 | 171 |
| Kerry | 402 | 169 |
| Kildare | 366 | 469 |
| Kilkenny | 437 | 137 |
| Laois | 212 | 271 |
| Leitrim | 64 | 44 |
| Limerick | 572 | 101 |
| Longford | 112 | 173 |
| Louth | 190 | 694 |
| Mayo | 409 | 193 |
| Meath | 206 | 180 |
| Monaghan | 211 | 76 |
| Offaly | 133 | 270 |
| Roscommon | 98 | 25 |
| Sligo | 237 | 237 |
| South Dublin | 263 | 992 |
| Tipperary N.R. | 233 | 132 |
| Tipperary S.R. | 262 | 390 |
| Waterford | 125 | 139 |
| Westmeath | 202 | 0 |
| Wexford | 230 | 284 |
| Wicklow | 265 | 85 |
| City Councils | | |
| Cork | 656 | 249 |
| Dublin | 2,465 | 1651 |
| Galway | 292 | 182 |
| Limerick | 335 | 99 |
| Waterford | 419 | 288 |
| TOTALS | 15,262 | 10,109 |

Leader Programmes Administration

140. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will allow a seamless transfer of applications for funding under the current Leader programme, where funding is unavailable to the new programme 2014-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53486/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): The Rural Development Programmes are implemented through a strict regulatory regime which is set by the European Commission. Each Programming period has specific Commission

and Council Regulations, to which the Programme must adhere, and these include the priorities and eligibility criteria for the Programme. These may change from one Programming period to the next.

Applications under the current Programme are made on foot of a local development strategy for the relevant area. When the 2014-2020 Programme commences my Department will be issuing a call for new local development strategies and in line with Putting People First – An Action Plan for Local Government the new delivery model will be aligned with local government.

Based on all of these factors, I do not expect applications under the current Programme to be automatically transferrable to the 2014-2020 Programme as the criteria, priorities and delivery mechanisms may have changed.

Departmental Funding

141. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if, through his Department or any of the State agencies funded by his Department funding has been supplied to a facility (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53506/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): Without having further details on the facility, I am not in a position to determine whether any funding has been made available to it under any of my Department's Programmes.

Rent Supplement Scheme Administration

142. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if it is intended to extend the estate management powers of local authorities under the Housing Acts, 1966 to 2009, to include tenancies supported by rent supplement or housing benefit. [53510/13]

143. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if it is intended to extend the estate management powers of local authorities under the Housing Acts, 1966 to 2009, to include tenancies acquired under the rental accommodation scheme where there is currently no statutory basis for tenant and estate management protocols and programmes of local authorities. [53511/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 142 and 143 together.

Housing authorities have no function in relation to the rent supplement scheme, which is operated by the Department of Social Protection. Insofar as the rental accommodation scheme (RAS) and the proposed scheme of housing assistance payments (HAP) are concerned, responsibility for estate management in relation to private rented accommodation, including RAS and HAP dwellings, rests with the landlord concerned, who has power under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to terminate a tenancy where the tenant is engaging in, or allowing others to engage in, anti-social behaviour. Nonetheless, housing authorities have certain powers set out below to address anti-social behaviour in RAS accommodation provided under the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and it is intended that forthcoming legislation will include powers for housing authorities to address anti-social behaviour in HAP accommodation.

Under section 14 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1997, housing authorities will have power to refuse to allocate, or to defer the allocation of, dwellings the subject

of rental accommodation availability agreements under Chapter 4 of Part 2 of the 2009 Act to persons engaged in anti-social behaviour or in the interest of good estate management. Under that Chapter, a housing authority may also notify the landlord of a dwelling the subject of a rental accommodation availability agreement that the tenant is or was engaged in anti-social behaviour, in which case the landlord is obliged to terminate the tenancy in accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 2004. Commencement of Chapter 4 of the 2009 Act is dependent on commencement of section 31 of the 2009 Act relating to local authority rent schemes, a process which, following the enactment of the Housing (Amendment Act) 2013, I will put in train shortly.

Voluntary Housing Sector

144. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 27 of 5 December 2013, if his Department has a means of measuring engagement of approved housing bodies with the newly developed voluntary regulation code, Building for the Future, published on 15 July 2013. [53513/13]

145. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 27 of 5 December 2013, if the proposed statutory regulation of approved housing bodies will include oversight of service level agreements between approved housing bodies and local authorities in respect of the management and maintenance of social housing units which may be either leased or owned by the relevant authority. [53514/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 144 and 145 together.

The Government’s Housing Policy Statement of June 2011 acknowledged the capacity and track record of the voluntary and cooperative housing sector and placed approved housing bodies (AHBs) at the heart of its vision for social housing provision. In July 2013 Building for the Future, a voluntary regulation code, was published as an important step towards a statutory regulatory framework. My Department, together with the Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency and the Housing Finance Agency, is now working with the sector to develop a set of financial criteria to further enhance its capacity to contribute to housing provision.

Development of the code was marked by close engagement with representatives of the sector. To date, a total of 76 organisations have signed up to the code, including 5 of the larger housing bodies. The voluntary regulation code is available on my Department’s website [www. environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie).

Details on the content of the proposed statutory regulation are not, at this stage, developed. However, the implementation of the voluntary regulatory code in the coming months will be a valuable source of information as to the scope and final content of the proposed statutory regulation to be developed by 2016. In addition, there will be widespread consultation, in the normal way, during the development of the new legal framework.

Departmental Funding

146. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to Parliamentary Question No. 27 of 5 December 2013, the recipients of the €10 million funding provided by his Department from 2011 to date through the capital advance leasing facility; the number of housing units provided by each recipient of such

funding; and the locations of where funded units have been built. [53515/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O’Sullivan): In the table below I have set out a breakdown of the some €10 million advanced by my Department to date in respect of projects under the Capital Advance Leasing Facility (CALF), by housing authority and by the approved housing bodies that have progressed these CALF projects. To date 158 social housing units have been delivered with the assistance of CALF; the remaining 25 units, to which these advances relate, are in the process of being completed.

| Housing Authority | Amount Advanced - € | Housing Units |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Athlone Town Council | 33,204 | 1 |
| Bray Town Council | 843,356 | 16 |
| Dún Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council | 7,644,494 | 103 |
| Drogheda Borough Council | 451,868 | 17 |
| Dublin City Council | 280,683 | 8 |
| Kildare County Council | 303,816 | 8 |
| Kilkenny County Council | 55,603 | 2 |
| Louth County Council | 482,565 | 17 |
| Meath County Council | 441,540 | 7 |
| North Tipperary County Council | 12,724 | 1 |
| South Dublin County Council | 67,670 | 3 |
| Overall | 10,617,523 | 183 |

| Approved Housing Body | Amount Advanced - € | Housing Units |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Cheshire Ireland | 199,709 | 3 |
| Clúid | 2,167,619 | 44 |
| HAIL | 162,976 | 5 |
| NABCO | 1,417,500 | 31 |
| North & East Housing Association | 974,123 | 35 |
| Oaklee Housing Trust | 303,816 | 8 |
| Sunbeam House Services Ltd | 843,356 | 16 |
| Tuath Housing | 4,548,424 | 41 |
| Overall | 10,617,523 | 183 |

Building Regulations Compliance

147. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53566/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): There are no proposals under consideration to amend the Building Regulations to extend the range of persons who can sign Certificates of Compliance in the role of Designer and As-

signed Certifier along the lines suggested.

Architects, Building Surveyors and Chartered Engineers are the construction professions typically involved in the design of construction works in Ireland and reference to these professions in the Building Control (Amendment) Regulations 2013 is entirely appropriate. Quantity Surveyors are not referenced in the regulations as signatories of certificates of compliance as their function is not relevant in this regard. It is open to persons who possess the requisite experience and competence in the design and surveying of buildings to seek inclusion on either of the statutory registers of architects or building surveyors as established under Part 3 and Part 5 of the Building Control Act 2007. There is no question of professionals who are not registered being allowed to sign certificates of compliance.

Planning Issues

148. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when a decision will be taken to finalise the list of protected structures in County Westmeath, which have been prepared on foot of the draft county plan; when his Department will be in a position to finalise the list in this regard taking into account the submissions made in respect thereof and the final recommendation by the local authority in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53593/13]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Jan O'Sullivan): Under section 54 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, additions to and deletions from its record of protected structures are matters for the planning authority concerned. I have no role in this matter.

Climate Change Policy

149. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to introduce climate change legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53616/13]

Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan): In February 2013, I released Outline Heads of a Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill for consideration by the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht and by stakeholders. The Outline Heads set out, *inter alia*, institutional and other arrangements for the development of national low-carbon roadmaps between now and the year 2050.

Following a consultation exercise involving the receipt of written submissions and oral hearings, the Joint Committee published its report on 20 November 2013. I am now considering the Joint Committee's report, as well as a range of other issues, with a view to finalising the draft Heads of the Bill as soon as possible. Subject to the approval of Government, my intention is to publish the final Heads before Easter 2014.

Courts Service

150. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the person who is the owner of a courthouse (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53424/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): As the Deputy is aware, under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of

the Courts Service which is independent in exercising its functions.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has confirmed that the courthouse in Ballyhaunis is the property of the Courts Service. The Courts Service has advised that from January 2014 the building will no longer be required for court purposes and it is prepared to transfer the property to the local authority, the Office of Public Works or another public body for public use. In the event that the venue is not required by those bodies it may be offered for sale.

Garda Policing Plans

151. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current Garda policy in relation to persons drinking alcohol on public streets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53474/13]

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.

Prison Security

152. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount spent by his Department in installing CCTV to Irish prisons over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53483/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The following table shows the expenditure that the Irish Prison Service incurred on CCTV installation from January, 2009 to end November, 2013.

| - | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | end Nov 2013 |
|-------|----------|----------|------|----------|--------------|
| TOTAL | €283,006 | €231,393 | nil | €511,060 | nil |

Total Spend = €1,025,459

Licence Applications

153. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details regarding the granting of restricted gun licences; the guidelines provided to members of An Garda Síochána in determining if a rifle is classified as an assault rifle and therefore requires a restricted licence; his views that stricter enforcement of target shooting being restricted to approved ranges is necessary; and if he will make a statement on the matter [53500/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): Section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 inserted a new section 2B into the Firearms Act 1925, and provided for the Minister, in the interests of public safety and security, by order, to declare specified firearms to be restricted firearms. The Firearms (Restricted Firearms and Ammunition) Order, S.I. 21 of 2008, as amended by S.I. 337 of 2009, defines what is a restricted firearm.

