



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE  
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

**DÁIL ÉIREANN**

TUAIRISC OIFIGIÚIL—*Neamhcheartaithe*  
(OFFICIAL REPORT—*Unrevised*)

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# DÁIL ÉIREANN

*Déardaoin, 23 Márta 2017*

*Thursday, 23 March 2017*

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 12 p.m.

***Paidir.***

***Prayer.***

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## **Leaders' Questions**

**Deputy Niall Collins:** At the outset I would like to sympathise with our colleagues in Westminster and with the people of London who have experienced yet another horrific attack by Islamic extremists. It is almost a year to the day since we had another attack, in Brussels, where 32 people lost their lives. On behalf of the Fianna Fáil Party, my party leader and my colleagues I would like to express our condolences to the families of the four people who lost their lives yesterday and to wish all the other people who were injured as part of that incident a speedy recovery.

The issue I wish to raise with the Tánaiste regards job creation. She will be well aware of the Succeed in Ireland initiative, a concept which grew out of the recent Global Irish Economic Forum. It is an idea and plan for job creation which was sponsored by the Government, managed by IDA Ireland and its running was contracted to an organisation called ConnectIreland. It is fair to say, by any measure, this initiative can be considered an outstanding success when one considers that, around the globe, there are now in excess of 80,000 members of the Irish diaspora connected to this programme in more than 147 countries. We have seen 81 companies locate in this country as a result of the initiative creating more than 2,000 jobs, with a yield to the Exchequer in excess of €300 million over the life of the programme and an estimated yield to our GDP of €1.8 billion.

In addition, it is very important that the Tánaiste knows, appreciates and understands that ConnectIreland is a not-for-profit company. It gets paid for job creation on a no-foal, no-fee basis. Every job it creates costs €4,000 whereas an equivalent job created by IDA Ireland costs in the region of €11,000, so the value for money can be seen. Significantly, it has gone a long way towards addressing the urban-rural issue we have, which has arisen because the Government and IDA Ireland have not been pushing enough jobs into rural Ireland with the result that there has been a concentration of jobs coming into the greater Dublin area.

On Tuesday, 21 March, the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation met with ConnectIreland and officials from the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It was a

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very unsatisfactory meeting because IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland failed to show. It is fair to say that there was cross-party support and a unanimous view that the work of ConnectIreland has been very successful. It has been proven to bring jobs into Ireland and into rural Ireland in particular. Now we are at a point where on 26 March, which is this Sunday, the contract is due to expire. The contract was extended by a year to allow for a review. That review has not gotten under way. We have had complete inertia from the Government and from the Department in regard to establishing it.

There has been a lot of momentum built up, there have been many leads generated, there have been many contacts generated and there are many potential jobs in the pipeline as a result of the Succeed in Ireland initiative and the work of ConnectIreland. It is coming to a shuddering halt on Sunday next. We are asking the Government to see common sense. Will the Minister step in and extend the contract? There is precedent because the contract was previously extended for a year. She should extend it for the period and duration of the review, which is about to get under way and for which we do not have the terms of reference. Can we have some common sense from Government and extend this contract?

**The Tánaiste:** I join with the Deputy in his opening comments as this is the first opportunity we have had in the Dáil to respond to the dreadful events in central London and outside Parliament in Westminster yesterday. I know that every Member of this House will join with me in expressing our outrage at this cowardly and evil act against innocent and defenceless people. We, like all right-thinking people, utterly condemn and reject such awful actions. Our thoughts and sympathies are, of course, with the families and friends of those who have lost their lives, among them PC Keith Palmer. He gave his life on duty in Westminster yesterday. We also think of the many men, women and children who have been injured and we hope for their speedy recovery.

I can confirm that there is an Irish citizen among the injured. I am advised that the person's injuries are not considered life-threatening and that the Irish Embassy in London and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade will offer all assistance to that person and to their family. I have conveyed my sympathy and offered our full support to the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd, MP. I spoke with the British ambassador this morning to express our sense of solidarity and our shock at these awful events. The ties that bind us across the Irish Sea are very close and strong. We feel, very keenly, that same sense of shock and horror that our colleagues, families and friends in Britain feel.

This is being treated as a terrorist attack and it has the hallmarks, as the Deputy said, of other attacks in Brussels and Paris. Whatever the motivation, there can quite clearly never be any justification for this type of inhumanity. I have been briefed by the Garda authorities and I spoke with the Commissioner this morning. An Garda Síochána is in constant contact with its UK counterparts, directly and through its liaison person there. Ireland cannot consider itself immune from the threat posed by international terrorism and extremism. The expert advice is that while an attack is possible here, it is unlikely. All possible steps are being taken by An Garda Síochána, supported by Defence Forces where necessary, to deal with any threat to this country. They will continue to work very closely with UK and international colleagues to make sure that we remain safe. There are a small number of people here whose activities are a cause for concern in terms of supporting terrorism. The authorities will continue to monitor them very closely. Today, however, is really about expressing our sympathy to all who have been affected by this appalling outrage in London.

On the points the Deputy raised about ConnectIreland and the Succeed in Ireland initiative, there was a detailed discussion on that in the Dáil yesterday. The Minister, Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor, made the situation in that regard very clear. It was borne out of the Global Irish Economic Forum with the aim of, rightly, involving our global diaspora. The context that should be put behind this is the fact that job creation has been so successful in this country. A strong policy has brought us to a point where unemployment has reduced from 15% to 6%.

On the Deputy's point on extending the contract, the Minister, Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor, made it clear yesterday that it is not legally permissible, due to public procurement law, to extend the contract. It has already been extended by one year and if the programme is to continue, IDA Ireland would need to put it out to tender. The board considered the future of the programme at its meeting in November and made the decision not to re-tender at this time. That does not mean that a definitive decision has been taken in respect of the initiative's long-term future.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** It is very important that the Tánaiste appreciates that we will lose a lot of momentum and initiative which has been built up if the contract comes to an end on 26 March. That will be very regrettable because many potential jobs are in the pipeline. The Taoiseach said yesterday that litigation was pending and the matter was *sub judice*, but that is not the case. We have to appreciate that ConnectIreland is asking for the contract to be extended for the duration of the review, and it will be happy to take its chances when the contract is advertised for re-tendering. Allowing all of the good work to fall does not make sense to me and my party.

On the legal advice quoted by the Tánaiste, ConnectIreland has received legal advice from Arthur Cox. It is one of the largest legal advisers in the country and the Government and State rely on its advice. Arthur Cox has stated:

We cannot agree that there should be any public procurement concern in extending the contract and, in particular, there is most certainly in our view no legal impediment that would prevent an extension of the contract to allow ConnectIreland to generate new leads and approvals for companies to establish in Ireland depending the departmental review of the initiative and the resulting decision on whether or not to extend the contract ... It is both legally permissible and entirely appropriate in the circumstances and we cannot identify any legal impediment while the IDA are refusing to do so.

Can the Government not see common sense and allow the initiative to continue while the review gets under way, bearing in mind that it is not yet under way? The Department is dragging its heels in a very bad fashion, in terms of getting this up and running. We do not have the terms of reference for the review; rather, we just have drift and inertia. We will lose momentum. Common sense should prevail.

**The Tánaiste:** No Government has been as committed to job creation as this one. The Deputy can see the fruits of that motivation and work in the numbers of jobs that have been created, which is spreading across the country and different sectors. We will do everything possible to ensure that continues. It has been a driving force behind the work of this and the previous Governments. It is incredibly important for the people of this country, because they want an opportunity to work.

The Minister will answer questions on this matter during Priority Questions later today. She

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has made it very clear that legal issues are involved and there is no choice but to go out to public procurement at this stage. She has also said she will conduct a review of the overall situation, which is important. She wants to examine the initiative, including its successful elements, and develop knowledge of what has worked and how it could be improved. She is currently setting the guidelines for that review.

There is a legal dispute between ConnectIreland and IDA Ireland, which is regrettable. The Minister has outlined a way forward. The programme has to go out to tender at this point.

**Deputy Mick Barry:** The acting chief executive of Bus Éireann has raised the question of declaring the company insolvent as a real possibility. It is striking that there has been little public debate on this issue. Bus Éireann plays a major role in the life of this nation, including rural Ireland, the cities outside the capital and the school transport system. The closure of Bus Éireann would mean €59 million payroll taxes from its 2,600 workers being lost, as well as the expense of hundreds of millions of euro in redundancy and social welfare payments. Perhaps the Tánaiste can tell the House the exact amounts that would be involved.

On the “Six One” news programme yesterday, Ingrid Miley said Bus Éireann management had pulled the pin out of the grenade. It was an apt metaphor for what is a declaration of war on workers’ wages as many workers will lose €4,000 or €5,000 in take-home pay under the plans. It is also a war on bus services. Dates have now been provided for the axing of some routes and the cutting back of others.

The stakes in this dispute are high, and include the protection of take-home pay, the future of Bus Éireann and the future of public transport in the State. It is in the interests of every public transport worker and everyone who cares about public transport that Bus Éireann workers defeat these cuts and that the Government is forced to properly fund public transport. A national public transport strike involving significant solidarity action from Iarnród Éireann and Dublin Bus workers could turn a long drawn-out battle with an uncertain outcome into a shorter and sharper clash which secures victory for the bus workers and forces the Government to invest in public transport. Such action now needs to be given very serious consideration.

Public transport in the State is significantly underfunded. The PSO subvention covers a mere 10% of total income, compared to more than 50% in other European states. If Bus Éireann was compensated in full for its free travel pass work it would receive an extra €17 million and the crisis would be averted. Instead, we have a do-nothing Government and a do-nothing Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport who refuses to intervene. The Minister, Deputy Shane Ross, acts as though he is on an episode of “Friends”, the one where Ross folds his arms, tells us that it is a doddle and lets the national bus company go to the wall.

What will that cost? Can the Tánaiste give us a precise or an approximate figure? The figure could end up being the cost of the Government’s desire to facilitate a low pay and privatisation agenda by doing nothing.

**The Tánaiste:** I reject the Deputy’s characterisation of the kind of jobs we want to create and maintain in this country. I am of course aware of the letter issued by Bus Éireann management to staff which highlighted yet again the company’s financial difficulties and indicated the measures it believed it must take to ensure the company’s future. Trade unions are meeting today to consider their response. It is regrettable that last week’s WRC discussions adjourned without agreement.

It is worth noting that since then the company and trade unions have highlighted that efficiency improvements are possible in terms of how the company organises itself. That is a significant signal which Members of the House should consider. People with real insight into how this company operates have acknowledged that there are improvements to be made in how it works. Last year, the taxpayer provided approximately €230 million to Bus Éireann across the PSO, free travel scheme and capital and school transport funding programmes.

Trade unions and management have publicly acknowledged that issues need to be dealt with within the company in terms of efficiency. They are exactly the type of issues that the Minister, Deputy Ross, has consistently identified when he has addressed this issue. They can only be resolved through realistic negotiations between the company and trade unions. I urge both sides to engage. Disputes are solved by parties sitting down, working through the issues and dealing with the reality of the situation.

It is not simply a question of taxpayer funding. We do not want taxpayers' money to be used in an inefficient manner. It has been acknowledged that there are very real issues within the company that need to be addressed, and they should be part of the discussion. It is regrettable that discussions in the WRC did not work out, but I have to agree with the Deputy that a strike is in nobody's interests, including the company, the employees or the travelling public, which will be completely discommoded if the strike proceeds. Everyone wants to ensure that does not happen.

What is required is realistic negotiations that will lead to an agreement and deal with the problems the company is facing. Both sides have acknowledged that these are part and parcel of what needs to be addressed. We must restore the company to a sustainable future, which is what the Government wants to see and why we urge both sides to sit down, discuss the issues and come to a resolution of them.

**Deputy Mick Barry:** The Tánaiste rejects my characterisation of a plan for a low pay agenda at a time when workers are facing cuts in take home pay of between €3,000 and €6,000 per annum. Her position is not credible. The Tánaiste referred to the PSO that is paid. The PSO is 20% down on what it was eight years ago. The Tánaiste's position is not credible. She spoke about ConnectIreland and IDA Ireland and the corporate welfare of €1,500 per job for employers. Here is a company with 2,500 jobs but the Government is not lifting a finger to save them despite the fact that if the company goes to the wall Revenue will be down €59 million in payroll taxes let alone redundancy and social welfare costs. The Tánaiste did not answer my question about the cost to the State. That the Minister and the Tánaiste have not answered it is very striking.

I wish to report to the House that the mood among bus workers, who are ready for strike action if the Government does not back down on this agenda, has very much hardened in the past 24 to 48 hours as has the mood among Dublin Bus workers and Iarnród Éireann workers, who are engaged in serious discussions about what support they might give in the event that solidarity is needed.

**The Tánaiste:** I hope the Deputy would, as I would, encourage people to get into negotiation mode because that is in the interest of the workers about whom he speaks.

**Deputy Dara Calleary:** Encourage the management too.

**The Tánaiste:** Let me repeat what the funding has been. Funding for PSO services, those

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socially necessary but often financially unviable services, has increased in the past two budgets. This year it increased by 11% and last year it increased by 13%

**Deputy Mick Barry:** It is down 20% on eight years ago.

**The Tánaiste:** We all know what the country has been through and what decisions were necessary. As soon as the economy had recovered and we were in the position to invest again, this Government showed its goodwill to those services by investing. There was an 11% increase this year and a 13% increase last year and Bus Éireann received a 21% increase in PSO funding in 2016. I do not believe what the Deputy had to say on the Government's approach is correct. When the money has been available, we have shown our goodwill and invested further. I now encourage both sides to get around the table so that we do not face a strike next week.

**Deputy Michael Lowry:** I wish to raise the issue of the Government's position with regard to support of Bord na Móna. Bord na Móna, in particular, the Littleton plant in my constituency, has been traditionally known for its production of briquettes for more than 40 years and has given valuable employment to people from Littleton, Killenaule, Templetuohy, Thurles and surrounding areas. The facility in Littleton can be traced back to Bord na Móna's roots. Recently, to safeguard the facility in Littleton, workers have accepted restructuring proposals from management and unions through the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. This is a clear commitment that the workforce at Littleton briquette factory is committed to its future.

Recently we have heard about a Bord na Móna review of peat production operations and briquette manufacturing factories. This has led to concerns and fears among more than 120 workers at the Littleton plant. Bord na Móna is going through a difficult time in terms of the sales of briquettes, principally because of the imposition of carbon tax at the insistence of the Green Party in the 2010 budget. At that time, I negotiated a derogation for peat produced products but it was reintroduced in 2013. Since 2013 the carbon tax has doubled meaning that there is a 50 cent tariff on every bale of briquettes produced. On top of that, the import of unregulated fuel products from Northern Ireland is a massive problem in the marketplace for Bord na Móna.

The current review by Bord na Móna of its peat operations is of fundamental and critical importance. Its recommendations will shape the future of peat production in Ireland. It will determine what quantities of briquette production will be required for the marketplace in the future. It will also determine the number of production facilities and recommend the location of the factory or factories. Its recommendations will have far-reaching implications and shuddering consequences. It has the potential to destroy livelihoods and to consign workers and dependent families to financial hardship. The outcome of the report is capable of wreaking havoc on local communities. Therefore, the report is a very serious matter that must be treated in a professional, responsible, fair and caring manner.

The Tánaiste must understand that this is a nerve-tingling time for the employees of Bord na Móna, whether they are in Tipperary, Offaly or another part of the midlands. The prospect of further rationalisation or consolidation has struck fear in the hearts and minds of employees. What is the Government's position on the Bord na Móna efforts?

**The Tánaiste:** As the Deputy well knows, Bord na Móna is a commercial State company and the management and operation of briquette factories is an operational matter for the company and not one in which the Government has any direct role or function. However, I recog-

nise the points the Deputy has made on the concerns of the employees in both places at present. Bord na Móna is facing significant business challenges in the context of the deregulation of the electricity market and increasingly competitive and challenging environments across all its business areas, not least its fuels business. It has been operating at a level significantly below capacity in recent times and there are a number of initiatives under way at present.

A comprehensive review is being undertaken at present on the operations at Littleton in County Tipperary and Derrinlough in County Offaly. The review will examine projected demand for peat briquettes as well as the plans for biomass and the combined capacity and infrastructure needed to deliver production to meet the forecasted demand. A serious analysis is being carried out at present on the production capacity and the demand and how they can be matched. As it requires much input from a number of people, the review is not expected to be finalised before May at the earliest. We will await the review and its analysis.