The Order declares assault rifles to be restricted and defines them as rifles capable of functioning as semi automatic firearms and as automatic firearms; or firearms that resemble such rifles. An application for a non restricted firearm certificate is made to the Superintendent of An Garda Síochána of the district where the applicant resides. However, applications for restricted firearm certificates are made to Chief Superintendents, thus highlighting the gravity with which the Commissioner regards such firearms.

Section 4 of the Firearms Act 1925, as amended, provides for the conditions subject to which all firearm certificates may be granted. A certificate for a restricted firearm has additional requirements which are that the applicant has a good and sufficient reason for requiring the firearm and he/she has demonstrated that the firearm is the only weapon that is appropriate for the purpose for which it is required.

The Commissioner's Guidelines on firearms licensing were published on 4 September 2009 to coincide with the commencement of the new provisions governing firearms licensing legislation. The Guidelines are for the benefit of An Garda Síochána and the shooting public alike, and the document includes guidance on the licensing of restricted firearms. Individuals seeking to licence any rifle or pistol for target shooting must be a member of an authorised rifle or pistol club.

Section 33 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 provides for the authorisation of shooting ranges by members of An Garda Síochána holding the rank of Superintendent. Applications for authorisations under this Section are made by the owner/operator of the shooting range having first obtained a firearms range certificate which is issued by my Department's Firearms Range Inspector.

Strict conditions apply to individuals seeking to licence restricted firearms and where these firearms may be used.

Deportation Orders Issues

154. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will re-examine the deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53521/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned is the subject of a Deportation Order following a comprehensive and thorough examination of his asylum claim and his application for subsidiary protection, and a detailed examination of the representations he submitted for consideration under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended). The effect of the Deportation Order is that the person concerned must leave the State and remain thereafter out of the State.

Representations were received from the persons' legal representative asking that his Deportation Order be revoked, in accordance with the provisions of Section 3(11) of the Immigration Act, 1999 (as amended). This application is under consideration at present. When a decision has been made on that application, that decision, and the consequences of that 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 Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. This service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek information by way of the Parliamentary Questions process. The Deputy may consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from the INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Naturalisation Applications

155. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current and or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 8; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53522/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned was granted temporary permission to remain in the State in 2001 under the arrangements then applicable to the non-EEA national parents of Irish born citizen children. His permission was renewed on a regular basis with the latest permission due to expire on 7 January, 2015.

A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation has been received from the person concerned. The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible.

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

Naturalisation Applications

156. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in regard to the determination of eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53523/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the application has entered the final stage of processing. It is my intention to grant citizenship to the individual named by the Deputy. A letter was issued to the person concerned on 10 December 2013 requesting submission of the prescribed fee and other documents. Upon receipt of the fee and documentation, the case will be finalised and the person concerned will be invited in due course to attend a citizenship ceremony, at which he is required to make a declaration of fidelity to the Irish nation and loyalty to the State and receive his certificate of naturalisation.

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

Residency Permits

157. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected residency status in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 6W; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53524/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The person concerned has been granted permission to remain in the State for the period to 26 August, 2015. This decision was conveyed in writing to the person concerned by letter dated 26 August, 2013.

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

INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

Deportation Orders Issues

158. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review the deportation order in the case of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53525/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the person referred to has no entitlement to work in the State. He is the subject of a Deportation Order, signed on 3 May, 2012, an Order which he has continually evaded.

I have outlined details in relation to the person concerned to the Deputy in a number of previous Parliamentary Questions. The situation remains unchanged.

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

Residency Permits

159. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will re-examine the residency status and eligibility for extended residency in the case of persons (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53526/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that neither of the persons named by the Deputy have applications for residency pending at present. They should be advised to submit applications regarding the requests mentioned.

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

Residency Permits

160. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a person (details supplied) in Dublin 11 has made an application for extension of residency status or leave to remain; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53527/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I wish to inform the Deputy that the person referred to has no entitlement to residency or leave to remain.

As outlined in previous Dáil replies in this matter the person referred to has no application pending for residency. The person concerned was granted permission to remain for a period of five years on 12 January, 2010 on the basis of being the spouse of an EU citizen, who was

residing in the State and was exercising his EU Treaty Rights.

The grounds under which she was granted permission to remain in the State no longer apply, as her EU spouse is no longer residing in this State. Therefore, the permission to remain which was granted under the provisions of Directive 2004/38/EC and European Communities (Free Movement of Persons) Regulations 2006 and 2008 has now been revoked. The person concerned was notified of this decision on 6 October, 2011.

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

Naturalisation Applications

161. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current position in regard to residency status and eligibility for naturalisation in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53528/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation has been received from the person referred to by the Deputy.

As the Deputy will appreciate, the granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process. I am informed that the application is now at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision in due course.

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

Visa Applications

162. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the procedure to enable the parents from Democratic Republic of the Congo to visit Ireland for their children's first communion on 24 May 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53529/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): It is open to a visa required National to make a visa application, for any purpose, the onus resting with the applicant to satisfy the Visa Officer as to why the visa should be granted. All information that the applicant wishes to have taken into consideration should be included where a visa application is submitted.

Comprehensive information on the visa application process is available on the website of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (www.inis.gov.ie). It should be borne in mind

however that the information contained on the website is intended to act as guidance only. It does not limit the discretion of the Visa Officer in dealing with individual applications. If the people concerned have not made visa applications, it is open to them to do so on-line through the following link: <https://www.visas.inis.gov.ie>.

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

Residency Permits

163. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the grounds on which a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24 was detained by French police in respect of which they must attend court proceedings there in 2014; if the nature of the circumstances affects their residency status; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53530/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service of my Department that the person referred to by the Deputy was granted refugee status in this State on 20 March 2002. The issue of legal proceedings in France is a matter between the person concerned and the French authorities and until such time as those proceedings are concluded it would be inappropriate to comment further.

Residency Permits

164. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the outstanding information required to determine residency entitlement in the case of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53531/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the person in question has no application for residency pending with INIS and is currently registered in the State under Stamp 3 conditions valid up until 9 July 2014.

An application for residency in the State on the basis of family dependency of an Irish national under Stamp 4 conditions in respect of the person concerned was refused on 19 November 2013 because requested supporting documentation was not fully provided. It remains open to the person concerned to submit a new application to INIS if and when they are in a position to provide the requisite supporting documentation.

The Deputy may wish to note that 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 established specifically 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.

Garda Recruitment

165. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will make a comprehensive statement on the proposed recruitment of new recruits to the Gardaí; the date on which he intends to open the competition for recruitment to the Gardaí; and when he expects the first students to start their training. [53574/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): The opening of a recruitment campaign for new recruits to An Garda Síochána was announced today, 12 December. Applicants may now submit an application through the Public Appointments Service website, www.publicjobs.ie. The closing date for applications is 9 January.

A number of stages will be involved between the application stage and trainees entering the Garda college, including a variety of tests and interviews, and it is expected that the first batch of new recruits will enter the Garda college in mid-2014.

Garda Divisional Headquarters

166. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the proposal to provide a new district Garda headquarters at Bailieborough, County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53597/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have requested a report from the Garda authorities in relation to this matter and I will be in touch with the Deputy as soon as it is to hand.

Garda Overtime

167. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has concerns that some Gardaí may have been fraudulent in their overtime and allowance claims; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53605/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that An Garda Síochána has an Internal Audit Section which carries out audits of overtime and allowance claims in line with the Internal Audit Standards set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Garda Síochána Anti-Fraud Policy ensures that the organisation is committed to identifying any risks of fraud and addressing these adequately. This is achieved by having appropriate controls in place to prevent, deter and detect fraud. All incidents of fraud will be thoroughly investigated.

Crime Prevention

168. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the measures the Gardaí will take to tackle the theft of smart phones; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53611/13]

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter): I am informed by the Garda authorities that 2 December 2013 was designated National Crime Prevention Day by the Garda Commissioner and one of the key objectives on the day was to provide information on the prevention of mobile phone theft. This message was issued by the Garda Press Office to raise the awareness of the public to mobile phone theft and provide information on steps to secure mobile phones and smart phones particularly in the run up to Christmas.

Crime prevention advice on mobile phone security was also provided on the Crimecall programme and on the Garda website www.garda.ie. This advice includes information on ways in which people can safeguard their phones, including obtaining their IMEI numbers to ensure that if their phone is stolen the service provider can immediately block the phone, rendering it immediately inoperative. Mobile Phone Security was included as a priority in An Garda Síochána's Supporting Safer Communities week in September and will also be featured in the campaign for 2014.

Local Garda management in the Dublin Metropolitan Region continue to address the ongoing challenges associated with theft and sale of mobile phones, in particular in the City Centre. In this regard Operation Aughrim was introduced in June 2012, in the Dublin Metropolitan Region, with particular emphasis being placed in the Pearse Street and Store Street Districts. This operation is intelligence led with uniformed Gardaí engaged in a high visibility patrols as well as plain clothes members conducting surveillance in identified hotspots. Contact with mobile phone shops which specialise in the sale, supply and repair of second hand smart phones also forms part of this operation.

Defence Forces Personnel

169. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Defence the formal process for investigating deaths-suicides of members of the Defence Forces. [53568/13]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter): I have been advised by the Military Authorities of the following procedures in relation to the investigation of deaths, including suicides, of members of the Defence Forces.

In the case of a death occurring in Ireland on military property and warranting investigation, the Military Police would have an investigative role. However, as the primacy of jurisdiction in such matters in Ireland rests with An Garda Síochána it is they who would have primary involvement in any such investigation.

In the case of the death of a member of the Defence Forces occurring outside a Defence Forces installation in Ireland and warranting investigation, such investigation will be undertaken by An Garda Síochána.

The Military Police conduct investigations into any death involving a member of the Defence Forces while serving overseas.

Determining the cause of death in all cases, including suicide, is the responsibility solely of the Coroner.

If the relevant military authority deems it necessary a Court of Inquiry may be established after any investigation established by An Garda Síochána, the Military Police or the Coroner, has ceased and reports have been finalised. In general, the purpose of such a Court of Inquiry would be to investigate if Defence Forces procedures and orders were followed and/or if they could be improved.

Rural Development Programme Funding

170. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm the level of national co-financing in the current RDP 2007-2013; if he will confirm his proposals for national co-financing in RDP 2014-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53411/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 over €4.8 billion is currently allocated to fund the support measures under the Programme. Various co-financing rates have applied at different times and to different measures over the course of the RDP. However, up to late November 2013 there had been total expenditure of €4.03 billion, of which €2.27 billion was EU funding.

In relation to the new RDP, 2014-2020, the European Council agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) provides some €313m per year, or a total of €2.19bn, for

Ireland under Pillar 2 of the CAP for the period 2014 – 2020.

A general EU co-financing rate of 53% is set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation but this rate may rise to a maximum of 80% for measures such as farm and business development, co-operation activities, and LEADER projects. Environmental type measures may be co-funded up to 75%. The total Exchequer funding that will be required to draw down the available European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding will depend on the types of measures included in the new Rural Development Programme and on the co-financing rates applied to these measures.

There are a number of conditions attached to Ireland's allocation of €313 million per annum. The draft Regulation provides that at least 5% of EAFRD funding must be reserved for LEADER while the draft Common Provisions Regulation provides that 6% of EAFRD funding must be set aside to a national performance reserve. The funding set aside to the performance reserve will be allocated to each Member State following a performance review in 2019. Finally, the draft Rural Development Regulation sets out that 30% of the total EAFRD amount must be reserved for environmental operations and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Work is currently ongoing in my Department to design the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the period from 2014 – 2020. In designing the new RDP, my Department must take account of the range of requirements set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation and the need to support key policy aims for the agri-food sector in the light of the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. In undertaking this work, a number of ex-ante analyses are being undertaken and a public consultation process has also taken place.

While final decisions in relation to what measures are to be included in the new RDP have not yet been made, my Department is in ongoing contact with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the overall financing that will be required.

Farm Household Incomes

171. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the plans he has put in place to address the serious income problems arising for farmers who are leaving REP scheme 4 at the end of this year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53412/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): While there are no plans to extend the current REPS 4 Scheme I am pleased to say that the revised CAP 2014 – 2020 gives priority to agri-environment schemes and requires that the new Rural Development Plan must include an agri-environment scheme. The process for the introduction of new schemes under the revised CAP is well underway.

I am, of course, conscious of the financial pressures on many farm families and of the importance of grant and scheme payments to their incomes and cash-flow. In view of the challenges we continue to face in terms of the public finances, and the requirement to balance competing needs both within the agricultural sector and in the economy as a whole, the government will give all issues careful consideration in the context of the funding requirements for the new Rural Development Fund 2014/2020.

Single Payment Scheme Administration

172. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding all 2013 CAP payments (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53427/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): An application under the 2013 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 15 May 2013. He was the subject of a cross report from this Department's ERAD Division on 24 October 2013 that detailed cross compliance breaches concerning the identification and registration of bovines and significant issues concerning animal welfare. These breaches resulted in a 65% penalty being recorded against his EU payments for 2013. A letter detailing this decision issued on 13 November 2013. The letter also informed him of his right to have the matter reviewed and his right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the independent Agriculture Appeals office. To date no such review has been requested.

Payments under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme issued on 17 October 2013 and an advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme issued on 16 October 2013 in respect of the above herd number.

As these payments were made prior to the finalisation of the cross compliance penalty my Department will initiate a process to recoup any overpayment that has been made. A letter will issue shortly from the Accounts Department of the Single Payment Unit informing the person named of the overpayment and how it can be repaid.

While payments were made to the herdowner concerned under the FWM Scheme in 2010/11, there is nothing more due to him under that Scheme.

Finally the person concerned is not a participant in either AEOS or REPS 4.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

173. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their agri-environment options scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53444/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from 1 November 2010 and full payments have issued in respect of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Scheme years.

Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. The checking process in respect of the 2013 Scheme year has been successfully completed and 75% payment will issue shortly to the person named. I expect that the balancing 25% payment will follow shortly after.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

174. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their disadvantaged area scheme and single farm payment scheme payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53475/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the application of the person named under the 2013 Disadvantaged Area Scheme has recently been finalised, payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

175. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

reason the second part of the single farm payment was not paid to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if the person has been informed of the reason for this non-payment; if they have had a chance to appeal this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53556/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The penalty applied in this case is as a result of a multi-annual sanction applied to a 2012 ground inspection as required under the terms and conditions of the scheme. The outcome of the ground inspection was appealed by the person named to The Agriculture Appeals Office and the decision was to uphold the original inspection result. A letter detailing the multi-annual sanction will issue shortly to the person named.

Departmental Schemes

176. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the payments made under each of the following schemes for 2012 and 2013, broken down on a county basis, rural environment protection scheme, agri-environment options scheme, disadvantaged area scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53557/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In the time available it has not been possible to provide the information requested. The material is being compiled and will be sent directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Agri-Environment Options Scheme Payments

177. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons due payment in 2013 under the agri-environment options scheme and the REP schemes; the number paid to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53558/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): There are a total number of 29,240 persons eligible to be paid under the 2013 REPS4 Scheme. A total number of 14,113 persons have been paid their 2013 REPS4 to date. Payments are continuing on a daily basis.

There are currently 13,746 farmers active in AEOS 1 and 2. A total of 9,308 of these farmers have been paid in respect of the 2013 Scheme year. Payments are continuing on a daily basis.

As regards payments to the 5,991 AEOS 3 participants who are in the initial year of the scheme and are therefore subject to a detailed checking process, these will commence in the first quarter of 2014.

Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Scheme Applications

178. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will extend the latest date for accepting applications under the TAMS scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53559/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) form part of the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme. I have, therefore, no plans to extend the current closing date and farmers must lodge an application with my Department on or before 31 December 2013 in order to be eligible

for grant-aid under the TAMS. However, the TAMS Sow Welfare Scheme has been extended to the end of February 2014 as a small number of farmers were unable to complete the investment works by the previous closing date of end of September 2013.

The determination of the farm sectors in which investment aid will be made available in the next rural development programme is currently under consideration within my Department.

Single Payment Scheme Payments

179. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who received penalties under the 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013 single farm payments scheme respectively; the number of these penalties that relate to the over-declaration of eligible land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53560/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As it is not possible to compile the full information requested in the available timescale, I am arranging for it to be provided directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Commonage Framework Plans

180. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he intends to issue an official response to the document on commonages prepared by the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine; his view on the proposals made by the committee; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53561/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The report of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture is a valuable contribution to the ongoing debate regarding the issues surrounding commonage lands, the views of the various stakeholders having been sought and considered by the Committee. As I have indicated previously, while it is generally accepted that this is a very complex matter and requires a very detailed action plan to cover the various issues, I intend in the near future to set out proposals on how these matters will be progressed. My firm intention is that the process will be fully inclusive and that all stakeholders, particularly farmers and their representatives will be central to the process. It is only by adopting this approach that the desired result can be achieved.

With regard to the specific recommendations of the Committee contained in their Report, I can confirm that these will be included among the range of issues to be addressed in the process that will shortly be commenced by my Department - it is very clear that matters to be resolved are very wide ranging and complex; it is self-evident that the process required to adequately address these must be fully inclusive and focused. To this end, I am determined, as indicated, to convene a broad group of all relevant stakeholders, charged with comprehensively addressing the range of issues.

Commonage lands form an important part of the farming enterprises of many farmers, particularly along the West Coast. They also form an important part of the local environment from the point of view of bio-diversity, wildlife, amenities and economic returns e.g. tourism. However, there is a substantial risk of land abandonment as under-grazing becomes more of a problem.

Under-grazing leads to an increase in ineligible land under Direct Aid and Agri-Environment Schemes and leads to risk of financial corrections being imposed by EU Commission. It is

vital, therefore, to maintain the commonages in GAEC (Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition), or where there is under-grazing, to return the habitat to GAEC. It is my stated aim that this will be achieved by working with the farmers directly managing the lands, relevant State agencies, the farming organisations and all other interested stakeholders. This matter will be further progressed when the Direct Payments Delegated Acts are adopted by the European Commission.

Common Agricultural Policy Reform

181. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will announce the rate of Exchequer co-funding for Pillar 2 of the Common Agricultural Policy programme 2014-2020; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53562/13]

192. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which rural development is likely to be facilitated in the aftermath of Common Agricultural Policy reform with particular reference to the utilisation of all funding available from the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53581/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to take Questions Nos. 181 and 192 together.

The European Council agreement on the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) provides a total of €2.19bn, or some €313m per year, for Ireland under Pillar 2 of the CAP for the period 2014 - 2020. The development of a new Rural Development Programme (RDP) under Pillar 2 will be a key support in enhancing the competitiveness of the agri-food sector, achieving more sustainable management of natural resources and ensuring a more balanced development of rural areas.

A general EU co-financing rate of 53% is set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation but this rate may rise to a maximum of 80% for measures such as farm and business development, co-operation activities, and LEADER projects. Environmental type measures may be co-funded up to 75%. The total Exchequer funding that will be required to draw down the available European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) funding will depend on the types of measures included in the new Rural Development Programme and on the co-financing rates applied to these measures.

There are a number of conditions attached to Ireland's allocation of €313 million per annum. The draft Regulation provides that at least 5% of EAFRD funding must be reserved for LEADER while the draft Common Provisions Regulation provides that 6% of EAFRD funding must be set aside to a national performance reserve. The funding set aside to the performance reserve will be allocated to each Member State following a performance review in 2019. The draft Rural Development Regulation also sets out that 30% of the total EAFRD amount must be reserved for environmental operations and climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.

Work is currently ongoing in my Department to design the new Rural Development Programme (RDP) for the period from 2014 – 2020. In designing the new RDP, my Department must take account of the range of requirements set out in the draft Rural Development Regulation and the need to support key policy aims for the agri-food sector in the light of the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. In undertaking this work, a number of ex-ante analyses are being undertaken and a public consultation process has also taken place.