In the meantime, Bord na Móna has been working with and briefing staff and employees in the fuels business have been briefed on the review. I assure the Deputy that I understand that ongoing updates will be provided to them. Management has also provided assurances that no decision on the future of the plants will be taken until the review is completed. At the very least, we must await the outcome of the review in May. No one at this point can predict the recommendations that will be in the review, but there are a number of initiatives taking place which it is hoped will give the best outcome for the jobs about which the Deputy speaks. For example, there is a pilot trial for the production and sale of a biomass briquette made at its factory at Littleton for the past 12 months. The development of a biomass briquette is a significant investment by Bord na Móna Fuels and a critical step in future proofing the jobs the Deputy is highlighting and meeting the particular challenges faced by the company at present. However, the company is investing in research to see how it can best meet those challenges ahead.

**Deputy Michael Lowry:** It is important to realise that the Government has a responsibility to oversee the policies of Bord na Móna and how they impact on employment. I presume there is a process involved here. As the Tánaiste indicated, the report will be published in May. I presume it will go to the board of Bord na Móna before being submitted to the joint committee with responsibility for energy and natural resources, the Minister and the Government. The future plans and ambition of Bord na Móna must not be curtailed by financial necessity. The Government must encourage and support the company by making available the substantial funds required to invest in upgrading existing plants such as Littleton and providing the €35 million required to install and commission a combined heat and power plant at the Littleton site. The trial at Littleton has been highly successful and made substantial progress. I hope its conclusions will show we can manufacture a biomass peat product and that this product, combined with investment in the combined heat and power plant, will secure the site's future. I ask that the Minister take this into account in his discussions with Bord na Móna.

**The Tánaiste:** I will ask the Minister to liaise directly with Deputy Lowry on this issue. It is planned to run further biomass production trials alongside peat briquette production in the next few months, with a view to completing a detailed business case for this product. The business case will consider the location for the commercial scale biomass plant. If or when this product is developed, it will offer an opportunity to provide sustainable, long-term, quality jobs in the fuels and feedstock divisions of Bord na Móna. As the Deputy noted, there is still some way to go and we await the review at the end of May and the results of the pilot projects which are assessing the viability of the product and how it could be developed. At that point, there will no doubt be committee hearings on the report. We await with interest the outcome in May.



**An Ceann Comhairle:** That concludes Leaders' Questions. I should point out that, at the Business Committee meeting this morning, I was requested to ensure that from now on, we strictly adhere to the time limits provided for Leaders' Questions in Standing Orders. For my part, I will do my best to adhere to that request from next week onwards.

### **Questions on Promised Legislation**

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I reiterate that Deputies may only ask questions on promised legislation. While they may also make reference to the programme for Government, we will not deal with constituency bucket lists Deputies may have.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** The programme for Government features a commitment "to encourage efficient local authorities to adopt commercial rates policies to help sustain existing business and encourage new start-ups". It will not come as a surprise to the Tánaiste to learn that many small and medium enterprises are facing rate increases of 20%, 30%, 40% and more. This is on the back of eight tough years during which they tried to keep the wolf from the door and keep their businesses open. Every Deputy and Senator is inundated with complaints from businesses concerning the application of commercial rates and increases in rates. We have information to show that one family business in Wexford with a turnover of €80,000 received a rates bill of €20,000. These figures speak for themselves and are completely unacceptable.

The equine industry is an important industry in most rural counties, including counties Kildare, Tipperary and Limerick, and employs thousands of people in rural areas. As with many other industries over the years, the sector has been reclassified as a leisure industry. This decision will bring the equine industry to its knees. Will the Tánaiste confirm that the Government will immediately review the relevant legislation and prevent further rates increases to try to retain vital jobs in rural areas?

**Deputy Jackie Cahill:** On the same issue, I attended a meeting in Kildare last night at which representatives of the equine industry made an extremely strong case. Given that the industry comes under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, those involved in it cannot understand the reason it has been reclassified as a leisure industry. This decision has resulted in threefold and ninefold increases in some commercial rates bills. There was no prior notification of this decision. For example, county councillors in attendance last night indicated they had not been informed that this reclassification of equine businesses was about to take place. I ask the Tánaiste to ensure the classification of equine businesses reverts to agricultural and agricultural rates are applied.

**Deputy Barry Cowen:** The Minister indicated earlier this week that he intended to introduce heads of Bill in this area in April. As such, new legislation may be forthcoming by the end of the year. Will the Tánaiste confirm that the rates bills which have landed on businesses' desks in recent weeks and will continue to be sent in the coming months will not be enforceable once the new legislation to amend the archaic mechanism used for calculating rates has been introduced? Notwithstanding the Government's commitment to address the regional imbalance, this development merely serves as a means of wiping out many businesses.

**Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin:** The equine industry is worth €2 billion and employs 28,000 people directly and 58,000 people indirectly. Deputies Cahill, McConalogue and I discovered at a meeting last night that people genuinely believe they will be put out of business, which is

appalling. We need a guarantee that the decision to reclassify the equine industry as a leisure industry will be reversed. The industry has always been classified as agriculture and continues to be classified as agriculture for development levies. There is no reason for this change and we need an assurance that it will be reversed.

**The Tánaiste:** The heads of a commercial rates Bill are due in April. I will ask the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Deputy Simon Coveney, to contact the Deputies specifically on the classification of the equine industry, on which I do not have details. Given the concerns raised by the Deputies, I will ask the Minister to communicate directly with them on the reasons for the change in classification and to provide as much information as possible.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** I understand the Government received the second interim report of Judge Yvonne Murphy on the commission of inquiry into mother and baby homes in the second half of 2016. When will the interim report be published? Cabinet meetings in this Government's term rarely extend into lunchtime, yet the Government is sitting on a report that is very significant for many people who are interested in what happened in mother and baby homes. I understand it is doing so out of fear that it contains reference, albeit no detailed analysis, to a potential redress scheme. Sitting on and failing to publish the report is deeply insulting to people who were in mother and baby homes. It also means the work of the commission, which is due to be completed next year, is not being taken seriously. Will the Tánaiste indicate by what date the Government will publish the interim report? Will the redress issue, which is apparently referred to in the report, be addressed by the Government?

**The Tánaiste:** I can confirm that the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Deputy Katherine Zappone, will publish the report by the end of this month. The Minister will address all the relevant issues at that time and the Government will consider them at that point.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I am not aware of whether legislation exists in the area I raise or if it is possible to legislate or introduce a mechanism to do something the Taoiseach indicated he could not do when responding to Deputy Paul Murphy yesterday, namely, interfere in the judicial process of another country. Ibrahim Halawa's trial was deferred for the 20th time yesterday.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** That matter is not relevant to the Order of Business.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** The Ceann Comhairle tried to prevent Deputy Paul Murphy from discussing this issue yesterday.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** It is not relevant to the Order of Business.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I have requested a Topical Issue debate on the case of Ibrahim Halawa three times this week. The Ceann Comhairle is trying to shut down discussion on the matter again. I do not understand why he is doing so.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy must resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I am asking about legislation.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** My responsibility is to enforce the rules of the House, which have been adopted by all Deputies. Will the Deputy resume her seat, please?

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I want to speak----

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**An Ceann Comhairle:** Will the Deputy resume her seat, please?

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** No, I will not resume my seat.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy will not resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I will not.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** That is an act of total-----

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I am asking the Tánaiste about-----

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy is not. That is an act of total disorder. I am asking her please to resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** Well then I am out of order. I want to ask the Tánaiste a question.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy is out of order. She should please resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** Ibrahim Halawa's trial was postponed for the 20th time. The man is very ill.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Please resume your seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I want to ask the Tánaiste a question about legislation-----

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The House stands suspended in view of the fact the Deputy will not resume her seat.

*Sitting suspended at 12.41 p.m. and resumed at 12.47 p.m.*

**An Ceann Comhairle:** We will resume. I call Deputy Mattie McGrath.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I have not asked a question.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** It is not relevant. I have made a determination on that.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I have a question to ask about legislation. Is this section of business not on promised legislation?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Yes. If the Deputy has a question on legislation, I am quite happy.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I started by saying to the Tánaiste that I wanted to ask a question about legislation which I am not sure exists. However, could we find a mechanism to do what the Taoiseach said we could not do yesterday, which was to interfere in the judicial process of another country? In other words, can we do something about the imprisonment, the continued delay of the trial of, and illness of Ibrahim Halawa who is an Irish citizen?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy is trying-----

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I am trying to find out-----

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy is circumventing-----

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** -----if there is a legal mechanism that we can take. That is all.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I will ask the Deputy again to resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** Is the Tánaiste willing to answer me?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I will ask the Deputy to resume her seat, please.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** Could the Ceann Comhairle ask the Tánaiste if she is willing to answer me?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I will ask the Deputy again to resume her seat. The rules of the House apply to the Deputy just as they apply to every one of the other 157 Members. There are no special rules for her.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** But the Ceann Comhairle's interpretation of the rules has gone a bit beyond where it should. In this particular instance-----

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** Can I ask my question?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** No, the Deputy cannot. Sit down.

**Deputy John Brassil:** We would like to ask questions as well.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy accused me earlier of suppressing a debate on a particular issue. I sought today to convene a meeting of the delegation that travelled to Cairo on the Halawa issue and only one Member was available to attend. I will not accept from her that I am trying to suppress a debate. I am implementing the rules of the House as they apply to her and everyone else.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** The Ceann Comhairle used the word "suppress". What I said was that he tried to shut down Deputy Murphy yesterday-----

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy should resume her seat. I am not having any further debate with her.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I am just asking a question of the Tánaiste.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy should please resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** Is there a possibility there is some legal mechanism, of which the Tánaiste can inform me, that the State can use to protect our citizen?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I am asking the Deputy to resume her seat.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** I will not resume my seat. I will leave the House because I have another meeting to go to-----

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Okay, I thank the Deputy.

**Deputy Bríd Smith:** -----but I protest at the way the Ceann Comhairle is treating me and, more importantly, the way he is treating the issue. It is disgraceful.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I will get my violin.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Deputy Mattie McGrath, please.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** There is a commitment in the programme for Government - I was there when it was put in - to hold a plebiscite on local town and borough councils. The Tánaiste need not be shocked. There is a commitment in the programme for Government to allow the holding of plebiscites and to ask the electorate in those areas to vote on whether they wish to have a town council, provided there is no cost to the State. We are a year into the Government's term in office and we have not seen anything about it. We know that big Phil the enforcer banished town councils. There was a commitment that there would be a plebiscite in each borough and district council to see if the people wanted them, provided there would be no cost to the Exchequer.

**The Tánaiste:** I will ask the Minister to liaise with the Deputy directly on where that programme for Government commitment is at.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** Which Minister?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The relevant Minister.

**The Tánaiste:** Yes, the relevant Minister.

**Deputy Billy Kelleher:** The irrelevant Minister.

**Deputy John Brassil:** There is a commitment in the programme for Government to increase our Garda numbers. Given the relative ease yesterday with which an individual created havoc and destruction in Westminster, what plans does the Government have to increase the security of this campus and its surrounding streets?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** That is not relevant either.

**Deputy John Brassil:** It is very relevant, given what happened yesterday.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** It is not relevant to the Order of Business.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** The Tánaiste might like to comment on it.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Does the Tánaiste want to make a brief comment?

**The Tánaiste:** We are all concerned to ensure that all premises are secured as much as possible, including this one. I assure the Deputy that the safety and security of locations around the country, including this one, is of prime concern to An Garda Síochána and it has all relevant initiatives under way. The recruitment of 800 gardaí this year is an important part of having a proper response, as indeed was the establishment of the armed response unit which we now have in Dublin and which is available and working at present.

**Deputy Josepha Madigan:** I moved First Stage of my Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Divorce) Bill 2016 on 6 July 2016. Some eight months later, it has not yet reached Second Stage. I receive e-mails and texts daily about this Bill, which will be of enormous assistance to about 300,000 separated couples throughout Ireland. Is there a way of expediting Second Stage of the Bill?

**The Tánaiste:** I am aware of the work the Deputy has put into this Bill and its importance. It is in the lottery for Private Members' Bills and we will await it emerging from there.

**Deputy Tony McLoughlin:** It was announced in the programme for Government and bud-

get 2017 that the Government is seeking to expand the level of dental services available to both the employed and self-employed who pay PRSI contribution in this country. On this basis, can the Tánaiste or the Minister, Deputy Varadkar, advise me when these services will be reintroduced and what services will become available? Will the optical benefit scheme which was announced also be extended?

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** There is a Government commitment to bring about a new deal for the self-employed in Ireland, which includes equalising their tax treatment, providing more supports for entrepreneurs and also extending new social insurance benefits to them, including the extension of the treatment benefit. The commitment is that by the end of the month 500,000 people who are self-employed, including farmers, and their dependent spouses, will have access to the free eye check and free dental check on the same basis as other employees who pay PRSI. I signed the legislation to do that yesterday. It will come into effect next week.

**Deputy Jack Chambers:** My question is on the Technological Universities Bill 2015. I met with the president of the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown which has gone through a three-step process. The next step is this legislation which was ready to go through the House when the last Dáil collapsed. What is the update on it? When can we progress it? If we cannot progress it because of other geographical considerations, will the Government consider a specific Dublin Bill to move it forward for the Dublin institutes of technology because it is important for their future progression and development?

**Deputy Mary Butler:** I also want to speak about the Technological Universities Bill 2015. Waterford and Carlow institutes of technology are in a similar position. When can we expect to see this Bill moved forward?

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** It is an issue that was raised earlier in the week by Deputy Howlin. The position is that the Bill was reintroduced on Committee Stage and will go back to debate on Committee Stage. Before we successfully complete Committee Stage, which was not successfully done in the last Dáil, we need to ensure certain issues are resolved. Some of those relate to industrial relations issues and others relate to the alignment of colleges that wish to become technological universities. This is an important initiative for all regions. I will not contemplate proceeding on a region-by-region basis. We need to see this as the future path for most, if not all, institutes of technology. We want to ensure we have that path, which is available to all regions, and can contribute to the sort of balanced regional development that all Deputies want to see.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I apologise to the four Deputies who have not been reached. That concludes Questions on Promised Legislation.

### **Topical Issue Matters**

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 29A and the name of the Member in each case: (1) Deputy Mick Wallace - difficulties with access to child psychology services in Wexford; (2) Deputy Tom Neville - littering of rural Ireland; (3) Deputy Clare Daly - recent comments by the chief executive of Caranua regarding applicants to the scheme and media coverage surrounding those comments; (4) Deputy Michael D'Arcy - review of Garda resources and geo-

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graphic spread of stations; (5) Deputy Pat Deering - redundancy packages of Cheshire Homes employees in Carlow; (6) Deputy Aindrias Moynihan - the progress of the new primary school for Ballincollig in 2017; (7) Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan - consequences of the International Protection Act for asylum seekers; (8) Deputy Frank O'Rourke - consideration of the commercial rates system for town centres; (9) Deputy Thomas Byrne - the process for DEIS selections; (10) Deputy Joan Burton - relocation arrangements for permanent primary school teachers; (11) Deputy Shane Cassells - community facilities in the Johnstown area of Navan, County Meath; (12) Deputy Noel Rock - the lack of mixed development in social housing PPP bundle 1; (13) Deputy Mattie McGrath - the future of the Bord na Móna plant at Littleton, County Tipperary; (14) Deputy Eamon Scanlon - conditions at Tubbercurry Garda station; (15) Deputy Brid Smith - the situation of Irish citizen, Ibrahim Halawa, in Egypt and his deteriorating health; (16) Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett - the Garda vetting of access programme students in DIT; (17) Deputy Gino Kenny - the continuing detention of an Irish citizen, Ibrahim Halawa, in an Egyptian prison; (18) Deputy Niamh Smyth - to ask the Minister to address concerns over reports of a possible increase in the cost of TV licence; and (19) Deputy Barry Cowen - carbon policy impact on sales of briquettes and employment in factories in County Offaly and County Tipperary.

The matters raised by Deputies Mick Wallace, Pat Deering, Barry Cowen and Michael D'Arcy have been selected for discussion.