While final decisions in relation to what measures are to be included in the new RDP have not yet been made, my Department is in ongoing contact with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the overall financing that will be required. I expect to make

decisions in relation to the measures to be supported under the new RDP by the end of this year, and to submit a draft programme to the Commission in early 2014.

Agriculture Schemes Data

182. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers who applied for the disadvantaged areas scheme and single farm payment scheme, broken down by county in 2013; the number that were paid their disadvantaged area payment to date; the number that had penalties applied; the number that paid their first and second single farm payment to date; the number that had penalties applied; the amount paid under each scheme in each county to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53563/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): A total of 120,551 have received the first payment of their 2013 SPS and 117,716 have received the second instalment. To date, 9,187 farmers have had a penalty applied.

The figures for those who applied and those paid in each county are set out in the following table.

| County | Number Eligible | Number Paid | Amount Paid |
|-----------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| CARLOW | 1,615 | 1,568 | €23,171,056.49 |
| CAVAN | 4,684 | 4,599 | €34,364,129.77 |
| CLARE | 6,008 | 5,967 | €46,757,703.41 |
| CORK | 12,809 | 12,580 | €159,567,461.24 |
| DONEGAL | 7,953 | 7,692 | €45,206,316.58 |
| DUBLIN | 609 | 592 | €8,705,650.72 |
| GALWAY | 11,715 | 11,439 | €75,809,780.77 |
| KERRY | 7,557 | 7,434 | €55,808,008.52 |
| KILDARE | 2,028 | 1,989 | €30,086,653.53 |
| KILKENNY | 3,420 | 3,361 | €52,705,778.82 |
| LAOIS | 2,899 | 2,854 | €38,974,899.20 |
| LEITRIM | 3,324 | 3,201 | €16,365,097.36 |
| LIMERICK | 5,029 | 4,955 | €50,246,674.13 |
| LONGFORD | 2,322 | 2,270 | €19,014,961.37 |
| LOUTH | 1,475 | 1,446 | €19,086,801.74 |
| MAYO | 11,297 | 10,975 | €56,747,549.73 |
| MEATH | 3,686 | 3,651 | €53,453,138.68 |
| MONAGHAN | 3,918 | 3,875 | €29,819,462.61 |
| OFFALY | 2,987 | 2,955 | €35,381,548.28 |
| ROSCOMMON | 5,591 | 5,497 | €39,356,456.42 |
| SLIGO | 3,876 | 3,777 | €21,493,349.85 |
| TIPPERARY | 6,850 | 6,778 | €97,682,129.70 |
| WATERFORD | 2,381 | 2,355 | €37,774,106.47 |
| WESTMEATH | 2,895 | 2,828 | €32,185,673.50 |
| WEXFORD | 3,975 | 3,908 | €58,009,920.89 |
| WICKLOW | 2,062 | 2,005 | €26,353,138.32 |
| | 122,965 | 120,551 | €1,164,127,448.10 |

Payments under the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 25 September and, to date, payments worth €186.5 million have issued nationally, to some 88,263 applicants, with payments continuing to issue on a twice weekly basis, with individual cases being paid as they are confirmed eligible. To date 10,588 applicants have had a penalty applied.

| County Name | Applied | Paid | Gross Amount |
|-------------|---------|--------|----------------|
| Carlow | 774 | 643 | €1,253,275.19 |
| Cavan | 4,945 | 4,362 | €9,103,751.90 |
| Clare | 6,249 | 5,511 | €12,596,287.54 |
| Cork | 7,283 | 6,205 | €13,758,387.78 |
| Donegal | 8,710 | 7,001 | €16,009,330.91 |
| Dublin | 152 | 101 | €223,761.07 |
| Galway | 12,361 | 10,376 | €21,686,029.79 |
| Kerry | 7,877 | 6,640 | €15,797,565.19 |
| Kildare | 548 | 429 | €726,030.87 |
| Kilkenny | 1,826 | 1,588 | €3,166,270.67 |
| Laois | 1,753 | 1,511 | €2,875,442.32 |
| Leitrim | 3,541 | 3,003 | €6,594,815.25 |
| Limerick | 3,001 | 2,524 | €4,682,741.38 |
| Longford | 2,430 | 2,122 | €4,448,240.33 |
| Louth | 825 | 645 | €1,044,430.80 |
| Mayo | 11,959 | 9,855 | €20,603,109.79 |
| Meath | 1,385 | 1,189 | €2,056,832.87 |
| Monaghan | 4,194 | 3,671 | €7,036,792.77 |
| Offaly | 2,480 | 2,118 | €3,985,204.06 |
| Roscommon | 5,883 | 5,007 | €10,629,291.24 |
| Sligo | 4,150 | 3,474 | €7,369,090.81 |
| Tipperary | 4,630 | 3,949 | €8,012,416.25 |
| Waterford | 1,504 | 1,258 | €2,454,658.90 |
| Westmeath | 2,714 | 2,345 | €4,470,349.53 |
| Wexford | 1,557 | 1,207 | €2,107,584.44 |
| Wicklow | 1,850 | 1,529 | €3,588,818.77 |

Agriculture Schemes Data

183. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money that would be available to transfer to lower paid farmers under Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 if the single farm payment was capped at €800/ha for the first 10ha and €400/ha for the balance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53564/13]

184. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the level of ceiling on the single farm payment that would be required to save the €108 million to be transferred to farmers with low payments under Pillar 1 of the Common Agricultural Policy 2014-2020 allowing that a cap of €800/ha would apply on the first 10ha; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53565/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 183 and 184 together.

The statistics requested by the Deputy are contained in the following tables. Each scenario is based on the 2012 Payments Model and relates to the application of mandatory measures and minimum convergence thresholds under the Direct Payment Regulation. This model of Internal Convergence results in the transfer of €103.783m to farmers with an Initial Unit Value below the national average. The application of any one or more optional schemes and the consequent reduction in the ceiling available to the Basic Payment Scheme would reduce the BPS payments received by these farmers and may lead to a reduction in the number of farmers affected and the amount of money saved.

Application of a cap of €800 per hectare (BPS + Greening) on the first 10 hectares

| Size of holding | 10 ha or less | More than 10 ha | Total |
|--|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| No. of Farmers | 93 | 49 | 142 |
| Value of Payment Reduction Following Application of cap of €800 on first 10 ha | €52,257.77 | €58,382.11 | €110,639.88 |

Application of a cap of €800 per hectare (BPS + Greening) on the first 10 hectares and a cap of €400 per hectare on the balance of hectares held

| Size of holding | 10 ha or less | More than 10 ha | Total |
|---|---------------|-----------------|-------------|
| No. of Farmers | 93 | 49 | 142 |
| Value of Payment Reduction Following Application of cap of €800 on first 10 ha and €400 thereafter. | €52,257.77 | €787,580.05 | €839,837.82 |

Question No. 185 withdrawn.

Agriculture Schemes Payments

186. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which the various farm support payments in respect of the current year have been met to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53575/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In respect of the 2013 Single Payment Scheme, 120,551 cases have received payment thus far. This represents 98.04% of eligible applicants. The total amount paid to date is €1,164,127,448.10. Payments under the 2013 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme commenced, on schedule, on 25 September and, to date, payments worth €186.5 million have issued nationally to some 87,713 applicants, with payments continuing to issue on a twice weekly basis, with individual cases being paid as they are confirmed eligible. Payments under the 2013 Grassland Sheep Scheme are due to commence today with payments worth €12.6 million issuing nationally to some 26,076 applicants.

Under the REPS 4 Scheme there are a total number of 29,240 participants eligible for payment in 2013. A total of 14,113 participants have now received their (75%) 2013 payment to a

value of € 57.06 million. It is anticipated that the 25% pay runs will commence shortly. There are currently 13,746 farmers active in AEOS 1 and 2. A total of 9,308 of these farmers have been paid their 75% payment in respect of the 2013 Scheme year and payment of the 25% will commence shortly. The remaining applications, which have issues that need to be resolved, will continue to be processed on an ongoing basis and will be paid once all administrative checks have been concluded. As regards payments to the 5,991 AEOS 3 participants who are in the initial year of the Scheme and are, therefore, subject to a detailed checking process, these will commence in the first quarter of 2014.

In relation to the On-Farm Investments Schemes all payments are made as soon as entitlement to grant-aid has been established.

Market Access

187. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which new markets for beef, lamb, pig meat or poultry or products thereof continue to be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53576/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I have been very active in developing relationships in new and expanding markets for beef, lamb and pig-meat, raising the profile of Ireland and guaranteeing confidence in Irish production and control systems; this provides a platform for long-term trading relationships into the future.

Since my appointment, I have led trade missions to China, the US, Algeria and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the Middle East. I recently accompanied the Taoiseach on a trade mission to Japan, one of the highlights of which was the agreement to open the market there to Irish beef. In November the US lifted its ban on the importation of beef from the European Union. This was one of my priorities last year when I visited the US, where I pushed the matter strongly with the US Department of Agriculture Secretary of State, Tom Vilsack and in meetings with Senators. My Department is now advancing the various technical requirements to ensure commencement of the trade at the earliest possible date.

My Department engages on a daily basis with many countries, in collaboration with Bord Bia and Irish embassies' personnel on market access issues.

These initiatives have led to a number of notable successes in securing agreement to import from authorities in Japan, Singapore, Egypt and Iran which allow the import of Irish beef; with Singapore, South Africa, UAE, Canada and the Russian Federation-Customs Union for the import of Irish sheep meat and with Australia and Serbia for the import of Irish pork.

Whilst the UK, as the largest single destination, and Continental Europe together account for the majority of pig meat exports, there has been a continued shift in recent years towards Third Country markets for pig meat. This differs from developments in other meats, particularly beef. Approximately one-third of Irish pig meat export volumes are destined for international markets, with China, the USA and Russia accounting for the majority of this trade.

Irish beef is now listed with more than 75 high-end retail chains across EU markets. This wide portfolio of customers has contributed significantly to higher returns for Irish beef in recent years and reflects the success of Bord Bia's differentiation and premiumisation strategy which focuses on the key attributes of Irish beef: environmentally sustainable, grass-based production systems, full traceability, quality assurance at all stages and superior eating quality. Among Bord Bia's key initiatives this year is the continued development, global promotion and marketing of its Origin Green initiative, designed to establish Ireland as a world leader in

sustainably produced food and drink. Over 200 companies are currently working with Bord Bia to develop, and commit to, sustainability plans setting out clear targets in emissions, energy, waste, water, biodiversity and corporate social responsibility activities.

Last week a delegation from my Department visited China for discussions with authorities there on the lifting of the beef BSE ban which prohibits imports from any EU country. While there are a number of stages to go before Ireland secures access for beef to China, I am hopeful that these can be progressed in 2014.

There is a strong demand for meat globally and my focus is to enable Irish exporters to take advantage of the opportunities that arise.

Animal Disease Controls

188. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which veterinary or laboratory facilities anticipated at Backweston, Celbridge, County Kildare have been put in place to date; the degree to which this provides adequate facilities sufficient to meet requirements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53577/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The laboratory facilities at Backweston are capable of meeting the vast majority of my Department's analytical and diagnostic requirements. Amelioration works in one area, the category 4 containment laboratories, are in progress with a view to bringing that laboratory into operation. The initial phase of these works will be completed in January of 2014. These preliminary works will be used to prepare a tender specification to complete the final phase of this project and ensure that this containment laboratory will meet the exacting standards required to achieve the category 4 containment status. Tendering for these additional works will take place in the first quarter of 2014.

These additional works will provide my Department with the additional containment facilities necessary to control the presence of exotic animal diseases that may be introduced into Ireland and is required to confirm Ireland's existing high animal health status.

Food Labelling

189. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which full enforcement of traceability in respect of all meat and meat products imported into this country including description and origin is now applied; the number of breaches of any such regulations recorded in the course of the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53578/13]

190. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which food and food products labelling continues to be enforced; the extent to which any breaches were identified in the past 12 months to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53579/13]

191. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which a means can be found to ensure that where a combination of meat or meat products exists in a particular form, clear indication of the content is provided on the label in a traceable form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53580/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I propose to

take Questions Nos. 189 to 191, inclusive, together.

Food production and labelling rules in the European Union operate in accordance with harmonised rules and member states controls are subject to audit and supervision by the EU Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) of the EU.

The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) under the aegis the Minister for Health has overall responsibility for the enforcement of food safety and labelling requirements in Ireland. It carries out this remit through service contracts with my Department and other agencies including the Health Service Executive (HSE), Local Authority Veterinary Service and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority.

Under current EU regulations, origin labelling is only mandatory for fresh beef and meat coming from third countries. However, new implementing rules on country of origin labelling for fresh, chilled and frozen sheep, goat, pig and poultry meat were adopted by the European Commission last week. These new rules will apply from 1 April 2015.

In relation to traceability, EU Food Hygiene Regulations stipulate, among other things, that there should be 'one up, one down' traceability at each point along the food chain and I am satisfied that food business operators in this country generally meet that standard.

The total number of infringements relating to breaches of labelling and traceability legislation during 2012 is as follows:

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| - Beef labelling: | 1,147 |
| - Traceability: | 2,923 |
| - Country of origin for beef: | 2,598 |
| - General labelling: | 2,107 |

These infringements relate to both domestically produced and imported food inspected in Irish food businesses. Other than the statistics given on beef labelling, these figures cover all food products and are not limited to meat and meat products.

There have been seven successful prosecutions relating to traceability and labelling non-compliances from the period January 2012 to date.

Question No. 192 answered with Question No. 181.

Transport Costs

193. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which it has been possible to alleviate the extra transport costs imposed on the agri-sector arising from the maximum permissible vehicle height restrictions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53582/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In light of the difficulties experienced by farmers in sourcing fodder supplies, earlier this year I announced the allocation of funding for an imported fodder transport scheme, designed to reduce the cost to farmers of imported forage (hay, silage, haylage) from outside the island of Ireland. The aid substantially covered the cost of transport into the country, thus reducing the cost to farmers of

a bale of hay by approximately one third.

While the scheme operated through the co-operatives, marts and other approved agencies, the actual beneficiaries are the individual farmers and primary producers who needed urgent supplies of feed. Operating the scheme in this manner was the quickest and most effective way of getting the fodder to those who needed it.

The Minister for Transport, who is responsible for road traffic law, introduced Statutory Instrument 366 of 2008 - Road Traffic (Construction and Use of Vehicles) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008 which sets the maximum height limit of vehicles in this country at 4.65 metres.

Following public consultation undertaken by the Department of Transport, prior to the completion of the relevant Regulations in 2008, the intention to introduce a 4.65m limit was announced in January 2007. In response to representations from the haulage industry, it was agreed that a five year derogation from that limit would apply to vehicles registered, licensed or in use prior to 1st November 2008. The derogation was introduced to allow a five-year period within which vehicles operating at heights in excess of the new limits could be withdrawn from use in Ireland in an orderly and planned manner, or to allow for the necessary height reductions by operators and would minimise the economic costs of the change. This derogation expired on 31 October 2013.

Given the lead-in time that this height limit has had, extending the derogation would have the effect of penalising those operators who have adjusted their fleet to ensure compliance with this well flagged law, while rewarding those that did not.

Animal Welfare

194. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which pig and poultry producers have been able to upgrade their accommodation in line with animal welfare regulations; if any specific issues remain outstanding in this regard; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53583/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The new EU animal welfare rules for the pig sector came into force on 1 January 2013. Grant-aid was made available under the TAMS Sow Welfare Scheme in order to assist farmers to bring their facilities up to the standards required by the new rules.

As a small number of farmers were unable to complete the investment works concerned by the previous closing date of end-September 2013, I recently agreed to extend the deadline concerned until end-February 2014. This will be the final extension for completion of work and lodgement of a payment claim under the above-mentioned Scheme. Farmers will be aware that it is an offence to keep pigs in non-compliant housing after 1 January 2013.

Fishing Industry Development

195. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which adequate provision has been made to ensure the survival of families dependent on the fishing industry in the context of EU fishing policy review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53584/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) will provide the framework for the long term sustainability of fish stocks around our shores, the continued economic viability of our fishing fleet and fish

processing while supporting the communities that depend on a vibrant fishing industry. The package agreed will support the rebuilding of fish stocks in European waters and will allow for setting TACs and quotas to reflect catches when a landing obligation is introduced on the basis that for the first and subsequent years, discarding of that stock no longer be allowed. In the longer term as fish stocks reach and are maintained at healthy levels, it will support increased fishing opportunities for our fishermen.

The commitment to develop and strengthen biologically sensitive areas, with spawning grounds and high populations of juvenile fish, will protect the livelihoods of coastal communities by ensuring that fish are allowed to grow to maturity, are more plentiful and fished in an environmentally responsible manner.

I am committed to continuing the path set out in Food Harvest 2020 for the development of the seafood sector in Ireland into 2014. The strategy set out in Food Harvest involves both the processing and aquaculture sectors and to date data from BIM indicate that added-value sales has increased by €50 million in 2013 alone.

I am fully supportive of implementing appropriate measures to achieve the objectives set out in the CFP reform and food Harvest 2020 which will bring real and meaningful reform and development in the seafood sector.

Fisheries Protection

196. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which wild trout and salmon stocks continue to be safeguarded in the context of marine aquaculture; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53585/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): All applications for marine based aquaculture licences are considered by my Department in accordance with the provisions of the following legislation:

- Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997,
- Foreshore Act 1933,
- EU Habitats Directive of 92/43/EEC,
- EU Birds Directive 79/409/EEC,
- Consolidated Environmental Impact Assessment Directives 2011/92/EU.

The legislation provides for both statutory and general public consultation. The statutory consultees include Inland Fisheries Ireland, which has specific responsibility for wild salmon and trout stocks.

All submissions received as part of both the statutory consultation stage of the process and the general public consultation stage form an integral part of my Department's consideration of every application.

Food Harvest 2020 Strategy

197. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which the targets set in Food Harvest 2020 continue to be met throughout each sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53586/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): I am confident that the industry developed targets set out in Food Harvest 2020 are achievable and can be met. The main targets in the Food Harvest report are by 2020 to increase the value of:

- Primary output in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sector by 33%;
- Value added production by 40%;
- Agriculture, food (including seafood) and drink exports by 42%.

In addition, a 50% increase in milk production and a 78% increase in the volume of aquaculture production is envisaged.

Progress on these targets and the 215 recommendations in the Food Harvest report are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis by the Food Harvest High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC). The HLIC, which I chair, consists of the senior officials of all state agencies involved in the agriculture, food and fisheries sector. Their third report “*Milestones for Success 2013*”, published in September, showed that the sector had achieved growth in excess of 25% (primary production), 20% (value-added) and 13% (exports) by the end of 2012, compared to the baseline period.

Food Safety Standards Regulation

198. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is satisfied that any poultry or poultry products entering this jurisdiction comply with all Irish and or EU regulations in respect of hygiene, husbandry, production or handling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53587/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): International trade in agri-food products is a reality with which we must live and as a general proposition, as a country with a strong export focus, it is clearly in Ireland’s broader economic interests to ensure that there is a reasonably liberal, but balanced international trade environment.

To protect animal and public health and in accordance with international trade agreements, the European Union (EU) has set down the conditions for importation of consignments of products of animal origin from non-EU countries intended for release into free circulation in the EU. These import requirements are generic and applicable for all countries authorised to export to the EU. The legislation imposes a series of health and supervisory requirements, designed to ensure that imported products meet standards at least equivalent to those required for production in, and trade between Member States. Products must have originated in an area where there are no restrictions imposed under EU Safeguard measures and come from establishments which are under the supervision and control of the competent authorities. The products must be free from residues and contaminants, correctly labelled and travel with the specific health certificates or other documents conforming to the models laid down in EU legislation drawn up in conformity with the relevant model for the product, completed and signed on behalf of the competent authorities of the country of export. The EU’s Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) carries out assessments of third countries wishing to export these products to the EU and submits for Commission approval those where the responsible authorities can provide appropriate guarantees as regards compliance or equivalence with Community feed and food law and animal health rules. Third countries and their establishments that are approved to export are audited and inspected by the FVO with regard to these guarantees and reports of the findings of inspections are published on its website.