## **Ceisteanna - Questions**

### **Priority Questions**

#### **Job Creation**

1. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if she will ensure the continuation of the Succeed in Ireland programme before the result of the current review has been published and examined; if not, the reason; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14746/17]

2. **Deputy Maurice Quinlivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if, in view of the fact the review of the ConnectIreland Succeed in Ireland programme will be commissioned shortly after the current contract with IDA Ireland expires on 26 March 2017, she will continue this scheme in order that IDA Ireland can extend ConnectIreland's contract to operate the Succeed in Ireland initiative; and if she will direct IDA Ireland to take action to avoid the loss of the jobs currently being sourced by ConnectIreland and take action to avoid the loss of the global network built by ConnectIreland. [14457/17]

**Deputy Niall Collins:** I raised this on Leaders' Questions in the last hour. The Minister is well aware of the Succeed in Ireland programme. I am asking the question because I want to impress on the Minister that there can and should be a way to ensure the continuation of this programme while the review, which has not yet commenced, is going ahead.

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 and 2 together.

The Succeed in Ireland initiative has been operated by ConnectIreland on the basis of a contract with IDA Ireland that was originally agreed in March 2012. The contract was extended by 12 months in March 2016 and is now set to conclude on 26 March 2017. It would not be permissible for any further extension to be granted on account of public procurement law.

The board of IDA Ireland, at its meeting in November 2016, considered the future of the initiative. It decided the agency would not re-tender for its continuation at this stage.

However, a definitive decision was not taken on the ultimate future of the Succeed in Ireland initiative.

I have asked my Department to commission a review of the initiative after the conclusion of the current contract. This will help to provide us with a better understanding of Succeed in Ireland's results and its wider contribution to employment generation. The review may also consider the development of a new initiative. It is important that this review be undertaken before a determination is made on how we proceed.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** No one disputes the fact that there will be a review. In fact, ConnectIreland welcomes the review because it has a good story to tell and all of its outcomes have been positive. Some 80,000 members of the diaspora in more than 147 countries are connected and almost 80 new businesses have grown in Ireland, creating in excess of 2,000 jobs. It has been a positive story, but the problem is that IDA Ireland feels threatened by this. ConnectIreland creates jobs at a cost of €4,000 per job whereas an IDA Ireland job costs €10,000 to €11,000.

What is the problem with allowing ConnectIreland to continue the initiative while the review is under way for a few months? The contract was extended a year ago to allow for the review, but it has not got under way yet. ConnectIreland's clear legal advice from solicitors Arthur Cox is that there is no reason that the contract cannot be extended for that purpose. ConnectIreland is happy to take its chance in any retendering process.

The Minister will lose all of the initiative, goodwill and contacts. It does not make sense.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** IDA Ireland's board decided this matter in November. I understand that this was partly because it had received legal advice about the difficulties associated with retendering in the midst of a legal dispute with the current contractor, ConnectIreland. IDA Ireland would also have considered the fact that the programme had only achieved approximately 10% of its target of creating 5,000 jobs. I respect the decision of the independent IDA Ireland board and have no reason not to.

It is not an option for IDA Ireland or my Department to enter into a further contract with ConnectIreland without first undertaking a new tendering process, as the maximum number of extensions to the contract has already been granted under public procurement law. Any further extension would constitute a breach of that law. My Department will be commissioning a third-party review of the Succeed in Ireland initiative.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** It is simply not the case that the figures cited by IDA Ireland are the programme's outcome. As the Minister knows, the Oireachtas committee held a full session on this matter on Tuesday, and it was disrespectful to the Houses of the Oireachtas that representatives from IDA Ireland failed to appear. It did not give an adequate reason for that. There is a dispute, but there is no litigation and the matter is not *sub judice*.



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I implore the Minister. There is a precedent for extending the contract. There is no reason for it not being extended for a further three to six months in order to allow the review to be conducted and the programme to continue. Arthur Cox has confirmed that it “is both legally permissible and entirely appropriate in the circumstances; and we cannot identify any legal impediment whatsoever to the IDA doing so”.

The Government devised what was a very good initiative and we support it, but we want to see it continued. Will the Minister please see common sense and find a mechanism to allow for that while the review is under way?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor:** First, we extended the contract.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** We know that.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor:** Let me continue, please. It is stated in black and white in that contract between ConnectIreland and IDA Ireland that the last six months of the extension were to be a wind-down period. That is how it is.

Second, extending the contract would break procurement laws, which we will not do. IDA Ireland has legal advice and I have advice from the Department’s legal adviser.

We have not decided in any way to get rid of the Succeed in Ireland initiative, which has been good. As to the figures that have been thrown out, the verified number that I have seen is 535 jobs. As part of the contract, ConnectIreland signed a verification clause. IDA Ireland has complied with exactly what is in the contract.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** What about the red lighting?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor:** I will revert on that matter in a moment as I am over time.

I keep hearing about jobs in the regions. A total of 58% of the jobs created, or 312, are located in Dublin, 30 jobs are in Cork and 42%, or approximately 220, are in the remainder of the country. I will revert to the Deputy on the other point.

## **Brexit Issues**

3. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the contingencies and supports in place to safeguard Irish jobs and exports from a hard Brexit scenario; the number of EU Competitiveness Council ministerial meetings that she made the case for the need of a revision of state aid rules to protect Irish enterprises and related jobs; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14747/17]

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor:** In advance of the Brexit referendum, my Department conducted a contingency risk assessment of the potential impacts of Brexit across relevant policy areas. We have refined our analysis since then and have been working with our agencies and across Government to put in place additional resources and actions so as to mitigate risks and maximise opportunities. I have also initiated new structures, consultation fora and research to inform our decision making. Budget 2017 and the Action Plan for Jobs 2017 include important initiatives to enhance the capacity of our enterprise agencies to assist companies in the context

of Brexit.

Since the Brexit referendum, I have attended three meetings of the Competitiveness Council. The issue of revisions of state aid rules on foot of Brexit has not arisen at Council meetings, in which the UK continues to participate. However, in all of my engagements with European Commissioners and Ministers from other member states since the UK decision, Brexit has been a central part of the discussions. At each meeting, I have stressed the potential impact of Brexit on the most exposed sectors of the Irish economy.

My departmental officials have also had discussions with senior officials from the Directorate General for Competition and other relevant DGs to sensitise them to the potential difficulties for Irish businesses arising from the Brexit referendum result. These discussions are ongoing, will continue to address all relevant issues and challenges and will explore all possible options.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** I thank the Minister. I wish to raise two points on this matter. We are nearing the invocation of Article 50, as the Minister is well aware, but something that she confirmed to me via parliamentary question will come as a surprise to many. Her Department has a Brexit unit, headed up by a principal officer, with only three staff. For such a large Department that plays a major role in promoting job creation and enterprise to have a Brexit unit that is so small is very concerning and disturbing. On this side of the House we have consistently called for an enterprise stabilisation fund and an employment support scheme similar to what was established in 2008 when the crisis hit this country. Does the Minister have any intention of introducing such measures to help businesses to buffer themselves against the oncoming shock of the impact of Brexit? In my part of the country in Nenagh, for example, jobs were lost when a company closed, citing Brexit as the reason to relocate to the UK.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Deputy Collins referred to the Brexit unit. I will describe to him exactly what is going on in the Department. In addition to the Brexit unit I chair a fortnightly meeting which is attended by the chief executives of IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland, InterTradeIreland and whichever other groups we need to make sure we are cognisant of what is happening in the various sectors.

The Secretary General of the Department chairs another meeting with stakeholders such as the Small Firms Association and the various trade organisations, including Retail Excellence and IBEC, which is led by Danny McCoy, and various other groups to ensure that we know exactly what is happening.

The Department is conducting pilot projects across three sectoral areas and will then address a further 11 sectoral areas that will be affected by Brexit. I assure the Deputy that much work is going on. We have the very best people involved. The Secretary General attends a meeting every fortnight and I, as Minister, and others are also present at those meetings making sure that Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland, InterTradeIreland all respond adequately to the Brexit challenge as well as the opportunities it presents.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** All that is against a backdrop of a dedicated Department in the UK to deal with Brexit while we have a three-person unit within the Department.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** It is not just a three-person unit.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** That speaks volumes. State aid rules are also relevant to this question. I am concerned that the 2017 Action Plan for Jobs, a 105-page document which the Min-

ister published recently, made no mention whatsoever of a requirement for a review of the state-aid rules. On this side of the House we consider a review of the EU state-aid rules is required. The current cap on state aid at €200,000 over a three-year period must be addressed in a comprehensive manner by the Government and the European Union. The rules must be changed in order to allow the State to help businesses to survive and withstand the impact of Brexit.

The Minister confirmed by way of reply to a parliamentary question that she attended two meetings of the National Competitiveness Council and that on no occasion were state aid rules or their revision discussed. That is most regrettable and of concern. Has the Minister made any attempt to build support or consensus from other member states to request the Directorate-General for Competition, DG COMP, within the Commission to review state aid rules, as that will be required in order to help Irish businesses to withstand Brexit?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** It is very easy for Deputy Niall Collins to talk about what businesses need, but we have carried out a tailored and targeted survey with more than 1,000 businesses, to which we had a 99% response. They had different requirements. Some of them want to be more competitive, others want help with currency fluctuation and still others want access to cheaper credit so it is not all about state aid rules.

I also wish to nail the assertion that we are not prepared. I outlined to the Deputy what is happening in the Department but we also report to the Brexit committee set up by the Taoiseach. Deputy Collins said there is a special Brexit unit in the UK. We have a special Brexit unit also that is chaired by the Taoiseach. A Secretary General is dedicated to Brexit and all 14 Departments are working together. Deputy Niall Collins suggested a dedicated Minister would be the answer. He asked me who I had met and what I am doing with my counterparts in Europe. None of the other 27 countries has a Brexit Minister. If we had one, he or she would not have a corresponding Minister to meet.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** None of them is as exposed as we are to Brexit. That is the important point.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Deputy Collins has made his point. The Taoiseach chairs the committee dealing with Brexit.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** We are the most exposed European member state to Brexit.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Deputy Collins is making a new point now. I am willing to respond to it.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** No. It is not a new point.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I refer again to the targeted and tailored survey we carried out. From the moment the referendum result was known, Enterprise Ireland contacted its 1,500 client companies. IDA Ireland did the same. InterTradeIreland is also doing wonderful work. If the Deputy looks at its website he will see exactly what it is doing. My Department and the enterprise agencies are responding well to Brexit. I assure Deputy Collins that the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Creed, is doing exactly the same with Bord Bia.

## **Enterprise Support Schemes**

5. **Deputy Catherine Martin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her plans to stimulate investment in sustainable enterprise; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14754/17]

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** This question relates to the fact that we as a country must invest in job creation in sustainable enterprises. Where is the long-term vision and plan and the joined-up interdepartmental thinking? What is the Government's plan to exploit the opportunity for thousands of jobs in the new renewable energy sectors in which it currently does not appear to be interested?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** My Department, through Enterprise Ireland, EI, and the local enterprise offices, LEOs, provides a range of supports to help Irish companies start, grow and export. In particular, Enterprise Ireland's new strategy for 2017 to 2020 will support more Irish companies to achieve greater scale, to be more competitive and expand into new export markets.

The objective of the Global Ambition strategy is to support enterprises across the economy to grow into strong international companies, developing world-leading products and services and exporting them all around the world. Sustainability is an important aspect of our drive to improve company level competitiveness. As part of helping clients to compete on world markets, Enterprise Ireland assists companies to incorporate sustainable practices into the day-to-day running of their business. Areas covered include environmental management systems, energy management systems and carbon management systems. Assistance also includes templates for devising an environmental policy statement and advice on the management of a business's environmental impacts.

Companies can also undertake technical feasibility studies into environmentally superior product design. Better environmental performance leads to improved efficiencies and direct savings in energy, water and waste costs. It can also increase access to customers who are increasingly demanding more environmentally friendly products and services. Those supports will make Irish companies more sustainable, more successful and more resilient.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** I thank the Minister for the information she provided on the supports and initiatives currently running in the area. To be honest, I still do not hear a comprehensive strategy. Unfortunately, the one element that is missing is ambition and we must be ambitious in this area. We need sustainability and sustainable enterprises not just to be part of the strategy, but rather the cornerstone of the Government's jobs policy. A just transition to the green economy is not only the right thing to do, but it is the smart thing to do. The Government is falling behind both other countries and the private sector.

The recent publication of the collaborative report between the International Renewable Energy Agency and the International Energy Agency commissioned by the German Government stated that, globally, we can create \$10 trillion of value with 6 million new jobs by 2050. We need to seek to ramp up our national commitments to reach the goals of the Paris agreement. They are relevant not just to the Minister's colleague, Deputy Naughten, and his Department, but they are also incredibly relevant to this Minister and her Department. I do not see that joined-up thinking. This is the area in which we must grow our economy and it is where the jobs are located.

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**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I thank Deputy Martin. Enterprise Ireland's strategy is global growth and we will continue with that. If I may say so, we are quite successful. The unemployment rate is now at 6.6%, with over 2 million people at work. In 2016, some 63,000 people went out every morning having got a new job. We are quite successful and this Minister is very ambitious, especially that jobs go to the regions and rural Ireland.

For Ireland, the green economy presents a major opportunity for employment creation and we are very aware of that aspect. Growth forecasts for the global clean, green sector are strong, amounting to over 20% per annum up to 2020 or over €2 billion in sales. Irish enterprise needs to continue to increase its share of the global market for green goods and services. In Ireland, the green economy covers activities such as sustainable food production; tourism; green financial services, as well as other green products and services; resource management; waste management; water and wastewater management; renewable energy; smart grids; and energy efficiency. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland also runs a range of programmes and schemes to assist businesses.

**Deputy Catherine Martin:** The Government must be much more active in helping create these new jobs in the renewable sector. Facilitating the movement of people into the sector while achieving our climate targets and fair and full employment in this country are indelibly linked. This is incredibly important for areas like the midlands, which currently has more than 3% greater unemployment than the rest of the country. The redirection of the peat public service obligation subsidy to the retrofitting industry could support more than 3,000 jobs, for example, with an average of 26 jobs per €1 million spent directly, indirectly or induced.

In creating a great economy, I suggest we must do two things. We must invest in new and renewable sectors and incentivise private businesses to do the same. We must also ensure that nobody is left behind, with new jobs created and retraining or reskilling options available to harness the wisdom and expertise of generations of people who have worked on making energy production in this country as efficient as possible. This is the new economy and we cannot afford to be left behind.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I am very aware it is the new economy. We are very ambitious and we have set targets for 2017 in job creation of 45,000 jobs. I am quietly confident we will reach that target by embracing the green economy. I agree with the Deputy that it is nothing new and it is not that I have not heard this before. It has been brought up at many of our meetings with Enterprise Ireland so as to ensure our companies are competitive, sustainable and aware of what jobs can be grown in this new economy. We will continue to do that. The Deputy indicated that there does not seem to be joined-up thinking but she should look at the eight regional action plans for jobs, as well as the new action plan for jobs for 2017. She will see a very joined-up approach in them.

## **Job Creation**

4. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the efforts being made to secure alternative employment for the workers at a factory (details supplied) in Nenagh, County Tipperary; her views on the standing down of ConnectIreland; if she will work with ConnectIreland in order to increase regional employment opportunities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14749/17]

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** We met the Minister and representatives of IDA Ireland during the week but what is she and her Department doing to deal with the onslaught being suffered in Tipperary? Most recently, we have seen losses at Coty in Nenagh and there are fears about Bord na Móna.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** The questions have been moved about. What number is this?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** We are going back to No. 4. It is a priority question.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I appreciate that. I was not here when the question was called initially.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** We will let the Deputy away with it this time.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** It is a long way to Tipperary. I hope the Minister can find it.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Was the Deputy late?

**An Ceann Comhairle:** He was.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** There we go.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I apologise, as long as the Minister has some good news for me.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** It is all right. I do not mind at all. The relevant State bodies will do everything possible to help the employees of this company to find new job opportunities. I have arranged that the inter-agency group, which is currently working to assist the Ranbaxy Laboratories and Suir Pharma closures, will now extend its remit to deal with the forthcoming closure in Nenagh. Earlier this week I met the Deputy and Tipperary Deputies to discuss the issue and I have arranged to meet the inter-agency group very shortly. I have spoken to the chairman of the group already.

Although the factory will not close until the end of 2018, IDA Ireland has already begun to pursue potential new investors for the site. The pipeline of new investment projects into Ireland is strong and every effort will be made to market the Nenagh facility and, of course, to also bring new jobs to the wider region. Both IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland will actively pursue job creation projects for Nenagh and the surrounding area. The announcement of the First Data project in Nenagh, which will create up to 300 jobs there, has been a significant recent success. It is notable that the former Suir Pharma premises in Clonmel has now been purchased by a new pharmaceutical operation and significant investment and job creation has been announced there.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I met the Minister and have given her a long-standing invitation to Tipperary since she took office. Unfortunately, she still has not given me a date for the visit and she is putting me off. We are getting worried that the sentiments of the old song “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary” are apt for this Government. Can it not find us in Tipperary?

I know about the inter-agency group led by Mr. Joe McGrath, which was established to help after the losses at Rambaxy and Suir Pharma. There have been some successes, especially on the Suir Pharma side. The Minister mentioned First Data in Nenagh. Coty, like Merck, Sharp and Dohme in south Tipperary, is a plant that has been there for over 40 years, providing long-

term employment and good jobs. It is a good company with an excellent work force. No matter what we do with inter-agency groups, when we lose a main pillar of employment in a town like Nenagh, it is devastating.

At the same time there has been an assault on ConnectIreland. The issue was raised by Deputy Niall Collins as well. We talk of ConnectIreland and connecting Tipperary but the Government is completely disconnected from rural Ireland, which is shameful. It is hiding behind a legal matter but a letter in my possession from ConnectIreland indicates there is no legal challenge in the courts at this point. It has not even entered arbitration. The statement is untrue and the Government is hiding behind it. It will be banished but the Minister should wake up and smell the coffee. The Minister should find out where Tipperary is and be down to meet us as well as the inter-agency group and local employees and employers.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I have done it before publicly but I reiterate that 63,000 jobs were created last year, with 72% of them outside Dublin. Those jobs are coming to provincial, rural and regional Ireland.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** That is fictional.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** The Deputy does not want to hear that. I met the Deputy on two or three occasions in my Department with various groups. We met about the Lisheen quarry project. We have also met about the recent closure of Coty. It is regrettable. It is terrible that 200 people lost their jobs there. I assure the Deputy that we are doing our best to ensure that site will be sold to a viable customer.

In regard to the evening that the announcement was made, it was made unknown to us in the Department. We certainly did not leak it, nor did the chief executive of Tipperary County Council. I have no idea where it came from. I apologise to the employees for the way they heard that news.

Amneal has now taken over the former J&J plant in Cashel. We will be looking to make sure that more jobs go to the regions, but that is what the Regional Action Plan for Jobs is all about. Whether the Deputy likes it or not, we are having considerable success.

However, I am ambitious. I myself am from the country and I want to see more jobs going to rural and regional areas.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** The leak was most regrettable. I am not blaming the Minister. If the Minister is trying to stop leaks in the Dáil, she has enough problems with Irish Water and WikiLeaks besides talking about leaks here.

The Minister needs to refocus on Tipperary, both north and south. It is a long county. It used to be served by two different regional authorities - the south east and mid-west. We are under sustained attack and it is not acceptable.

I was in Washington at the ambassador's engagement and I met the CEO of IDA Ireland. I have never met him in Ireland. One cannot meet him. IDA Ireland needs to re-jig the process and refocus, get connected and not be afraid of the coverage of ConnectIreland because it was getting some of the credit for jobs. We want the jobs. We do not care who provides them. The taxpayers' money is going into them. It is a smoke screen to say that there is a legal case with ConnectIreland. ConnectIreland has done a good job, as has Connect Tipperary, but they have

been muffled and strangled at every corner. IDA Ireland needs to get off its high horse and get down and dirty.

The Minister did not hear me and other Deputies ask the delegation that attended the meeting about the site visits. She had left the meeting as she had to come to the Dáil. There were very few visits to Tipperary and the members of the delegation would not tell us where or what plants were visited. Why the secrecy? We want jobs. We want industries brought to Tipperary to show them the road network and other excellent facilities serving Tipperary, including the IT, and above all, the excellent workforce that we have on offer. We need that to happen rather than wringing of hands and saying that there is an action plan. We need action. We need the Minister to get connected the way Tipperary is and be down to us soon, not putting me off every time I ask her to visit. One gets tired of asking.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Some 3,368 jobs are supported by IDA Ireland in Tipperary. The Deputy has not even mentioned Enterprise Ireland. They support 5,352 jobs there.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** The Minister is now like a schoolteacher lecturing.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Deputy Mattie McGrath does not want to hear anything. All he wants to do is shout.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Let the Minister speak.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** The LEOs in Tipperary support 1,437 jobs.

Deputy McGrath stated he has not met IDA Ireland. I beg the Deputy's pardon. The Deputy met IDA Ireland in my office at least two or three times.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I said the CEO.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Did the Deputy inquire to meet the CEO?

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** Yes.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I did not know that. That is the Deputy's business and his.

Deputy McGrath is also raising ConnectIreland in another question about Tipperary. I dealt with ConnectIreland. I believe there is another question coming about ConnectIreland and I will have more to time to address that issue.

## **Other Questions**

### **IDA Site Visits**

6. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the detail of regional IDA Ireland site visits and vacant properties in 2016; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14452/17]

**Deputy Niall Collins:** As the Minister will be aware, I have submitted this question on



every relevant occasion because we are concerned about the lack of IDA Ireland site visits to many parts of Ireland, in particular, Roscommon - Deputy Eugene Murphy is here beside me. Other such places include Kerry and, as Deputy Mattie McGrath mentioned, Tipperary. Can the Minister address in her answer the uneven spread and imbalance of IDA Ireland site visits across the country through 2016?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** Regional development is a key priority for me and I am determined to help drive job creation all over Ireland. Increasing and sustaining foreign direct investment outside of our main urban areas represents a vital part of this.

IDA Ireland's strategy for 2015-19 includes a commitment to increase foreign direct investment in every region outside Dublin by 30%-40%. The 2016 results show that IDA Ireland is actively working towards this goal, with 52% of all jobs created by the agency's clients last year based outside of Dublin. Site visit statistics also indicate that progress is being made towards this objective. In 2016 there were 638 IDA-sponsored site visits nationwide, up from 565 in 2015. Locations outside Dublin accounted for 55% of these visits. It should be remembered that site visits do not necessarily accurately project future investment, as most investment comes from an expansion of existing company activity.

To attract more FDI to the regions, IDA Ireland must maintain an adequate supply of marketable serviced land and buildings that can be offered to potential investors. There are currently 23 vacant IDA-owned properties which are available for investment and I can provide details on these to the Deputy directly.

I emphasise that IDA Ireland is actively encouraging clients to locate in regional locations. The final decision, however, always lies with the company concerned and can be influenced by many different factors including access to talent, proximity to transport hubs and the suitability of local infrastructure.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Has Deputy Eugene Murphy a supplementary on this?

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** I will make a brief comment. I thank Deputy Niall Collins for bringing it up and sharing time. In her reply, the Minister repeatedly states "outside of Dublin".

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** It is because the Deputy is saying its all going to Dublin.

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** I am asking where are the Minister's agencies in Roscommon, east Galway, Leitrim and Longford? It is not happening in those areas. I acknowledge the programme for Government states the Government would create 155,000 jobs outside of Dublin but our region is being destroyed because we do not have jobs. If one looks at towns such as Ballaghaderreen, Castlerea, Strokestown, Cortober in Carrick-on-Shannon and Roscommon town, there are units ready to be used. I believe the Government is not engaging.

IDA Ireland had one or two visits to Roscommon.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** One.

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** One. In Cavan, which is in Deputy Niamh Smyth's constituency, the number was low also. IDA Ireland is not engaging with certain counties and I want the Minister to change that. If the Government does not do so then we are not getting a fair crack of the whip.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I know where Deputy Eugene Murphy's concern is coming from but if he thinks about it, the chief executive and the board of the companies involved decide where they want to go. IDA Ireland encourages them. I myself have encouraged companies that I have met to go to regional towns not too far from many of the towns Deputy Murphy mentioned.

The LEOs in Roscommon supported the creation of 704 jobs last year, EI supported 1,688 and IDA Ireland 985. I would love to be here saying to the Deputy it was 9,995 but the reality is the chief executive and directors of the board - many of whom are in the US because 130,000 of the 150,000 FDI jobs in the country come from the US - make those decisions in the US with IDA Ireland. As I say, I have been at some of those meetings and I have heard IDA Ireland push - I myself have pushed - to try and land those jobs in regional areas but there are reasons why they do not.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I thank the Minister.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** In my answer, I mentioned these reasons and they include transport hubs, talent and local infrastructure.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Minister's time is up.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** Everybody understands how the corporate world works in terms of decision-making. Companies make the decisions that are best suited to them but it is a fact, and despite everything the Minister says there is no disputing it, that IDA Ireland is failing the regions of the country outside of the greater Dublin area in terms of site visits. In 2016, there was one site visit to Roscommon in 2016 there were three site visits to Kerry. That is unacceptable. The responsibility falls back on the Minister to impress upon IDA Ireland that it must engage in itineraries outside the greater Dublin area in so far as possible. The figures show that 45% of site visits were in the greater Dublin area, which was the figure the Minister gave, but if one looks at the GDP statistic provided recently by the CSO, 45% of the Irish GDP is generated in the greater Dublin area whereas in the UK, 20% of GDP is generated in the London area. We have an imbalance and IDA Ireland needs to work harder to address it. Is the Minister going to do something different to bring some initiative or give some direction to IDA Ireland to change the trend which is towards the greater Dublin area and the east coast? We cannot allow a situation to persist in which Roscommon, Kerry, Cavan and other counties fail to receive due consideration from IDA Ireland. Can the Minister redouble her efforts and implement an initiative to address that?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I work very hard to ensure that this will happen, not just with IDA Ireland but with Enterprise Ireland, our LEOs and InterTradeIreland. Despite what Deputy Niall Collins said, I am still coming back with hard figures to him. In 2016, 52% of all jobs created were outside Dublin as were 55% of all site visits. At the same time, we have to be realistic. There is a global trend to base foreign direct investment around large urban areas where there is access to transport networks. Quite often, companies want to be located near competitors or clusters of similar enterprises. As a result, it is unavoidable that some businesses are only interested in investing in our larger cities. Deputy Niall Collins did not mention Limerick, which is outside Dublin. There were 49 site visits to Limerick, ten to Kilkenny, 42 to Galway, 49 to Cork, 18 to Clare, 20 to Sligo, 17 to Waterford and 36 to Westmeath. As such, site visits are taking place.

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**Deputy Niall Collins:** I am well aware of that. As spokesperson, my role extends to the whole of Ireland, as does the role of the Minister.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Please, Deputy Collins.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I have just told Deputy Niall Collins that there were 638 sites visits altogether and I called out a number of counties, not just Limerick, albeit I pointed out that Limerick had been successful, as had Galway, Louth and Sligo.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The time is up.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** That is if one is counting site visits as successes, which I do not. I see the landing of jobs in those areas as the success.

*Question No. 7 replied to with Written Answers.*

### **Brexit Issues**

8. **Deputy James Lawless** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the estimated challenges and opportunities posed by the Brexit result, in particular regarding the opportunities that are available for third level institutions in the context of PRTLTI. [9927/17]

**Deputy James Lawless:** My question is on two matters, in a sense. Brexit poses opportunities for Ireland, in particular in regard to research activities. In parallel, the PRTLTI has been hit in recent years by funding cuts. Can we align those two goals to maximise our advantage post-Brexit to attract high-level research activity?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** While the full extent of any impact of Brexit on research in Ireland will only become evident as the Brexit situation unfolds, Science Foundation Ireland, an agency of my Department, is actively working on measures we can take to maximise the opportunities as well as mitigate the risks. We are taking a positive and proactive approach to supporting our research and innovation sector in light of Brexit. Science Foundation Ireland is currently developing a number of proposals in this area. Science Foundation Ireland will continue to build on its existing research collaborations with the UK and Northern Ireland and will be encouraging Irish researchers to diversify their partnerships with other EU countries. In addition, Science Foundation Ireland is developing proposals to collaborate with top UK universities to attract both leading researchers and PhD students to Ireland through joint programmes with Irish universities.

The PRTLTI, which has been funded by my Department since 2010, has provided rounds of investment in research infrastructure since 1998. The funding allocation for 2017 is €14.4 million. In 2016, the funding allocation was €30.4 million, including a Supplementary Estimate in December of €20 million. In total, sustained investment since 1998 amounting to some €1.2 billion of public and private funding in our higher education institutions has built research capacity in the Irish higher education system. This enables our researchers to successfully compete in funding opportunities such as Horizon 2020.

*Additional information not given on the floor of the House*

The planning and design of a successor to cycle 5 of PRTLTI is an action in Innovation 2020

and is being progressed by my Department working closely with the Department of Education and Skills. My Department is seeking funding to commence a successor to cycle 5 of the PRTLTI as part of its submission to the mid-term review of the capital plan. There will be more clarity on a successor to cycle 5, including time lines when this review is concluded and the funding envelope for this and other projects is finalised. The programme design is in the early stages until funding is secured. A new cycle of the PRTLTI would increase the capability and capacity of the Irish research system which will support it to avail of any opportunities that may arise as the Brexit situation develops.

**Deputy James Lawless:** I put down the question in the context of PRTLTI. I am aware of the good work Science Foundation Ireland does and have met the chief executive, Mr. Mark Ferguson, recently and complimented on the fantastic work he does. I am aware of his ambitious plans to link with top universities in the UK to allow them to benefit from ERC type grants. However, PRTLTI is not a Science Foundation fund; it is a separate fund for a separate purpose and covers different institutions. The Minister said the budget for 2017 is €14.4 million and was €30.4 million in 2016. The 2017 budget of €14.4 million is derisory for a fund that started off in the hundreds of millions. That is where it was targeted and that is where it was. Science Foundation Ireland is a great institution, but it is no substitute for PRTLTI. I hope we will see a vastly increased budget on €14.4 million in the announcement shortly of cycle 5 of PRTLTI. If we are serious about attracting top talent across all the disciplines and universities, including the humanities, we must get serious about PRTLTI and third level funding. Science Foundation Ireland does great work, but it is not a substitute for everything else.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** The PRTLTI programme has been allocated €14.4 million. While this figure is small relative to recent years, the historic liabilities in cycle 5 are close to being paid down in full. We are at an early stage in terms of the design of the successor to PRTLTI cycle 5. As such, it has yet to be decided whether there will be any specific Brexit-related component to the programme. However, a new programme will increase the capacity of the research system and that is something that is required in any scenario associated with Brexit. The Department has sought funding for Innovation 2020 in the mid-term review of the capital plan. This includes a proposal to commence the successor to cycle 5 of PRTLTI, which is the key action in Innovation 2020. If we have agreement in principle to the launch of the new cycle of PRTLTI, we can make a start in 2018.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I thank Deputy Lawless for letting me in on this question. I am very passionate about research and development and the opportunities there could be for Ireland. I am particularly passionate about the Border region and Cavan and Monaghan. It is wonderful to have Cavan Institute and Monaghan Institute but we do not have universities or the infrastructure. Anything the Minister can do to bring research or development to the Border counties would be welcome, and a special case has to be made for the Border region in particular because it will be at the coal face of the outcome and implications of Brexit. We have Cavan Institute and Monaghan Institute run by the education and training boards, which have been hugely influential in keeping a young population and preventing a complete brain drain from the Border region and this needs to be worked on and thought very much about in the negotiations.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I hear exactly what the Deputy is saying. Without doubt, the programme for research in third level institutions, PRTLTI, has been an important part of the research funding and it has provided dedicated large-scale research funding for colleges to implement their research strategies and fund the people, equipment and buildings to go

with them. The PRTLTI has involved €1.2 billion of public and private investment since 1998 in physical research facilities and support for human capital for research. I hear exactly what the Deputy is talking about for the Border. The overarching vision for the PRTLTI was to propel Ireland towards establishing an international profile as a premier location for carrying out world-class research and development.