Import controls on products of animal origin arriving from third countries must be performed at an EU Border Inspection Post approved for that category of product being presented. Consignments for import requiring veterinary checks must be notified in advance to the Border Inspection Post of import and presented on arrival for checks with all the appropriate documentation. Border Inspection Posts in Ireland are operated by my Department. The import controls procedures on products of animal origin are highly prescriptive and strictly audited by the FVO to ensure compliance. Again, reports of the findings of inspections are published on the FVO's website.

In summary, the import of all products including poultry from third countries is governed by a comprehensive and robust legislative framework laid down at EU level, controlled by EU Member States in the first instance, and audited by the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office, to ensure compliance with all of the relevant food safety standards. Finally, consumers wishing to purchase high quality Irish poultry products should look for the Bord Bia Quality Assurance mark.

Common Fisheries Policy Review

199. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the degree to which conservation measures already adopted in the context of the Common Fisheries Policy or otherwise continue to improve fish stocks in traditional Irish fishing waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53588/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): This Department's recent Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) summarises the pressure on the 59 stocks dealt with in the 2013 Stock Book and compares with the same evaluation presented last year. While there has been some improvement in the status of some fish stocks, others remain a concern

The newly reformed Common Fisheries Policy prioritises conservation measures and environmental issues and implements the ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management to ensure the negative impacts of fishing activities on the marine ecosystem are minimised, it also endeavours to ensure that aquaculture and fisheries activities avoid the degradation of the marine environment.

The SIA also notes that the activities of the fleet have other impacts on the wider marine ecosystem. Greater efforts are necessary to achieve a more harmonious and eco-friendly interaction with the broader environment and to support compliance with European Environmental Directives

As a general principal Ireland is committed to having Total Allowable Catches set at levels that can produce Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY) by 2015, where possible and by 2020 at the latest, this is consistent with the newly reformed Common Fisheries Policy reform. A core objective of the Common Fisheries Policy is to "ensure exploitation of living aquatic resources that provides sustainable economic, environmental and social conditions". Under the ongoing reform of the CFP, the goal of attaining fishing mortality rates that are consistent with delivering maximum sustainable yield by 2015 has been set. While achieving this through the regulation of catches (TACs) may be relatively straight-forward in the context of a single species fishery; in multi-gear, multi-species and multi-fleet fisheries using single species, TAC constraints are complex and challenging.

A practical and phased discards policy is now being introduced where in the early years of implementation, TACs and quotas will be set to take account of current levels of discards, which should see quotas increase over time.

I am fully supportive of implementing appropriate measures to achieve the objectives set out in the CFP reform. The new Common Fisheries Policy reform agreement will bring real and meaningful reform to how EU waters are fished in the future. The agreement is designed to ensure the long term sustainability of fishing in Ireland and throughout EU waters.

Rural Environment Protection Scheme Payments

200. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when REP scheme 4 payment will be made available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53596/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): The person named commenced REPS 4 in May 2008 and received payments for the first five years of their contract. REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Administrative checks in respect of the 2013 payments have been finalised and the 75% payment amounting to €5898.82 issued to the person named on the 5th December 2013. The remaining 25% balancing payment will issue shortly.

Disadvantaged Areas Scheme Payments

201. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if a decision has been made on an appeal for disadvantaged area scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53600/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): As processing of the appeal received from the person named under the 2013 Disadvantaged Area Scheme has recently been successfully finalised, payment will issue shortly, directly to the nominated bank account of the person named.

Equine Industry Issues

202. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the actions he will take to deal with the issue of oversupply of horses in the country and with the large number of abandoned horses both in urban and rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53601/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): My Department is keeping the horse welfare situation under review and, in particular, the need for additional welfare measures. However, there is no evidence of a major welfare problem in the horse sector at present due to the relatively high level of horse slaughterings this year and the very good weather well into the Autumn, which has created a very favourable fodder situation.

My Department, in conjunction with the local authorities and the gardaí are adopting a pro-active approach in relation to welfare issues in the horse sector and this has reduced the numbers of abandoned horses throughout the country particularly in urban areas. The Deputy may be aware that, in recent weeks, 82 horses were seized in the Cork city area. While a small number of horses had to be euthanized on welfare grounds, the majority that were seized are being re-homed with the assistance of welfare groups and the remainder were required to be correctly identified in accordance with EU legislation prior to being returned to their owners.

Furthermore, last week, my Department engaged with the local authority and An Garda Síochána in a similar proactive manner in County Wicklow.

My Department devotes considerable resources to issues relating to the welfare of animals including horses. To date this year, my Department has paid some €2.5m to the Local Authorities under the Control of Horses Act to enable them to deal with stray and unwanted horses. My Department also provides considerable financial support to animal welfare organisations to assist them in the delivery of animal care and welfare services. In 2012, this funding came to a total of €1,365,000 to some 140 organisations. I plan to make an allocation in respect of 2014 shortly.

In conclusion, I can assure the Deputy that my Department will continue to work with local authorities and gardaí in other areas if similar cases occur and intervention is required. I urge the public to continue to avail of the Animal Welfare Helpline in operation by my Department, to report instances where animal welfare may be compromised on 1850 211 990.

Horse Slaughtering Data

203. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of registered horses in the country at present; the number slaughtered at registered premises during the past five years; the estimated number of unregistered horses in the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53602/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): It is not possible to provide the exact number of registered equines resident in the country at present due to the absence of precise figures for exports and unrecorded deaths in the information provided by the Passport Issuing Organisations to my Department earlier this year, in the context of the establishment of a central data base by the Department.

However, I understand that a study entitled “Economic Contribution of the Sport Horse Industry to the Irish Economy”, commissioned by Horse Sport Ireland and carried out by UCD in 2012, estimated the population of sport horses registered with Passport Issuing Organisations at 124,000. Furthermore, estimates provided by Weatherbys Ireland and Horse Racing Ireland indicate that the number of thoroughbred horses in the breeding sector and in training was 30,000 in 2012. In view of the nature of the issue, it is not possible to provide any reasonable estimate of the number of unregistered horses in the country. The number of horses slaughtered at approved premises in each of the years since 2009 was as follows:

| YEAR | TOTAL |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 2009 | 4,247 |
| 2010 | 9,790 |
| 2011 | 17,560 |
| 2012 | 24,362 |
| 2013 (up to 30/11/13) | 10,027 |

Fisheries Protection

204. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the efforts his Department is making to prevent British ships from fishing in Irish waters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53618/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): Access arrangements for all EU fishing vessels are set down in the Common Fisheries Policy. As the Deputy is aware, UK fishing vessels have access to fishing quotas in ICES Areas VI and VII under the Common Fisheries Policy. Operational issues in relation to sea fisheries control are a matter for the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

Pigmeat Sector

205. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding DNA testing on pigmeat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53639/13]

Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney): In 2011, the European Union passed a new Council Regulation on Food Information for the Consumers (FIC), Regulation 1169/2011, which has updated the requirements for consumer information and labelling in a number of areas including;

- country of origin or place of provenance including the origin labelling for meats other than beef (that is pigs, sheep, goats and poultry),
- voluntary labelling of all foods and
- the mandatory labelling of meat as an ingredient.

These requirements are to be implemented by way of EU Commission implementing regulations and these regulations were agreed last week and will come into force on 1 April 2015. Consumers should rightly expect not to be misled by inaccurate labelling and must have confidence in what they are eating. Ireland will continue to give leadership in this area and will work with its EU partners to strengthen consumer assurance measures, including more accurate labelling requirements as set out in the Regulation (1169/2011/EC). I can assure the Deputy that Ireland will rigorously enforce these new regulations.

Child Poverty

206. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if an application or submission was received from Tuam, County Galway in respect of the area-based interventions addressing child poverty; the type of organisations that made submissions or applications; if it is still open to groups to make submissions or applications; the plans for such interventions in the future; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53410/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department is responsible for implementing the new Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme 2013-2016 which is an early intervention and prevention programme which provides for targeted, evidence based interventions, to improve outcomes for children and families in areas of severe disadvantage. The ABC programme is co-funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and will have a total funding allocation over 2013-2016 of €29.7m.

In March of this year, applications were invited from area-based not-for-profit organisations, which were either part of a pre-existing consortium or were prepared to form one for the purpose of the new programme. In each case, the consortium had to be led by an organisation with a proven track record of working with statutory and non-statutory service providers and local community groups. The scoring criteria identified in the application process were evidence of need; quality of the proposal; additionality and sustainability; and understanding and captur-

ing outcomes. The closing date for receipt of applications was 31st May 2013.

Fifty applications to participate in the new programme were received and evaluated against the programme criteria. The evaluation process was undertaken by a Working Group of the Inter-departmental Project Team which was set up in February of this year to oversee the implementation of the programme. The Project Team is chaired by my Department and includes representatives from seven other Departments, our co-funders The Atlantic Philanthropies and two organisations, Pobal and the Centre for Effective Services, which have been designated to manage the programme on behalf of my Department.

Based on the evaluation process, in addition to the three projects which participated in the previous Prevention and Early Intervention Programme (PEIP) implemented by my Department in partnership with The Atlantic Philanthropies, the Project Team recommended nine of the fifty applicants for entry into the next, design stage of the programme. A further application was recommended for entry to the design stage of the programme, on the basis that it will form part of one of the three projects which were previously in the PEIP. The recommendations of the Project Team were noted by Government on 25th November 2013.

I can confirm to the Deputy that an application was received from Galway Early Education, under the lead organisation Galway City Partnership, but that this application is not included in the areas which have been invited to proceed to the next stage. My Department is currently engaged in supporting successful applicants through the design stage of the programme and there are no plans at present to invite new applications. My Department will, however, be developing a mentoring programme in 2014 in the implementation of evidence-based programmes to improve outcomes for children and young people, for applicants which did not score sufficiently highly to enter the programme at this stage but showed future potential against the criteria set for the programme. I understand that Galway Early Education was included in this group and has been invited to participate in the mentoring programme when it is established.