### **Economic Competitiveness**

9. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the steps being taken to reverse the continual fall in Irish business competitiveness levels and Ireland's attractiveness as a location for businesses, particularly Ireland's competitiveness standing with the UK; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14451/17]

**Deputy Niall Collins:** In her reply, will the Minister address the concerns we have expressed previously, and which I will express again, on Irish competitiveness with regard to the UK, and the competitiveness gap which exists and which seems to be widening? This is particularly concerning in the context and backdrop of Brexit.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** In 2016, Ireland moved from 16th to seventh in the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook, and from 24th to 23rd in the 2016 World Economic Forum, WEF, Global Competitiveness Report. The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report shows Ireland is ranked 18th, ahead of the UK in terms of ease of starting a business and paying tax but behind in the overall rankings.

Ireland's improved competitiveness performance has been central to employment growth. Brexit means we must do more to enhance our attractiveness as a location to start and locate a business. The 2017 Action Plan for Jobs sets a target to achieve a top five global competitiveness ranking based on the IMD measure by 2020. The plan sets out a range of actions to further enhance competitiveness and help achieve this objective.

The National Competitiveness Council has also undertaken a benchmarking exercise comparing Irish and UK competitiveness performance. To improve competitiveness, we must consolidate Ireland's traditional strengths, such as talent, productivity and export competitiveness, and address areas such as infrastructure where we lag behind other countries.

As Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, my focus is on ensuring Ireland is a competitive location internationally to establish and run a business. We are stepping up investment in infrastructure. We are driving the implementation of our research strategy, Innovation 2020. We are putting more people on the ground in foreign markets to attract investment and help Irish businesses which export to the UK and help others diversify into new markets.

**Deputy Niall Collins:** I have mentioned this to the Minister on a number of occasions and, unfortunately, I hate to have to report that we have not seen any progress on the closing of the competitiveness gap which exists. The Minister quoted the world rankings to me, but she will know we dropped to 18th place out of 189 economies in the Ease of Doing Business report. We have now fallen behind Georgia, Latvia, Estonia and Macedonia in the global rankings. This is a very telling statistic to compare how we are doing *vis-à-vis* other jurisdictions in terms of competitiveness. It is extremely worrying, bearing in mind the Taoiseach committed to making us the best small country in the world in which to do business. I want to ask the Minister about

the capital gains tax, CGT, relief which applies to entrepreneurial gains, and I have raised this issue with her previously. As she knows, the 10% rate of CGT applies to entrepreneurs up to a limit of £10 million in the UK. We have a very unfavourable regime in this country. Young entrepreneurs will go to the UK and seek to generate enterprise and business there because they are not getting the same break here. Can we please look at our corporation tax rate, in particular for entrepreneurial start-ups?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** In budget 2017, the Government reduced capital gains tax to help entrepreneurs, bringing this relief more in line with that in operation in the UK. We are providing a lower 10% level of capital gains tax for entrepreneurs on disposals of qualifying assets up to a lifetime limit of €1 million. Capital gains tax entrepreneurial relief introduced in 2017 provides for a reduced CGT rate of 10% for entrepreneurs. The reform of CGT is a work in progress and I have secured the competitive 10% CGT rate. The relief will be kept under consideration and, depending on its operation and the resources available, can be revisited in the context of future budgets. My objective is to deliver 10% on lifetime gains of up to €10 million. I will continue to advocate for further enhancements to the threshold.

The Deputy gave a list of competitiveness factors. I have other numbers and I am very willing to share them with the Deputy. They are on the public record with regard to the World Bank ranking, the World Economic Forum and the IMD ranking. The Deputy mentioned the goods market efficiency in Ireland, where we are rated fifth and the UK is ninth. There are numbers and statistics. My target for the IMD report for next year in the Action Plan for Jobs is to go from seventh to fifth.

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** The Minister's answer is fine and I am sure it is correct, but the goalposts have changed. The CSO figures for 2016, and I questioned the Taoiseach on this during Leaders' Questions two weeks ago, show a drop in the value of exports of almost €500 million, that is, €480 million, for 2016. Most of this drop occurred between June and the end of the year, after the Brexit vote. Even more seriously for people such as Deputy Smyth and me in particular, small food businesses are being affected because almost all of the loss is in the food and drink sector and the Minister must take this on board.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I am aware of the €480 million drop in the value of exports and not in the amount of exports.

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** Yes, the value.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I am absolutely conscious of the problem and the issues in the agrisector and with regard to agrifood. I assure the Deputy I have been in touch with Bord Bia. I work very closely with the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Marine to make sure our agribusinesses can compete. Enterprise Ireland and the local enterprise offices are on the same page. We are working towards it and we will be doing our very best. I have put in €3 million in extra staff. I have also given more money to the LEOs in the budget and ensured an extra €50 million was added to the €500 million from 2016.

It is now 2017 and the budget allocation was €550 million. I will make sure to make that case for our businesses and our companies. Enterprise Ireland will work very closely with me, as will InterTradeIreland.

*2 o'clock*

## Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

10. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation her views on the lack of a democratic process surrounding the pending EU ratification on the CETA trade deal; the implications of the investor-state dispute mechanism for Ireland; her further views on the need to wait for the EU Court of Justice on the legality of the investment court system, ICS, before ratification by the Houses of the Oireachtas; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14423/17]

**Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan:** The question relates to CETA and the lack of a democratic process surrounding the pending EU ratification of the trade deal. It also relates to the implications of the investor court system and the need to wait for the European Court of Justice ruling on the legality of the ICS before ratification here or elsewhere.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O’Connor:** On 15 January 2017, the European Parliament voted in favour of the provisional application of the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, better known as CETA. This is part of the democratic process as set out in the treaties for the approval of international trade agreements. Provisional application is a standard part of a trade agreement and allows those parts of the agreement for which the EU has competence to come into force. The provisions relating to investment protection and investment dispute settlement were excluded from the provisional application.

Ratification can now commence in member states according to their constitutional requirements. This is also part of the democratic process for ratification of the trade deal. The Dáil will be part of the final decision to ratify the agreement in our case. It is important to wait to see the benefits of the agreement come into being before it is put before the Dáil for ratification. Then we can have a fully informed debate based on facts and evidence. Ratification by the Dáil will not be sought in advance of any relevant proceedings at the European Court of Justice.

I support the provisional application of CETA so that firms may immediately benefit from the new business opportunities. My Department is already working with our agencies and business groups to ensure that firms can take advantage of the terms of this agreement. I will be leading a trade mission to Canada in the first half of this year to promote the opportunities provided by the agreement.

**Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan:** I am not coming at this with an anti-trade agenda but with an agenda that there should be a right to trade without any recourse to these investor court systems. I take from what the Minister said that the investor court system seems to be gone completely. I ask her to clarify that because of concerns among members of parliament in many countries, MEPs, trade unions, NGOs and civil society about that particular system. It is considered an affront to democracy. The German judges expressed concerns that it did not even meet the minimum standards required for a judicial system in a democratic country, and the European association of judges took the same line.

The concerns of the NGOs and trade unions were that it was going to allow foreign companies to sue governments and so bypass legal jurisdiction. I take hope from what the Minister has said. It was allowing companies to sue governments on future imagined profits as it stood. The Ecuadorian Government chose not to renew a licence for an oil exploration company. The company took the country to court. The court found against the Ecuadorian Government and awarded the company €2.36 billion based on the profit that would have been made. I ask the

Minister to clarify the investor aspect of it. There have been calls for a new chapter on that system. Where is that now?

**Deputy Niall Collins:** I have a quick comment on this. The Minister might be able to clarify this today but she can get back to me if not. Fianna Fáil is clear on where it stands on CETA. We support it and think the upside to the trade deal will be very beneficial to our country in the main.

People and groups are voicing concern and opposition to CETA and to aspects of the agreement. We had a briefing at the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation by some officials from the Minister's Department. I asked them to detail and outline, following the consultation exercise that they undertook with stakeholder groups, the level of opposition and concern that was expressed. The response from the Minister's officials was that it was minimal. If I am not incorrect, they said that no opposition was expressed to them. I have subsequently met with other groups which are expressing opposition, including farming representative groups and those types of organisation. I ask the Minister to double-check with her Department on the level of consultation that it has undertaken with various stakeholder groups and to gauge exactly what I just outlined there.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I have seen letters in agreement with CETA and I have also seen other letters. I will double-check and get Deputy Collins the exact details. I hear exactly what the Deputy is saying. Substantive engagement took place, sector by sector, to identify Ireland's interests over the course of the negotiations. We looked at the elimination of virtually all tariffs between Ireland and Canada. We looked at the creation of new opportunities for farmers and agrifoods. As the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, I have to make sure that jobs are created throughout Ireland. Over 70% of our exports and half of our domestic economic activity is generated by foreign direct investment. We are trying to make sure that we seize the opportunities. I assure Deputy Collins that there will be a vote in Dáil Éireann. We want to see what benefits will accrue so that we can make an informed decision. I am looking forward to engaging with companies in Canada and Enterprise Ireland will be with me to ensure that we can grow companies. IDA Ireland will also be there to make sure that there is more investment into Ireland. We will then be able to come back and make a better-informed decision on what happens, and then we can vote in Dáil Éireann.

**Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan:** I would also like to make a point about the Seanad's rejection of CETA, which is very significant. There are still concerns about the implications for jobs, particularly in small and medium enterprises, and about agriculture, particularly milk and beef prices. There is a danger of us being flooded by genetically modified foods. The people of Wallonia, who are very dependent on dairy and beef products, like us, have voted against this agreement five times. They wanted the Belgian Government to bring this to the European Court of Justice to see if this is legal under European law, as is their right under Article 218. There are concerns that, while there are chapters on labour and sustainable development, there is nothing on violation of those particular standards. The other concern is about future privatisation of public services and that CETA could open a floodgate for that to happen. I ask the Minister to clarify if we are going to wait for the European Court of Justice ruling before the vote is taken here.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** The majority of the provisions of CETA will be provisionally applied. Chapter 8 on investment shall only be provisionally applied in so far as it relates to foreign direct investment. Chapter 13 is about financial services and it shall not be



provisionally applied in so far as it applies to the portfolio investment, protection of investment or investment dispute settlement. That was one of the major issues. The article on camcording in chapter 20 on intellectual property will not be provisionally applied. The articles on administrative proceedings, review and appeal in chapter 27, on transparency, shall not be provisionally applied. The article on investor protection in chapter 28 on exemptions will not be provisionally applied. That was a major issue. The provisional application of chapter 22 on trade and sustainable development, chapter 23 on trade and labour and chapter 24 on trade and the environment shall respect the allocation of competences between the Union and the member states.

### **IDA Site Visits**

11. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number of IDA Ireland visits in counties Sligo and Leitrim in 2016 and to date in 2017; the efforts under way to attract tenants to the new advanced IDA Ireland facility in Finisklin, Sligo; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14417/17]

**Deputy Tony McLoughlin:** I wish to ask the Minister about the number of IDA Ireland visits in counties Sligo and Leitrim in 2016 and to date in 2017. What efforts are currently under way to attract tenants to the new advanced IDA Ireland facility in Finisklin, Sligo? The Minister visited the new state-of-the-art facility at Finisklin recently. However, there are many vacant premises in the industrial estate at Finisklin and elsewhere. I have been inundated with requests about this matter.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Eugene Murphy):** The Deputy has only 30 seconds to introduce his question, but I will let him back in after the Minister's reply.

**Deputy Tony McLoughlin:** Okay.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** IDA Ireland maintains statistics in relation to site visits by potential investors on a quarterly basis. During 2016 there was a total of 20 IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits by potential investors to County Sligo. This was up from seven in 2014 representing a 185% increase. There were eight site visits to County Leitrim in 2016, up from two in 2014 representing a 300% increase. It is expected that data on site visits for quarter 1, 2017 will be available early next month. It should of course be remembered that site visits do not necessarily accurately project future investment, as most investment comes from an expansion of existing company activity.

The significant increase in site visits to Sligo and Leitrim only reflects part of the agency's ongoing efforts to attract foreign direct investment to the north-west region. IDA Ireland has also made a considerable investment in a new 31,000 sq. ft. advance technology building located in Finisklin Business Park, Sligo. This facility is due for completion at the end of April 2017. I am informed by the agency that this building is already being actively marketed to all potential investors.

Sligo and Leitrim at end-2016 had 27 companies and 2,703 jobs supported by IDA Ireland.

**Deputy Tony McLoughlin:** I thank the Minister for her reply. She mentioned that in 2016 the north west had 20 IDA Ireland-sponsored site visits to County Sligo. Are any of those ongoing and, if so, what progress has been made? Does the Minister receive an update on all the

visits? Are they successful or are clients going elsewhere? As the Minister knows, the highest number of commercial vacancies in my constituency is in County Sligo. The national unemployment rate is 6.6% but it is much higher in my constituency. I have heard announcements concerning foreign direct investment in Dublin and elsewhere on the east coast, but our area has a major problem with Brexit which is coming down the tracks quickly.

The Minister rightly referred to Enterprise Ireland, and I acknowledge its work as well as the work being done by local enterprise offices or LEOs. In the third level sector, Sligo Institute of Technology and St. Angela's College produce an adequate number of talented graduates. However, I have expressed my concern about jobs in my constituency to the Minister on a number of occasions.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Eugene Murphy):** I do not wish to be rude but can I stop the Deputy there? I would like to allow the Minister to reply and I will then let the Deputy have another minute.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I acknowledge that Deputy McLoughlin and I have had numerous conversations in County Sligo. County Sligo is close to my heart because while my family is from Galway, most of them live in County Sligo. Enterprise Ireland, InterTradeIreland and the LEOs are all working hard to ensure that jobs are landed. A wonderful new IDA Ireland advance factory has been built in Sligo and I am hopeful that we will be able to land a good company there with sustainable jobs.

The Deputy also asked me if site visits were being followed up. IDA Ireland follows up every lead, as I have seen for myself when I am with them. I cannot answer the question fully because it is commercially sensitive and so I could not possibly tell the Deputy what companies will decide to invest in Sligo. However, not only are we conducting site visits there but we are also talking to companies to make sure that if they want to expand they will be helped to do so. We will continue to do that. There are excellent people in Sligo from IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the local enterprise office. There is also an excellent chamber of commerce and trading community.

**Deputy Tony McLoughlin:** I acknowledge what the Minister has said about personnel from the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the LEOs. I have often wondered about providing incentives to bring people to the west and north west. On the east coast, including Dublin, it can be difficult to find homes to buy or school places for children. Additional incentives should therefore be provided to companies to relocate to the Sligo-Leitrim region because we have all the necessary facilities there. The work of the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and LEOs in trying to attract more jobs to the north west is vitally important.

The Acting Chairman, Deputy Eugene Murphy, referred earlier to his own area of Roscommon. This is a plea from the heart for more investment in the north west. I know the Minister is doing her utmost, but additional incentives would encourage people to come to the west. If they do come, as the Minister's family has done in recent years, they will never leave. More employment is needed in the region, but rates are too high.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Eugene Murphy):** I will keep the Minister's reply to one minute because I want to get through more questions.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I agree, Chair. Deputy McLoughlin mentioned Sligo Institute of Technology which is a wonderful place. I have met the institute's president and

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there are fantastic courses being offered there. As the Deputy may know, when companies come to Sligo that college runs courses to make sure there is a pool of talent ready. There is also a wonderful tourism sector in the area. Some 584 new jobs were created there from 2011 to 2016. I can assure the Deputy that I try to get to Sligo as often as I can to see my new granddaughter. I am very conscious of all the attractions that Sligo has. There are talented people there in addition to effective personnel from the IDA and Enterprise Ireland. We will make sure to keep the pressure on to land those jobs in Sligo.

### IDA Site Visits

12. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if there are any planned IDA Ireland or FDI visits to counties Cavan or Monaghan in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14433/17]

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I wish to ask the Minister if any IDA Ireland or FDI visits are planned to counties Cavan or Monaghan in 2017 and if she will make a statement on the matter.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I am informed that, for reasons of commercial sensitivity and client confidentiality, IDA Ireland does not comment on upcoming site visits by potential investors.

The agency maintains statistics in relation to site visits by potential investors on a quarterly basis. The latest data available cover 2016 only. During 2016 there was a total of two IDA Ireland sponsored site visits by potential investors to County Cavan and two site visits to County Monaghan. It is expected that data on site visits for the first quarter of 2017 will be available next month.

It is important also to note that data on site visits is not necessarily an accurate measure of the level of foreign direct investment. IDA Ireland actively encourages clients to locate in regional locations. The final decision, however, lies with the investor. Cavan and Monaghan at end of 2016 had 12 companies and 1,340 jobs supported by IDA Ireland.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I am going to read out some figures to the Minister regarding IDA Ireland visits to Cavan and Monaghan from 2012 to 2016. I have to read them into the record because they are so appalling. In Cavan in 2012 we had three visits, in 2013 we had two visits, in 2014 we had one, in 2015 we had zero and in 2016 we had two. Monaghan, similarly, had zero in 2012, one in 2013, zero in 2014, two in 2015 and two visits in 2016.

Out of 636 total visits nationwide in 2016, Cavan and Monaghan had only two IDA Ireland site visits each while Dublin alone had 284. I know the Minister will say the companies decide where they want to go and all the rest but there seriously has to be a concentrated emphasis on making a special case for the Border counties.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I hear the Deputy. She knows that I have met the Cavan and Monaghan groups and the Deputies from the area. The figures from IDA Ireland are not great but in Monaghan there are 5,168 jobs supported by Enterprise Ireland. That is also an agency under my aegis. There are 903 jobs supported by the Local Enterprise Offices, LEOs. It is the same kind of story in Cavan where there are 1,162 LEO jobs and 5,221 jobs from Enterprise Ireland. I know the Deputy might not be getting it from IDA Ireland but I am really push-

ing. I know that it is the policy of IDA Ireland to ensure that companies which come looking in Ireland go to visit the regions, but honestly it is the chief executives that decide where they will visit. I will keep pushing however.

**Deputy Niamh Smyth:** I acknowledge the work the Minister is trying to do. Obviously, I also acknowledge the work that Enterprise Ireland is doing and the work done by our LEOs in Cavan and Monaghan, including assistant head of enterprise, Jim Fox, in Cavan and John McEntagart, head of the Monaghan LEO. That work is wonderful, however we are having a brain drain out of our two counties. The skilled jobs are just not there.

I ask the Minister to work with her colleagues, including in the Department of Education and Skills and particularly in the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport, and specifically the Minister, Deputy Heather Humphreys, to ensure such co-operation between the various Departments. Of course we do not have the infrastructure to make these places attractive. I am the first to acknowledge that. The biggest disgrace of all is that our N3 stops at the Cavan border. If one looks at a map of this island, it is absolutely atrocious and disgraceful to see how our counties have been treated in terms of infrastructure, particularly with roads. That certainly does not help our case when the Minister is out there with IDA Ireland is trying to attract jobs and visits. There really needs to be cooperation between the various Departments to make sure there is a special case.

I am not exaggerating. The Minister should take out the map. I was shocked myself at a recent meeting in Monaghan County Council when a map was taken out to show us the road infrastructure. We do not have a rail service. That cross-departmental work is going to be key to making us attractive to IDA Ireland. I ask the Minister please to do that.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I hear exactly what the Deputy is saying but we do have a north-east, north-west action plan. We have a plan to make sure that jobs are created, whether they are IDA Ireland jobs, which I would like to see more of, or Enterprise Ireland jobs, LEO jobs or InterTradeIreland jobs. Just to put it on the record, there were actually 2,339 jobs created by InterTradeIreland in 2016. One of the key actions in that regional action plan is an M1 digital payments cluster. This is a key part of that action plan for jobs which proposes the creation of a digital payments hub in Drogheda. The Deputy knows that I co-hosted the meeting on that with the Minister, Deputy Humphreys, and that it was in her office with the Deputies from Cavan and Monaghan.

We also had the establishment of the two regional skills fora, one for the north east and one for the north west, in the plan. We are also supporting a wide range of tourism developments across the regions, including a 22 km greenway project between County Monaghan and County Armagh. It is absolutely on my radar. I assure the Deputy that the Minister, Deputy Humphreys, reminds me of that every time I meet her, as do our other Deputies.

## **Business Parks**

13. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 634 and 635 of 21 February 2017, the number of employees at each of the IDA Ireland business and technology parks and landbanks in north Dublin; her plans for business parks in Fingal and north Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14414/17]

39. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 634 and 635 of 21 February 2017, her plans for the greenfield site and Belcamp business and tech park; the tenants that she is hoping to attract to the area; the timeframe in which she will have the park operational; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [14411/17]

**Deputy Thomas P. Broughan:** I just want to follow up on a previous question I asked the Minister about Clonshaugh industrial estate and the proposed Belcamp industrial park in the north fringe. As the Minister knows it is a critical area of the northside. In light of some of the earlier, very passionate, speeches I am very much in favour of regional development. I support all possible jobs for Roscommon, Sligo and other parts of the country because we need to reach the whole county, but I am focusing on this. I think we have about 100 acres there. It is a greenfield site. There was an illegal dump on it, which had been cleared. IDA Ireland has owned it for approximately 15 years. Are we going to move on that and start creating jobs there?

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 13 and 39 together.

IDA Ireland owns five business parks and one greenfield site in north Dublin. The agency also markets a business park in Blanchardstown which has been developed as a joint venture with Fingal County Council. There are 696 IDA Ireland client companies in Dublin. I understand that the agency does not track the number of people the Deputy asked about in each park.

I am informed that in 1997, IDA Ireland acquired approximately, as the Deputy said, 48 ha at Belcamp in north Dublin. In 2001, a waste landfill covering approximately 1.5 ha was found at the site. Investigations revealed that the illegal dumping in this area occurred in the early 1980s. The agency's current objective is to remediate the land affected by the dumping.

In January 2015, IDA Ireland completed a freehold sale of around 2 ha of the lands unaffected by the waste, to the ESB. The balance of the unaffected land has been master-planned as a data centre hub and is currently being marketed to the agency's clients.

I have asked IDA Ireland's property development department to make itself available to meet with Deputy Broughan should he wish to discuss these matters in more detail.

**Deputy Thomas P. Broughan:** I would be delighted to do that and I welcome that. I also hope that the IDA will liaise with all our local agencies, particularly with Fingal County Council, as it is in Fingal, under manager Paul Reid. I hope it will liaise with Dublin City Council, Dublin City University, the education and training board and all the other agencies, in particular some of the local development agencies. I am thinking in particular of Coolock Development Council, of which I have been a board member for the past 30 years.

*Vis-à-vis* recent discussion, probably the greatest head IDA Ireland ever had was Padraic White. Padraic voluntarily chaired our council for the past 27 years and was fantastic help to the north Coolock area and the general northside area in liaising with local business in Clonshaugh and so on. We want to keep these linkages.

A few weeks ago I was at the 40th anniversary dinner of Allergan. Allergan is an amazing American company on which the Taoiseach made a very good speech. Allergan is in Westport and in Coolock, with two major facilities employing a couple of thousand workers. That is the kind of thing we need to encourage into the future. We are very anxious to have Belcamp, which used to be called the Fingal industrial park, going ahead in this region where maybe

another 25 or 30 homes are going to be built, it is hoped, over the next few years. Swords will grow to a city of, perhaps, 100,000 people given the second runway and so on. We need the industrial park.

**Deputy Brendan Smith:** The Minister is aware that I have put forward a proposal in regard to 29 acres of land owned by the State that is available for a business park at Killgarry in Cavan. I put forward a specific proposal in regard to the possibility of locating a new data centre there. It has the acreage and infrastructure from the point of view of telecommunications, water, sewerage and the road network. I appeal to the Minister to intercede with IDA Ireland. It is an ideal piece of infrastructure to attract inward investment to a region that needs it.

**Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor:** I will take on board the issue raised by Deputy Smith and will talk to IDA Ireland about the data centre.

In response to Deputy Broughan, I have met the Fingal county manager, Mr. Paul Reid, to discuss development issues in Fingal. He sits on the Dublin regional action plan for jobs, which is an important driver of growth in north Dublin. I am very aware of the five business parks and greenfield site in Dublin, many of which are located near the Deputy's constituency. They include Blanchardstown, the Swords business park, Clonshaugh business park and the Belcamp business park, to which the Deputy has referred.

Fingal and south county Dublin own two further sites which are used by IDA Ireland, namely, the IDA Ireland college business park in Blanchardstown, which is overseen by Fingal County Council, and the Grange Castle strategic site in south County Dublin. I will meet Mr. Reid very soon. He is a very competent chief executive of the county council. I will make sure we discuss the matter to which the Deputy referred.

*Written Answers are published on the Oireachtas website.*

## **Topical Issue Debate**

### **Mental Health Services Provision**

**Deputy Mick Wallace:** In the past month alone, my office has been contacted by four different families regarding services for suicidal children and teenagers in Wexford. We were contacted by a 14 year old girl and her mother. She has presented to the HSE twice with suicidal thoughts. Her father committed suicide when she was younger and her uncle also committed suicide. She wrote a letter to the office of the Minister for Health recently. She received an acknowledgement but nothing since. I would like to read a piece of her letter in order to reflect her own words:

Dear Minister Harris,

I am fourteen years old and from Wexford. I am writing to you to tell you my experience of seeking help for my mental health.

In January 2016 I asked for help as I was experiencing suicidal thoughts and struggling to come to terms with very tragic bereavements in family.

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I was referred to psychology services in the HSE. They met with my Mam and then me in June 2016. They said they could help me, but I am on the waiting list. I was informed that I would be waiting between 1-2 years.

In December '16/ January '17, I had thoughts of suicide again and of being unable to cope. I was very confused and emotional.

On Wednesday the 18th of January '17, my doctor put me into A&E to see a mental health group. I saw a normal doctor and he told me that I had to stay in one night so I would be seen quicker.

On the Thursday morning, I was told I was going to be seen but as the day went on, we heard no more. When the doctor was doing his rounds, my Mam asked the nurse what time were CAMHS coming at and the nurse said they aren't coming anymore. After that I was made stay in hospital until Monday the 24th. I was scared and very anxious and did not understand why I had to stay in hospital. I just needed someone to talk to and help me deal with my low mood and emotions.

I was finally seen on Monday by CAMHS and got discharged with no appointment for help still. They said I needed a psychologist and they don't have one on their team and they would have to contact the other service. I would like to know why there is no help for children when they ask for it? What can you do or what can be done to stop other children going through this?

I spoke about a similar matter recently in the Dáil when we had statements on hospital waiting lists. I referred to a woman who approached me in a supermarket in Wexford whose son presented with suicidal ideation and spent five days screaming for help in Wexford Hospital. Child psychiatry and child psychology services were not available through the county until someone was eventually dispatched from Dublin.

The girl who wrote to the Minister, Deputy Harris, also spent five days in hospital before she was able to speak to mental health professionals through staff from CAMHS. They assessed her and said she had no psychiatric disorder and, therefore, she did not require their services but instead those of a psychologist. The mother and teenager to whom I referred have gotten nowhere after 14 months, two GP referrals, two assessments with CAMHS and psychology services and one five-day stint in hospital, despite the fact that CAMHS and psychology services say she needs help.

The people in Wexford are tired of begging for proper services. The Minister of State can tell me about all the extra funding that is being provided and what is being done, but it is not being felt in Wexford by the people who need help from the State. Such help is not there for them. What in God's name can the Government do to help?

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy):**

I thank Deputy Wallace for raising this important matter and acknowledge the contents of the letter he read, which was very bravely written by a 14 year old. I know the Deputy will understand that I cannot comment on nor do I have information on individual cases. Having reared two children, I now find it very challenging to get my head around the fact that so many young people are familiar with the term "suicidal ideation", never mind taking action. Our society seems to have changed to a significant extent.

Children and adolescents who present with suicidal ideation in Wexford, depending on their presentation or presenting problem, may be referred to a number of services including a school counsellor, teen counselling service in the Ferns Diocesan Youth Service, the HSE child and adolescent mental health service, CAMHS, in Wexford, the HSE primary care community psychology services, or the HSE self-harm intervention programme.

Child psychology services are delivered by a number of different agencies, including CAMHS, which employs psychologists, primary care psychology services and disability services for children with intellectual disabilities or autism. All referrals for CAMHS services come from a GP to a consultant psychiatrist and the CAMHS team. The team prioritises who is most urgently in need of psychological intervention. Children and adolescents assessed and diagnosed by the team with a mental health disorder, and assessed as needing psychological intervention and at risk of suicide or who are highly distressed, are prioritised.

Wexford mental health services have advised that the CAMHS psychologist relocated in November 2016 but that a replacement psychologist has been appointed for CAMHS. This psychologist will start next week on 27 March. I know the Deputy will welcome this news. Upon commencement in the post, it is intended that the CAMHS psychology waiting list will be triaged and appointments will be offered based on prioritisation of clinical need. In addition, approval has been granted to recruit a staff grade psychologist post in CAMHS and the process for recruitment is under way.

Psychology services in Wexford are delivered through primary care and disability services across the catchment area of Wexford. Children or young people are usually referred to primary care psychology services for a number of behavioural or emotional concerns. It is more common for young people to raise suicidal ideation as a concern during their assessment or intervention rather than it being a reason for referral to primary care psychology unless a previous assessment has been completed, for example, by CAMHS.

When a young person discusses suicidal ideation within an assessment and-or intervention, he or she receives a thorough psychological assessment and intervention is offered to a high standard. In recent years a number of factors have impacted on waiting times in psychology services. These include population growth in the Wexford area, significantly increased service demands and more complex demands and, as referred to earlier, staffing challenges. As with many other areas throughout the country, there are staffing challenges within Wexford psychology services, including maternity leave, sick leave and reduced working hours, which are impacting on waiting times. Unfortunately, there is also an overall national shortage of psychologists at this time which has contributed to increasing waiting times both locally and nationally.

The HSE tells me that it continues to endeavour to address such issues that arise through a number of measures. These include continuing to actively fill approved posts, monitoring waiting lists in line with available resources and prioritisation criteria and reconfiguring children's disability services into geographically-based early-intervention and school-aged teams as part of the national progressing disability services for children and young people programme, which will ensure a more equitable delivery of services.

**Deputy Mick Wallace:** I thank the Minister of State for her response. I know this is not her responsibility but the truth of the matter is that not only are psychology services in Wexford poor and not only is the HSE's approach to the problems that prevail in Wexford very poor, but there is not near enough emphasis on psychology. I am not even sure if there is a psychothera-



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pist on the books of the HSE. Perhaps there is, but I am do not know of it.

The girl I mentioned needs psychological help, psychotherapy or counselling. CAMHS have psychotherapists but not psychologists on their team. Publicly-funded psychotherapy and counselling is practically non-existent in Wexford. The girl and her mother met the HSE psychologist in Grogan's Road in Wexford in June 2016. The psychologist stated that the girl was a candidate for the service and that it could help her but that there is a waiting list. The Minister of State spoke about the waiting list problem. However, in February 2017 her mother asked for an update on child psychology services for the girl. She was told that the HSE psychologist the girl met in June 2016 had left and that there was now only one psychologist working with children in the county.

We were also contacted this month by the mother of a seven year old boy in Wexford. This boy has waited for a year and a half to access CAMHS and occupational therapy. The boy goes to his local school in Wexford but he does not attend the mainstream classes there as he has expressed a wish to kill himself in front of other students. He is seven years old. The boy was referred to the senior child psychologist in Wexford in March 2015. He has been waiting since then to see a child psychologist. He has now been waiting for more than two years. A seven year old child has expressed a desire to kill himself but he is yet to get the help he needs.

We have had one of the highest rates of suicide for a number of years. The last time I checked - a couple of weeks ago - we had 19% unemployment. We are not getting the help that we need and the HSE's approach leaves too much to be desired. Will we ever get a Government to address the dysfunctional nature of how the HSE operates? The mental health services available in Wexford today are pathetic and something has to change. Something has to give.

**Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy:** I reiterate the good news, which is that a psychologist will start next week. This will certainly be an advantage. As I stated earlier, prioritisation of those on the waiting list will have to commence as soon as possible. I wish to provide some form of reassurance because I know the Deputy is frustrated at particular issues - we all are. It is heartbreaking to think that the child the Deputy referred to would be experiencing such thoughts at that age. The self-harm intervention programme that was established in Wexford in 2004 is a free and confidential service. Children under 16 years of age experiencing that are referred by a GP or another medical professional to the service.

Ferns Diocesan Youth Service, which is funded through the HSE and partly funded by Tusla, is doing additional work. It provides supports for young people who are referred into the HSE substance misuse services. We must recognise that those engaged in the misuse of alcohol and other psychoactive substances are more prone to suicidal ideation. Those in the LGBTI community are also impacted in this regard and, in particular, are at risk of self-harm. To try to be positive, that there was a new appointment should certainly try to get things back at the level we want them in Wexford.