Community Development Projects

207. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the funding East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd has received from the Department in 2010, 2011, 2012 and to date in 2013; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53434/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The Department of Children and Youth Affairs does not directly provide funding to the East Clare Community Co-Op Society Limited. However, the Deputy might note that the Family Support Agency, which falls under the remit of my Department, provides funding to the organisation under its Scheme of Grants for Marriage, Child and Bereavement Counselling Services. The amounts paid under this Scheme since 2011 are set out in the following table:

| Year | Amount |
|------|---------|
| 2011 | €10,700 |
| 2012 | €9,500 |
| 2013 | €8,300 |

Health Services Staff Data

208. **Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 232 of 26 September 2013, if the Health Service Executive

has provided a response; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53473/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): The HSE compiles a monthly census of employment in the public health and social care sector and submits it to the Department of Health. Figures supplied from this census of employment in the public health and social care sector, indicate that the number of whole-time equivalent (WTE) social workers employed in the HSE Children and Families service area in the years 2010 - 2012 are as follows:

| Years | Staff |
|-------|-------|
| 2010 | 1,220 |
| 2011 | 1,256 |
| 2012 | 1,452 |

The census numbers reflect the outcome of a process of reclassification of social workers within the HSE into various care groups, including children and families, as part of the process of establishing the Child and Family Agency. Consequently direct comparisons with social work numbers for previous years are not meaningful.

Departmental Funding

209. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the present position regarding the application by Cavan County Council-Cavan Sports Partnership for funding to develop a skate park in Cavan town; when the application is likely to be approved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [53598/13]

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald): My Department has a capital funding allocation of €250,000 in 2013 to support the provision of play and recreation facilities for children and young people. Unfortunately, the application from Cavan County Council/Cavan Sports Partnership was not successful in securing funds towards the development of a skate park in Cavan Town on this occasion and they were notified about this on 2nd December 2013.

Health Services Staff Remuneration

210. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to ensure that money received by charities and hospitals and used as top-up payments is repaid to the taxpayer; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53573/13]

227. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health the actions that will be taken regarding the top-up salary payments by section 38 agencies to its chief executives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53572/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 210 and 227 together.

As has been reported extensively, a considerable number of Section 38 agencies have been found to be in breach of Government pay policy with regard to the remuneration of senior staff. I have requested urgent action to ensure that every agency is fully compliant with Government pay policy. The HSE has a team of senior managers following up with individual agencies and the Director General of the HSE is meeting the Chairpersons and the CEOs of all the Section 38 organisations today. The HSE will take whatever actions are necessary to deliver full compliance and ensure that any governance deficits identified are comprehensively rectified im-

mediately. The question of recoupment will be dealt with on a case by case basis. As indicated above the HSE is urgently meeting individual agencies and it is important that due process is followed.

National Lottery Funding Disbursement

211. **Deputy Michael McNamara** asked the Minister for Health the funding East Clare Community Co-Op Society Ltd. has received from his Department in 2010 to 2013, inclusive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53407/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The organisation in question applied for National Lottery funding in 2011, 2012 and 2013. A National Lottery grant of €5,000 was awarded to the organisation in 2011. Each year applications to the Department for National Lottery grants far exceed the funding available and it is not possible to assist every organisation that applies.

Hospital Consultants Contract Issues

212. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultants that have remitted private practice fees to hospitals where they work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53415/13]

213. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money that has been remitted to hospitals from consultants who have exceeded their specified ratio of public to private patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53416/13]

214. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that in 2012, more than 50% of inpatients treated at Croom Orthopaedic Hospital were private patients, while 38% of inpatients treated at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and 36% of those treated at Mercy University Hospital in Cork were private patients and some 35% of children treated at Crumlin children's hospital had private health insurance, the reason the health service is not pursuing this and recouping the money it is entitled to under the terms of the consultant contract; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53417/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I propose to take Questions Nos. 212 to 214, inclusive, together.

Implementation of Consultant Contract 2008 is a matter for the HSE in the first instance. The Contract sets out clear rules on the permitted ratios of public-private practice and the measures to ensure that these provisions are complied with. Depending on contract type, a consultant may have no access to private practice (Type A contract holders), a cap of 20% private activity for newly appointed consultants (Type B) or a cap of up to 30% in the case of certain existing consultants. Under the Public Service Agreement, following negotiations at the LRC in September 2012, health service employers and the consultant representative bodies agreed a range of measures to support improved patient care, including a renewed commitment to consultant compliance with the limits on private practice activity. I have asked the HSE to revert directly to the Deputy in relation to the specific issues he has raised.

Home Care Packages

215. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a home care package application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53428/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a

service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Medical Card Eligibility

216. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card is at risk in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53437/13]

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 issued to Oireachtas members.

National Lottery Funding Disbursement

217. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide details of Health Service Executive lottery funding; the amount of lottery funding dispersed by the Health Service Executive to organisations in 2013; the process for allocating this funding; the person who decides the way the funding is allocated; the organisations that received funding in 2013 detailing the amount they received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53468/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): I have requested the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the specific issues raised.

Psychological Services

218. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the level of resources for child psychologist services at the Child and Adult Mental Health Services in Cork City (details supplied); the current posts that are vacant; if any recruitment is planned; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53469/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As this is a service issue this question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Care of the Elderly Provision

219. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on a case (details supplied). [53477/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): I note that the HSE requested additional information on 30 October 2013, which has now been provided in the details supplied. As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Parliamentary Questions Numbers

220. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to reduce the waiting time for the parliamentary questions contact in the Health Service Executive to reply to a

parliamentary question from the date it is in Dáil Éireann, which is currently 15 days, to a waiting time of ten days or lower; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53498/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The HSE's commitment, set out in the 2013 Service Plan, is to respond to 75% of parliamentary questions within 15 working days of referral. The HSE is currently responding to over 80% of parliamentary questions within 15 days of referral and 57% within 10 days. 2014 will be a challenging year but the goal is to continue to maintain and improve those response times within that overall commitment.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Eligibility

221. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement community based dedicated health and rehabilitation supports for teenagers aged 13 to 17 years following an acquired brain injury which would target the individual needs of teenagers and provide specialist advice-services to them and their families; if he will address the gap in health policy for adolescents which would take into account their educational, emotional, physical and family needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53509/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): The supports provided by the Health Service Executive (HSE) to people with brain injury involves a multi-disciplinary team approach and incorporates Acute Hospital Services, the National Rehabilitation Hospital, Primary Care, Community Services, Long-term assisted living supports and Rehabilitative training services. These services are provided directly by the HSE and a number of non-statutory organisations. Within Disability Services, Headway Ireland and Acquired Brain Injury Ireland are the two main organisations funded to meet the needs of such persons. As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

Primary Care Centres Provision

222. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Health the reason a proposal to build a primary care centre in an area (details supplied) in County Offaly can no longer proceed, despite the fact that considerable preplanning was conducted with the local Health Service Executive representatives and as a result of which a considerable sum of money has already been invested in planning and development of same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53516/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): Delivery of health-care infrastructure is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Infectious Disease Screening Service

223. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health if his Department's Lyme Disease Awareness Group will tackle the need to provide better diagnostic tests and treatment for Lyme Disease sufferers; and the strategy the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Health Service Executive Health Surveillance Centre have to deal with Lyme Disease [53519/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Health Protection Surveillance Centre is establishing a Lyme Borreliosis Group whose aim will be to develop strategies to undertake primary prevention measures in order to minimise the harm caused by Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland based on best international evidence. The remit of the Group will also include raising awareness amongst both clinicians and the general public and exploring ways in which to improve

surveillance of neuroborreliosis in Ireland.

A joint Consensus Statement on the Clinical Management of Lyme Borreliosis was produced in November 2012 by the Scientific Advisory Committee of the Health Protection Surveillance Centre, the Infectious Diseases Society of Ireland, the Irish Society of Clinical Microbiologists, the Irish Institute of Clinical Neuroscience and the Irish College of General Practitioners. This Consensus Statement was produced in order to ensure that the management of Lyme Borreliosis is as consistent and as standardised as possible. The Consensus Statement lays out the optimal conditions on the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme Borreliosis in Ireland.

Long-Term Illness Scheme Numbers

224. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to set up a multiple sclerosis registry similar to the cancer registry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53569/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): There are no proposals or plans in place to set up a Multiple Sclerosis registry.

Medicinal Products Supply

225. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will carry out a study on the moneys that could be saved in the health budget by ensuring that patients take their correct medications and drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53570/13]

226. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he has any plans for his Department or the Health Service Executive to hold a campaign regarding the non-adherence of persons to taking their medications and drugs so that his Department can make cost savings in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53571/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 225 and 226 together.

A Medicines Management Programme (MMP) has been established by the HSE to provide sustained national leadership in this area. The aims of the MMP include (a) ensuring that patients have access to the essential medicines that they need; (b) facilitating more cost-effective prescribing with initiatives in relation to high-cost medicines; (c) ensuring value for money in relation to medicines; and (d) enhancing evidence based prescribing and optimising patient safety through a reduction in medication related adverse events.

The MMP will focus on drugs and medicines which can be expected to have a significant impact in terms of patient safety and expenditure. In this context, the MMP will monitor drug utilisation and expenditure under the community drug schemes and initiate a health technology assessment for products where there are queries in relation to efficacy and value for money. This process has the potential to produce significant savings in drug expenditure while at the same time enhancing patient safety.

The MMP has also introduced the preferred drugs initiative which facilitates more cost-effective prescribing particularly in relation to high-cost medicines and it has commenced a series of educational meetings with general practitioners to reinforce the message around safe, effective and cost-effective prescribing as well as generic prescribing.

Compliance with medication is a matter for the patient in conjunction with their medical practitioner. Pharmacists also have a vital role to play in relation to the management of individual patients and/or medicines.

Question No. 227 answered with Question No. 210.

Departmental Funding

228. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a breakdown of moneys provided to groups opposed to suicide over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53604/13]

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

Departmental Funding

229. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide a breakdown of the funding provided to the Dyspraxia Association of Ireland over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53608/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): Accountability for the management of services is a matter for the Health Service Executive to address within the ambit of its Vote (Vote 39). The level of health services to be delivered each year within the available funding is set out in the HSE's annual National Service Plan. As the Deputy's question relates to a service matter, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Obesity Strategy

230. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health the measures he is taking to prevent obesity in school children; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53614/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): As Minister for Health, I have made overweight and obesity and in particular childhood overweight and obesity, a public health priority and have established a Special Action Group on Obesity (SAGO) whom I meet with regularly to progress the obesity agenda. The Special Action Group on Obesity comprises representatives from the Departments of Health, Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills, the Health Service Executive, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland, *Safefood* and other key stakeholders, to examine and progress a number of issues to address the problem of obesity. The range of measures being implemented by my Department seeks to promote a healthy lifestyle, to encourage people to make healthier food choices, to become more active and take the first steps towards reducing obesity.