### **Community Care**

**Deputy Pat Deering:** I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak on this issue today. I have been trying to raise it for the past six or seven weeks. Eventually, my time has come.

To provide background to the situation, this concerns the Cheshire home group and, in

particular, my local one in Tullow in County Carlow. Cheshire Ireland is a non-profit provider that is predominantly funded by the HSE. It currently provides support services in 17 different residential centres in addition to a range of community-based services throughout the country. It employs approximately 700 people.

A new policy on residential support for persons with disabilities has been agreed between the HSE and resident services providers. This policy is outlined in *Time to Move on from Congregated Settings - A Strategy for Community Inclusion*, which was published by the HSE in 2011. It aims to provide residents of congregated settings with alternative accommodation and care services in mainstream communities. In order to implement the policy, the Cheshire home group, as has other residential care service providers, has proposed to progressively close all their institutions that are serving ten or more people by not later than 2019. As the Minister of State knows, this process is currently under way and will result in compulsory redundancies of a number of catering and domestic staff.

The Cheshire home group has experienced financial difficulties in recent times and since 2008 has been in severe difficulty. In an effort to counteract these difficulties, it entered into an agreement with SIPTU, the INMO and Unite in 2014 under the Labour Relations Commission. As part of that agreement, the HSE was to fund a number of the outstanding issues of the Cheshire home group. This was supposed to happen by December 2015 at the very latest. As of today, it has not happened. Almost all the staff have been made redundant in my local Cheshire home which is almost closed as most of the service users have been moved out to the community-based services.

A commitment was given that no more staff would be made redundant until this issue was resolved. My understanding is that staff are to be made redundant in the next number of days and this issue still has not been resolved. What is the position regarding the commitment made as part of the Labour Relations Commission agreement? When will the HSE's commitment to make redundancy payments be honoured? I ask the Minister to give a commitment that no one will be made redundant until this issue has been resolved.

**Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy:** I thank Deputy Deering for raising this very important matter. Cheshire Ireland provides a range of support services to people, often with very complex and high support needs with both physical and neurological conditions in their homes, residential centres, supported accommodation and stand-alone respite facilities. Cheshire Ireland is funded under section 39 of the Health Act 2004, with services based throughout the country, including Tullow, County Carlow. The Health Service Executive has in place service level agreements with these providers, funded under section 39 of the Health Act 2004, which set out the level of service to be provided for the grant to the individual organisation and requirements regarding standards of care.

In 2017, as part of the overall service arrangement which the HSE community health care organisation No. 5 has with Cheshire Ireland, a funding allocation of €1.965 million will be provided to Carlow-Kilkenny community services. The Carlow-Kilkenny disability manager and finance manager reviewed the service level agreement file and advised that, at the service level agreement meeting in 2016, Cheshire Ireland indicated that it would undertake staff redundancies. I am informed, however, that the HSE did not receive any request for funding from Cheshire Ireland for these costs.

As the individuals employed by section 39 organisations are not HSE employees, the HSE

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has no role in determining the salaries or other terms and conditions applying to these staff, including any pension arrangements. Accordingly, such arrangements offered by individual providers will vary. I confirm to the Deputy and House that the pay and superannuation terms and conditions of the staff concerned are not subject to the control of the Department of Health as the employees are not classified as public servants.

The Deputy asked a specific question on a commitment given by the Health Service Executive at a meeting of the Workplace Relations Commission. I have no information on that matter and I am not in a position to make any commitments on redundancies in the company concerned. I will, however, endeavour to establish what precisely is the position regarding the HSE's commitment.

**Deputy Pat Deering:** I thank the Minister of State for her response. With the greatest respect, however, I am slightly disappointed and frustrated with it because my information differs entirely from the information provided. A Labour Court decision issued on 16 December 2015 recommended that the Cheshire Ireland engage with the Health Service Executive. It states: "Having regard to the Employer's financial difficulties and substantial dependency on the HSE for funding, the Court further recommends that the employer should engage in early course with the HSE with a view to securing the necessary additional funding required." My understanding, and that of the staff, trade unions and everyone else concerned, is that the HSE, in conjunction with Cheshire Ireland, would facilitate this particular matter. It is disappointing and strange that the HSE appears to have abdicated its responsibility in this matter. I ask the Minister of State to review the issue with HSE officials to determine precisely what the position is. Staff are in limbo and require clarification and certainty.

**Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy:** The Deputy is correct that the staff in question require clarification and certainty. As I stated, the information provided to me is that the HSE did not receive any request for funding from Cheshire Ireland for costs arising from staff redundancies. As for the recommendation made by the Labour Court that the employer engage with the HSE, while I do not know what efforts have been made by either party, I undertake to establish what the position is on this matter. I will liaise directly with the Deputy on the issue.

### **Bord na Móna**

**Deputy Barry Cowen:** I raise this issue on foot of an ongoing review of the peat briquette production end of Bord na Móna's business. The review is clearly the result of a decline in sales of peat briquettes, although production continues by virtue of the need to stockpile. The review is centred on the operations in Littleton and Derrinlough.

Many Deputies are well aware of the history of Bord na Móna in the midlands region, particularly in my home county. The company is the lifeblood of the community and the bedrock of its economic life. It continues to contribute to education, culture and sport in the region. It is imperative that every effort is made to assist the company in its efforts to diversify and meet the demands of a changing energy and heating regime. These factors and cost of oil have affected the sale of briquettes.

Some time ago, I pointed out to the Minister that the previous Government had reintroduced and subsequently doubled the carbon tax on peat products. It did so against a backdrop of Bord na Móna's efforts to diversify into new products and methods which would enable it to thrive

given that peat production and excavation is to be discontinued from 2030 onwards. Fianna Fáil sought to have a proportion of the proceeds of the carbon tax generated from Bord na Móna products held in an enterprise or innovation fund to assist with the development of alternative industry and employment in the sector.

Bord na Móna has diversified in the generations since the company commenced operations. Co-operation, negotiation and consultation were engaged in before agreement was reached between the company and the workforce. This shows the goodwill the workforce has shown in seeking to secure the company's future in the face of a number of challenges.

This morning, the Tánaiste stated the role of Government and Minister with responsibility for this area is one of oversight and that policy-making was not directly involved. Policy-making played a role in the past when a Fianna Fáil-led Government saw fit to develop new power plants in Edenderry, Shannonbridge and Lough Ree that would have co-fuel potential. There is an onus and responsibility on elected representatives and the Government to ensure Bord na Móna, a semi-State company, receives State assistance in its efforts to diversify. I contend that it was a direct intervention by a previous Government, in introducing a carbon tax on peat products, that led us to the position in which the briquette factories face a live threat. More important, the Government failed to ring-fence the income generated from peat in an innovation and enterprise fund, which would have assisted the workforce and region and ensured alternative industries could emerge from this process and prosper.

While I do not wish to belittle the obligations imposed on us by carbon policy in general, if one Government saw fit to have a derogation for peat products, another Government should recognise that fact. Instead, it decided to reintroduce and double the tax without  
*3 o'clock* establishing an innovation fund to ensure a seamless transfer to alternative opportunities and industry. We have reached a red light and redeployment will be required between the two peat briquette plants, where possible. This is despite the fact that the ash content in the Derrinlough plant is such that production at the site is much more cost efficient than anywhere else. I ask the Government to seriously consider, even at this late stage, establishing an innovation fund using carbon tax revenue from peat industry.

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The introduction of a carbon tax was about sending a price signal that there is a cost associated with the combustion of fossil fuels to the detriment of the environment. Peat briquettes have among the highest carbon content of all fossil fuels. As a result, they are among the dirtiest fuels, and given the environmental impact, it is important that they are taxed.

Ireland is legally bound to reduce emissions by 20% on 2005 levels in 2020 and 30% on 2005 levels by 2030, as part of the European Commission's climate and energy package to tackle climate change. The carbon tax was introduced in 2010 as part of an overarching energy strategy and is a key tool to reduce emissions towards meeting these and other climate change commitments. While carbon tax was introduced in budget 2010, its application to solid fuels, including peat briquettes, was delayed to allow for the development of a robust mechanism to counter the large scale sourcing of coal from Northern Ireland where lower sulphur standards apply. Such a mechanism is in place since June 2011. The carbon tax was introduced to solid fuels on a phased basis, initially at €10 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 1 May 2013 and subsequently at €20 per tonne from 1 May 2014, thus bringing the carbon tax on solid fuels in line with that on all other fossil fuels at €20 per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

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While tax increases are unpopular, it makes sense to increase taxes in areas where some benefits can arise. In this instance, a carbon tax promotes energy efficiency, reduces emissions and reduces our dependence on imported fossil fuels. As a matter of principle the reliefs from the carbon tax are limited to ensure as wide an application as possible. Placing a carbon tax on solid fuels also offers an opportunity to develop cleaner more efficient and environmentally friendly alternative fuels. To complement the introduction of the carbon tax, especially for those at risk of fuel poverty, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland provides a number of fiscal supports to energy users. The better energy homes programme provides grants - more than €200 million to date - to assist home owners improve the energy performance of their houses while the better energy warmer homes funds energy efficiency improvements in the homes of the elderly and vulnerable, making the homes more comfortable, healthier and more cost-effective to run.

In the Finance Act (No. 2) 2013, the Minister for Finance legislated for the introduction of reliefs from carbon tax for solid fuels which contain a certain proportion of biomass. Last November, this relief was commenced, which exempts the biomass element of the solid fuel from carbon tax and I understand that Bord na Móna is currently in the process of developing such a fuel which should result in a cheaper more sustainable fuel which is better for the environment. As A Programme for a Partnership Government states, “climate change is the global challenge of our generation”, and work is ongoing in all Departments towards developing and implementing Ireland’s first national mitigation plan, which aims to deliver a pathway enabling transition to a low carbon, climate resilient and environmentally sustainable economy by 2050. The draft plan is open for public consultation and is published on the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment website with submissions invited from interested parties by 23 April. A key part of developing the plan has been the preparation of robust technical, environmental and economic analysis to evaluate the impacts of a range of different climate change mitigation options. The carbon tax is, and will continue to be, a fundamental pillar of the transition towards a decarbonised economy and society by 2050.

The carbon tax was introduced in 2010 and was reintroduced by the following Government. It was always going to increase over time on a phased basis, as was indicated, to bring in line with other fossil fuel taxes and as part of the strategy to move us away from dependence on them, for which we pay a significant amount to import. They are also detrimental to the environment when we burn them.

**Deputy Barry Cowen:** I thank the Minister of State for his response. I had hoped the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment who has an oversight role relating to Bord na Móna among other semi-States, would be present to deal with the matter but I take it his Department felt it was more appropriate for the Department of Finance to respond considering its responsibility for the implementation of the carbon tax. I acknowledge the will of the Government to move towards a decarbonised economy over time but, unfortunately, it has failed to recognise the value of peat production and the energy sector in the midlands and, in particular, Bord na Móna’s role in that regard. The company has produced over time excellent fitters, mechanics, and electricians and through education thereafter, helped the economies of the towns and villages they built to prosper in the region and to expand the opportunities for the children of these staff which were not necessarily available to those who were at the forefront and put in place initially.

The Government has failed to recognise that this sector in its efforts to diversify and move to a different economy and in its efforts to move to having different driving forces within the

local economy should be shown the respect it deserves in so far as a fund should have been put in place, which could have derived from the doubling of the carbon tax by the previous Government. It was an ideal opportunity to help and assist Bord na Móna and other companies within the region to ensure alternative enterprises, industries and opportunities would ensue over time, considering the advancements that have been made in respect of infrastructure and connectivity to Dublin and other centres of population, education and so forth. That opportunity was lost. While I do not doubt the merit of the carbon tax, I implore the Minister of State to provide alternative opportunities in this region by ring-fencing the carbon tax yield from the products manufactured by companies in the region for reinvestment in the community. An innovation fund should be put in place as peat production is decimated, as evidenced by falling sales, notwithstanding the fact that the staff need to know about their future and their prospects for redeployment. Should they not be recognised and their future provided for by virtue of the fact that the ash content is at such a level that it is very productive for the Derrinlough factory to continue to produce briquettes? I implore the Government to reconsider ring-fencing the carbon tax on these products to find alternatives.

**Deputy Eoghan Murphy:** The carbon tax was always going to increase, as per the plan when it was introduced in 2010, to bring it in line with the taxes on other solid fuels in the market. It was not, therefore, a question of the Government deciding to double the tax. The plan on its introduction in 2010 was to bring it in line with the tax on other fossil fuels and that has happened. The Government is well aware of its responsibilities in this regard and it is meeting them. A number of supports remain in place while these changes take place. The changes were well flagged and mitigation measures were taken.

The transfer to alternative opportunities has been happening. Bord na Móna staff has expertise and it is doing excellent work. The Government and the Deputy understand that the impact of the carbon tax will inevitably be evidenced in the sale of peat briquettes, which is what is happening, but it also provides an opportunity and an incentive to transition to cleaner and more suitable fuels in the future. The chief executive officer of Bord na Móna stated the company has been undergoing seismic change in the transition from its traditional peat-based activities towards more sustainable businesses. This also demonstrates that the carbon tax is having the desired effect with industry responding to the changing landscape and working towards delivering a cleaner, healthier future for all our citizens.

### **Garda Resources**

**Deputy Michael D'Arcy:** I thank the Ceann Comhairle for the opportunity to raise this issue again. I raised it in January and the reason I am being given the opportunity to raise it again is that there was confusion within the Department. The reply to the issue in January seemed to be misleading, which is the gentlest term I can use. Following that debate, I went around the houses to try to find out the current position. Page 96 of the programme for Government cannot be clearer. It states, "We will increase Garda numbers to 15,000, invest in CCTV, and mandate the Policing Authority to oversee a review of the boundaries of Garda districts and the dispersment of Garda stations." I wrote to the authority following the previous debate and, in its reply, the authority was clear that it was not reviewing the Garda districts and that I should contact the Garda Inspectorate. I wrote to the Garda Inspectorate, which replied: "It is envisaged that this examination will take account of the ongoing work by the Garda Commissioner to implement a divisional model of policing in Ireland." The reply goes on to state that it is also important to

note that the examination of district boundaries does not form part of this review.

I need some clarification. Is the programme for Government being implemented or not? Would the Minister like me to read from the letter again? It states “It is important to note that an examination of district boundaries does not form part of this review.” It also states: “The review should take account of the changing environments in rural, developing urban and sub-urban areas; the views of local communities; the allocation and deployment of Garda resources at the local policing level, including the use of the Garda Reserve, Garda facilities and Garda equipment; and relevant recommendations made in previous Inspectorate reports.”

The programme for Government does not seem to have been implemented at this moment in time by the Garda Inspectorate. What is the Minister of State’s view on that?

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Eugene Murphy):** The Deputy will have an opportunity to come back in. The Minister of State has four minutes.

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I thank the Deputy for raising this important matter yet again. I am here on behalf of the Tánaiste who cannot be here this evening. She sends her apologies.

In its Programme for a Partnership Government, the Government has recognised community policing as the embodiment of An Garda Síochána, providing a means of recognising that every community, both urban and rural, has its own concerns and expectations. It commits the Government to ensuring a strong and visible police presence throughout the country in order to maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance to citizens and to deter crime. A cornerstone of this commitment is the Government plan to achieve an overall Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021, comprising 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. This investment in personnel is complemented by substantial investment in resources across the board for An Garda Síochána.

The Deputy will be aware of the significant resources that have been made available to An Garda Síochána under the Government’s capital plan 2016-2021. In particular, some €205 million in additional funding for Garda ICT and €46 million for new Garda vehicles has been allocated over the lifetime of the plan. This investment will facilitate the provision of more effective policing services and I have no doubt that the new resources now coming on stream will see an increase in Garda visibility in our communities. Revisiting the decisions made to close Garda stations is also part of that commitment. In this context, the Tánaiste has requested the Garda Commissioner, while fully cognisant of her statutory functions, to identify six stations for reopening on a pilot basis to determine possible positive impacts that such openings will have on criminal activity, with special emphasis on burglaries, theft and public order. The pilot will feed into the wider review being undertaken by the Garda Síochána Inspectorate, at the request of the Policing Authority, of the dispersal and use of resources available to An Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities.