The Special Action Group on Obesity is concentrating on a range of measures including actions such as: calorie on menus in restaurants, how best to support healthy eating choices, the supply of healthy food products in vending machines in schools, the detection and treatment of obesity, healthy eating guidelines and the promotion of physical activity. As one of the measures specifically designed to combat Childhood Obesity, on Monday 21 October, I launched the *Safefood/Healthy Ireland/HSE* three year Childhood Obesity Campaign – *Childhood Obesity: Let's take it on – one small step at a time* which is designed to create greater awareness among parents about the threat of childhood overweight and obesity and provide practical tips to help address the problem with the ultimate aim and effecting behaviour change.

I have also tasked SAGO with establishing a sub-committee to investigate and develop

a range of options around pricing and other mechanisms in order to reduce consumption of foods and drinks from the top-shelf of the Food Pyramid (as per the Department of Health's Healthy Eating Guidelines) as these foods and drinks are not necessary for health. The sub-committee's report and recommendations were presented to me on Wednesday, 23rd October when I attended a meeting of SAGO and an action plan is now being developed around these recommendations.

Because the issue of Childhood Obesity is of such serious concern for me I placed it centre stage of the Irish Presidency of the EU and was successful in having the EU mandated to draw up an EU Action Plan to tackle Childhood Obesity. This Plan has been drafted and will be finalised before the end of the year. SAGO will continue to liaise with other Departments and organisations in a cross-sectoral approach to further progress initiatives to help halt the rise in overweight and obesity.

As childhood is a critical period for developing obesity as well as an opportune time to prevent or intervene on it, as eating and physical activity patterns are developed and established during this period, the majority share of HSE Obesity funding is channelled towards childhood obesity prevention programmes, run by the HSE and increasingly with partners both in public and voluntary organisations, who are best placed in the community to provide effective initiatives.

Services for People with Disabilities

231. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding payment of items in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53620/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch): As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

Orthodontic Service Waiting Lists

232. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health if he will evaluate the prospects of the moratorium on recruitment being lifted for the Health Service Executive's orthodontic service in order that clinical staff can be employed to treat children assessed and placed on the category 4c treatment waiting list; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53641/13]

234. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health his plans to alleviate the waiting list for treatment for children who have been assessed and have been placed on the category 4c waiting list of the orthodontic services of the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53643/13]

Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Alex White): I propose to take Questions Nos. 232 and 234 together.

The reduction in size of the public service has been an essential component of the approach to addressing the State's fiscal difficulties. This has been combined with a firm focus on improving public service efficiency and effectiveness. The Haddington Road Agreement provides for some five million additional working hours annually. These measures will enable the health service to continue to reduce overall numbers, while maintaining services and service levels to the greatest possible extent.

The HSE provides orthodontic treatment to those who have been assessed and referred for treatment before their 16th birthday. Orthodontic referrals are generally received via the Public

Dental Service school screening programme. An individual's access to orthodontic treatment is determined in accordance with the Modified Index of Treatment Need. The dental health component has five categories ranging from 1 (no need for treatment) to 5 (great need). Further sub-divisions of these categories are substantially based in accordance with the causes of mal-occlusion, e.g. misalignment of teeth. Patients with the greatest level of need are provided with treatment and those with urgent clinical need are prioritised. The HSE has commissioned an independent review of orthodontic services. The outcome of this review, which is near completion, will give guidance as to what changes will be desirable to provide the best possible model of care delivery, given the current resources available and future demand for services.

Health Services Staff Issues

233. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Health the options for the transfer of staff within the Health Service Executive, or for the HSE to utilise clinical staff resources within the service, in order to alleviate waiting lists for treatments; the services for which such transfers-utilisation of staff can occur; his plans for enhancing such transfers-utilisation of staff in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53642/13]

Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly): The Public Service Agreements 2010 - 2016 provide for the increased use of staff redeployment arrangements within the health service and across different sectors of the public service.

All staffing arrangements have to be considered in the light of the current budgetary pressures in the health service and the need to reduce the numbers employed throughout the public sector. This has been combined with a firm focus on improving public service efficiency and effectiveness. The Haddington Road Agreement provides for health service staff to increase their working hours. The value ascribed to this element of the Agreement is in the region of five million hours annually for the health workforce as a whole.

The Deputy will be aware that public hospitals are being reorganised into more accountable hospital groups. I am confident that the group structure will allow for more efficient deployment of human resources, facilitating effective and flexible use of staff, thus allowing a better response to service needs.

The HSE has been asked to respond directly to the Deputy in relation to the procedures applicable in the health service for such redeployment.

Question No. 234 answered with Question No. 232.

Road Safety Authority

235. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the recourse available to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry who is unhappy with the results of a driving test; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53398/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The subject matter of this question, namely the operation of the driving test, is the statutory responsibility of the Road Safety Authority. I have therefore referred the question to the Authority for direct reply, and I would ask the Deputy to contact my office if a response has not been received in ten days.

Roads Maintenance

236. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide details with regard to maintaining the funding of local authorities in counties with high road usage. [53457/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Firstly I would like to explain that the improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads, in its area, is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

I announced the 2013 regional and local road grant allocations in January this year providing €347 million to local authorities for works on regional and local roads. I also provided an additional €2.7 million for drainage works on regional and local roads in March this year. More recently, (12th June) I announced an additional €50 million to County and City Councils for regional and local roads bringing the overall amount available in 2013 to approximately €400 million.

The main two road grants are the Restoration Improvement and the Restoration Maintenance grants. Both of these grants are allocated based on the length of mileage of regional and local roads within the county. In the case of counties that experience higher road traffic than the norm, a loading is applied to the mileage within the county. In the case of Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown County Council a factor of 2 is applied, one of 1.5 is applied for Fingal and South Dublin County Councils while a factor of 1.2 is used for Kildare, Louth and Meath County Council.

Details of the regional and local road grant payments to local authorities are outlined in the regional and local road grant payment booklets which are available in the Oireachtas Library. Details of the 2013 regional and local road grant allocations to each local authority are also available in the Oireachtas Library. The 2014 grant allocations will be announced early in the New Year.

Roads Maintenance

237. **Deputy Anthony Lawlor** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if the Department will co-fund, with Kildare County Council, the upgrade of a junction (details supplied) in County Kildare; if it is possible to build a roundabout at the junction instead; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53458/13]

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 these roads are funded from local authorities' own resources and are supplemented by State road grants. The initial selection and prioritisation of projects to be funded is also a matter for local authorities.

Up to now local authorities could apply for grant funding for projects such as this under the Specific Improvement Grants Scheme. However, due to the need to focus available funding on the repair and strengthening of the road network, the Specific Improvement Grants Scheme is being wound down.

It is important to reiterate that the role of Exchequer grants for regional and local roads is to supplement the resources of Councils like Kildare County Council. It is, therefore, open to the Council to fund this project from its own resources.

State Airports

238. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the commitment to establish Cork Airport independently free of debt; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53480/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): Policy in relation to the future of Cork airport was decided by the Government in November 2012 in the context of the decision to separate Shannon Airport from the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA). The Government decided that the existing ownership of Cork Airport by the DAA would be maintained for the present. That decision is consistent with the report from Booz and Co. that found that Cork Airport performs well under DAA ownership and management and operates to a sustainable business model.

Departmental Funding

239. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide in tabular form the subsidies paid by his Department to all public and private transport operators here including subventions; if the number of public transport routes currently privatised will be put out to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53501/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): There is no subvention paid directly by my Department in relation to public transport services. The award of Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracts falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has direct responsibility for this area. The total Public Service Obligation (PSO) subvention payable to the NTA in 2013 is €226.5 million. The allocation and payment of the subvention to all operators, including the amount payable to the three CIÉ subsidiaries, is decided by the NTA in accordance with their PSO contracts with the companies. The Luas tram services are operated under contract from the RPA by a private operator and does not receive any PSO subvention. I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days.

Public Service Obligation Services

240. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will provide in tabular form the total annual passenger numbers by service for all State subsidised public transport services, including services receiving subventions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53502/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The award and monitoring of Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracts falls under the independent statutory remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA), which has direct responsibility for this area. I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you do not receive a reply within ten working days. The Deputy may wish to note that total annual passenger numbers in respect of the three CIÉ companies are contained in their published annual reports.

Dublin Bus Services

241. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will clarify the analysis he utilised when he stated in August 2013 that no Dublin Bus route was making a profit; if he will publish this information; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53503/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Public Service Obligation (PSO) bus services provided by Dublin Bus are provided under contract from the National Transport Authority (NTA). I was relying on the briefing provided by both Dublin Bus and the NTA when I made that statement in relation to PSO bus services operated by Dublin Bus. As the Deputy will be aware, all of the PSO services provided by Dublin Bus are

loss making requiring subvention. If they were not loss making, they would not be eligible for subvention. While the vast majority of the services operated by Dublin Bus are PSO services, it also has some limited purely commercial services such as Airlink and Dublin Bus Tours which operate without subvention. Without the level of PSO subvention, in addition to free travel payments and capital funding, the company and the PSO services it provides would incur unsustainable losses.

In relation to providing further information on the performance of Dublin Bus's PSO network, I have referred the question to the NTA for further response. If the Deputy does not receive a response within ten working days, please contact my private office.

Roads Maintenance Issues

242. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the annual cost of motorway maintenance; under what authority this maintenance is carried out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53504/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): As Minister for Transport, Tourism & Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The maintenance of individual sections of national roads (including Motorways) is a matter for the National Roads Authority (NRA) under the Roads Acts 1993 to 2007 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

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.

Sports Funding

243. **Deputy Damien English** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will outline all available financial and non-financial supports available to minority sports clubs and to the national associations of minority sports here, such as American football; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [53646/13]

Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar): The Irish Sports Council is the statutory body with responsibility for the promotion, development and co-ordination of sport, including the provision of financial and other supports to the National Governing Bodies of Sport. I have referred the Deputy's question to the Council for direct reply. I would ask the Deputy to inform my office if a reply is not received within 10 days.

In addition, capital funding is available under the Sports Capital Programme. I hope to make an announcement on the next round of the Programme before the end of the year.