It is worth noting that on 19 July, the Government approved a five-year reform and high-level workforce plan for An Garda Síochána which addresses the implementation of both the agreed recommendations of the Garda Inspectorate report, Changing Policing in Ireland, and the commitments in the programme for Government aimed at increasing the visibility of An Garda Síochána. It was also agreed that the Garda Commissioner’s modernisation and renewal programme 2016-2021 will be the vehicle for this reform. The key structural change to the op-

eration of the Garda will be the replacement of the current district model of policing with a divisional model where responsibilities will be allocated on a functional rather than a geographical basis, subject to modifications to ensure the close relationship with communities is maintained in large rural divisions. The Policing Authority has informed the Garda Inspectorate that the review should take account of the changing environments in rural, developing urban and suburban areas; the views of local communities; the allocation to and deployment of Garda resources at the local policing level, including the use of the Garda Reserve, Garda facilities and Garda equipment; and relevant recommendations made in previous Garda Inspectorate reports. It is clear that a comprehensive review is being envisaged by the authority, including a consultative process with local communities. The review should be completed within the first half of 2018 and the Tánaiste looks forward to receiving the report from the authority in due course.

**Deputy Michael D'Arcy:** Is the programme for Government being rejected? Is that what the Minister of State is telling me? This is the second occasion on which the Minister of State has answered this question on behalf of the Tánaiste. It is not the Minister of State's area of responsibility. He does not have much interaction with the policing side of his Department. I cannot keep asking the same question, getting different answers and then getting no answer at all. The programme for Government was agreed less than a year ago. It is not an unreasonable question. Are the boundaries of the Garda districts being reviewed by the Policing Authority, the Garda Inspectorate, the Minister for Justice and Equality or the Department of Justice and Equality? Who is doing it? I do not want to have to go back to the Ceann Comhairle again and ask for another Topical Issue debate on this. On the previous occasion, I gave the Minister of State all the details and numbers of the population in the Enniscorthy district which takes in two local electoral areas of Gorey and Enniscorthy. I do not need to go over it again. I need the Minister of State to find out for me.

The standard of response coming from Departments is absolutely scandalous. It is not the fault of the Acting Chairman nor is it the fault of the Minister of State, Deputy Stanton, but the rubbish being presented as responses to Deputies in the House cannot continue. Deputy Eugene Murphy is in the Chair at the moment. It is his job to ensure the answers are not substandard. It is the second time the Minister of State has answered this question from me and it is the second time that the answer is substandard.

**Deputy David Stanton:** The Garda Inspectorate, at the request of the Policing Authority, is carrying out a wider review into the operation of the Garda Síochána. The key structural change to the operation of the Garda will be the replacement of the current district model of policing with a divisional model where responsibility will be allocated on a functional rather than a geographical basis subject to modifications to ensure the close relationship with communities is maintained in large rural divisions. That is the commitment and that is what is going on. As I said, the review should be completed within the first half of 2018. The Tánaiste looks forward to receiving the report from the authority in due course. That is the information I have been given. That is what the Tánaiste is saying. It will take account of the changing environments in rural, urban and suburban areas, the views of local communities and relevant recommendations made in the previous inspectorate reports. It is a comprehensive review. It is ongoing.

The Policing Authority has, in accordance with section 117(2) of the Garda Síochána Act, formally requested the Garda Inspectorate to examine the dispersal and use of resources available to An Garda Síochána in the delivery of policing services to local communities and to make recommendations to provide a more reasonable and effective policing service. In addition, the Garda Commissioner has been requested by the Tánaiste to identify for reopening



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six stations that were closed under the Garda Síochána district and station rationalisation programme. Work is under way on both of these initiatives. The Tánaiste looks forward with interest to their completion. In the meantime, the Government is fully committed in line with the programme for Government to ensure visible, effective and responsive policing in every community, including the most minimal response times possible. This commitment is underscored by the Government's accelerated recruitment programme and the ongoing major investment in the Garda fleet and the ICT infrastructure of the Garda Síochána which will facilitate the provision of high visibility and mobile policing services to communities. Taken together with the ongoing Garda modernisation and renewal programme, these measures will better equip An Garda Síochána and facilitate provision of the twenty-first century policing service that fully meets the expectations of our communities.

### **Intoxicating Liquor (Breweries and Distilleries) Bill 2016: Second Stage [Private Members]**

**Deputy Alan Kelly:** I move: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."

I thank the Deputies who are here for the debate on this Bill. It is a small Bill but it is very important legislation that will have a dramatic impact on the microbrewing and distilling industry. I welcome to the Gallery a number of my good friends and colleagues - craft brewers from the four corners of Ireland - who are here to watch proceedings. This Bill will change their lives, careers and economic prospects and the economic prospects of the localities they represent throughout the length and breadth of this country. One of the craft brewers in the Gallery is Mr. Cuilan Loughnane, who owns the White Gypsy Brewery in Templemore. I thank him in particular for inspiring this legislation. I am only acting as the conduit. He employs three other people and last year, he won the best beer award. When I called in to congratulate him, he told me the story of a number of visitors to his brewery from the US and their exasperation that he could not sell them anything was clear. He could not sell them a bottle to be taken away or consumed on the premises. He told me of how a group of brewers came together because they wanted to deal with this issue. I committed there and then to helping him, because this anomaly must be addressed quickly if the industry is to grow.

The aim of this small but important Bill is to remove a major regulatory barrier to breweries, microbreweries, cider makers, distillers, vineyards - Ireland has more than a couple - and others and allow them to sell their produce to visitors and tourists on site and those who wish to take that produce off site. Currently, microbreweries cannot sell their own produce to tourists and visitors on site. The Bill would also allow for restricted off-sales and on-sales, but only in respect of the microbreweries' own produce and nothing else. They could only sell during normal trading hours and would be closed at 6 p.m. As such, this is nothing like a pub licence. Rather, it is a specific licence to address an anomaly and allow these individuals, who are working hard in a labour-intensive industry, to increase their outputs and their capacity to raise revenue and to give a tourism experience to those who wish to avail of their produce.

I will go through the Bill's various sections shortly; it is a common sense Bill. Imagine touring the amazing vineyards of Italy, France or Spain, for which there are significant tourism markets, only to be told at the end of the tour that people cannot taste the wines that they just saw being produced or order a case for when they leave. That would be mad, but it is the situation facing Irish microbreweries and microdistillers. Imagine not being able to purchase wine

or allowing that industry to grow in Bordeaux, Tuscany or La Rioja. That is what is happening in Ireland.

It is a resilient industry, but even resilient industries need help. It is estimated that there are some 90 microbreweries operating in the Republic, of which 62 are production microbreweries and at least 28 are contracting microbreweries. There has been a 29% increase in the number of production microbreweries from 48 in 2015 to 62 in 2016. That is an incredible jump in a short time. The number of microbreweries has more than quadrupled since 2012. This has happened in other countries, for example, Canada, but because of a lack of supports, their microbrewery industries collapsed. We must ensure that the same does not happen in Ireland.

There has been a phenomenal growth in new enterprises in the past two years. Thirty-three of the 62 production microbreweries commenced production in the 2014-15 period alone. The output of craft beer microbreweries amounted to some 134,000 hectolitres in 2015, representing a 56% increase on the 2014 figure. In absolute terms, output rose by 48,000 hectolitres. Output from the 13 microbreweries that commenced production in 2015 accounted for one quarter of the increase. On the basis of trends, the breweries anticipated last August that output would increase by 63,000 hectolitres, or 47%, in 2016. Given the trends of recent years, it is clear that the percentage growth rate in production is in decline from a high of 75% in 2013. As such, now is the time to ensure that this industry is supported. Craft beer producers' estimated total turnover in 2015 and 2016 was €40 million and €59 million, respectively. In the more than five years since 2011, turnover has increased elevenfold. Based on international experience, there is substantial potential for further development of the Irish craft beer industry in terms of numbers, output and employment. An increase in the number of breweries to more than 100 and a fivefold increase in output are possible in the longer term.

The microbrewing industry sources more than half of its brewing ingredients by value domestically. For example, 95% of microbreweries source supplies of malted barley from within the Republic, typically amounting to 80% or 90% of all of their malted barley inputs. Distribution is a further source of local spin-off activity. Thus, there are significant downstream benefits for agriculture and other sectors.

At 2016 production levels, microbreweries employed 439 persons of full-time equivalent status. That number is constantly increasing. Of the industry's total employment, 399 persons were employed in production microbreweries and 40 were employed in contracting companies. Consider the two largest brewers in Ireland, specifically the number of people employed in their production operations. Compared with the numbers employed by microbreweries, there is not much of a difference. It shows that this is a labour-intensive industry that hits the four corners of the country and has benefits beyond all of that.

This industry has significant tourism capacity. I speak as a former manager of Bord Fáilte and Fáilte Ireland. I have discussed this matter with Fáilte Ireland extensively. I have seen visitors to many of the breweries represented by those in the Public Gallery. After taking a tour, visitors are told that they cannot buy and consume the beers on the premises or take the produce away. It is utter madness if one is trying to develop an industry around the four corners of Ireland.

Fáilte Ireland is so in favour of this legislation that it helped me launch the Bill a few months ago and spoke at the event. Imagine how Fáilte Ireland would promote this industry as a new product and experience for domestic and international tourists. It is already doing that in re-

spect of distillers, particularly whiskey distillers, and it wants to create a craft brewing marketing map that it can promote domestically and internationally. We all know that the No. 1 visitor site in Dublin is the Guinness Storehouse at 1.6 million people. We are always discussing the need to spread tourist numbers around the country and to create more regional jobs. Imagine marketing these breweries to people who are interested in visiting these sites. There must be a considerable volume of such people.

There are opportunities downstream for many other industries, for example, farmers in terms of cereal sales, if we can get the industry to a level that sustains demand at a fair price for the cereal crops that the brewers need. Farmers need more distribution outlets and to diversify. This Bill presents a significant opportunity in the short to medium term. I encourage Teagasc to examine the matter. The potential is not just limited to creating jobs downstream and through tourism and increased production. The Action Plan for Jobs has both a national and regional focus. There is also the Action Plan for Rural Development. This industry ticks all the boxes in terms of the action plans I have outlined. Many of the brewers live in rural areas and provide employment for local people. When they expand their operations, such employment will multiply. Furthermore, with the passage of the Bill, not only will there be more direct employment due to increased production, in the agriculture sector and in sales and marketing, there will also be employment in the construction sector because many brewers will expand their premises. I have met many brewers who wish to invest but that is conditional on the Bill being passed. As well as making the breweries bigger, there is a need to create visitor experiences. That will create employment. One can imagine the positivity that will create in rural areas.

Many of the large brewers have a significant market share and when it comes to incentivising sales through pubs, they can always do more than the small producers. I believe in supporting the small operator to get fair play. Small brewers will never be able to incentivise publicans to the same extent as the larger ones in order to sell their produce. While brewers might put together packages for publicans to exclusively sell their produce if this Bill is accepted, we will be able to create awareness of the produce of microbrewers and ensure greater knowledge and, accordingly, demand for craft beers and other artisan products which will ensure that the playing pitch is little bit more even as a result.

We have great microbrewing and microdistilling industries that need support. The Bill is a simple one that is just over a page long. The first section lists the beverages to be covered, namely, beers, spirits, cider, etc. On Committee Stage, I would be willing to add other products such as wine. Section 1(2) outlines the times microbreweries and microdistilleries can sell their products, which is from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Section 1(3) outlines the offences prescribed in the event of non-adherence to the terms of the legislation and the impact of that. The Bill also defines what constitutes a visitor for the purpose of the legislation.

The Bill is a principled one which has received great support in the House. The reason for that is the Bill is a common-sense measure. Those involved in the industry are investing in their communities and looking after their local culture and traditions. The connection with the history and culture of the locality is evident from the names of some breweries and the beers they brew. There is also a connection with cultural trends across the country. For that reason, I urge each and every Member to support this common-sense Bill to give microbrewers and microdistillers across the country a fair chance and to allow the industry to grow to a level that is sustainable in the long term, to develop an export market and to develop a tourism product of which we can all be proud.

I thank everyone in this House who has told me he or she will support the Bill. I also thank all the microbrewers who are present in the Gallery, in particular, Cuilan, Gráinne and Seamus who have been working with me since day one. It is very important that the Bill is passed.

I acknowledge the person who put much of his life into the microbrewing industry, namely, Oliver Hughes, a pioneer in craft brewing in this country. He developed the famous Porterhouse brewing company and he passed away over a year ago. It was his foresight that allowed this industry to grow to where it is today. I urge Members to be fair minded and to allow the Bill to pass. I hope the Bill will pass before the summer so that all of those who are in the Gallery - and other brewers across the country - will have a chance to grow their industry, which they desperately need to do.

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I thank Deputy Kelly for publishing this Bill. At the outset, and on behalf of the Tánaiste, let me state clearly that the Government will not oppose the Bill. I am personally quite supportive of it. However, in order to address certain shortcomings, the Government will propose appropriate amendments to the Bill in due course on Committee Stage.

It goes without saying that the Government is fully committed to supporting regional and local development and, in that context, to fully exploiting the job-creation potential of artisan food production and local tourism initiatives. Recently, we have seen an increase in the number of craft breweries and distilleries, and this trend is set to continue. This is a dynamic and entrepreneurial sector with real growth potential.

Some craft breweries and distilleries admit visitors for guided tours of their premises. They tend to attract tourists to the area and create local employment opportunities. They also contribute to local economic activity by generating demand for the provision of ancillary services such as accommodation, catering and transport. I visited a craft brewery in my constituency, Eight Degrees Brewing in Mitchelstown, recently, which is expanding. Deputy Kelly was correct in that regard. Having completed a tour of the premises - and having tasted products produced on site - it is only natural that visitors may wish to purchase some of the products. Some of the larger breweries and distilleries have already obtained public house licences which enable them to sell alcohol products, including those produced on the premises, to visitors. For smaller craft brewers or distillers, that may not be an option, not least because of the outlays required to extinguish an existing licence. The purpose of this short Bill is to cater for their needs.

While accepting the general principle that breweries and distilleries be permitted to sell their own products to participants on guided tours, and recognising that the provision of licences for indigenous producers can boost local enterprise and employment opportunities and lead to increased tourism activity, we must also remain alert to the risks of potential abuses. Experience shows that loopholes in licensing law tend to be fully exploited.

Deputy Kelly's Bill proposes the creation of a retail licence which would authorise the sale of the licensee's own alcohol products "for consumption on or off the premises". That would permit licensees to establish a bar on the premises in which visitors could remain for an indefinite period between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. to purchase and consume such products. While the Bill proposes that the Revenue Commissioners would automatically grant a retail licence to holders of licences for the production of alcohol products, the grant of a retail licence under the licensing Acts requires the presentation of an appropriate court certificate to the Revenue Commissioners. A District Court certificate is required in the case of an off-licence and a Circuit

Court certificate in the case of an on-licence. That requires the applicant to apply formally to the relevant court, on notice to the Garda. The certificate is normally granted unless the court refuses to do so on grounds such as the character, misconduct or unfitness of the applicant; the unfitness of the premises concerned or; the unsuitability of the premises for those residing in the neighbourhood.

The objectives of the court-based procedure are to ensure that licensed premises are suitable and safe for customers and that they will be operated by licence holders in a responsible, peaceable and orderly manner in accordance with licensing law, including the prohibition on sales to under age persons. It also permits any potential adverse impact on local residents to be taken into account at the outset.

In order to obtain a retail licence for a craft brewery or distillery as proposed in the Bill, the applicant should, therefore, be required to obtain a court certificate from the District Court or Circuit Court, as the case may be. Having obtained the certificate, the Revenue Commissioners will issue the licence and it will be renewed automatically each year without any further court involvement unless there are grounds for objecting to renewal. Such objections, arising, for example, from disorderly conduct or drunkenness on the premises or nearby, can be dealt with by the District Court.

It should be noted that obtaining a retail licence could also require change-of-use planning permission, but that is covered by the planning code rather than licensing law. In the case of an on-licence, compliance with relevant fire safety standards is also essential. Under the Fire Services Act 1982, the fire authority is also a notice party to any application for an on-licence. The Bill proposes that licences be made available to “premises to which visitors are admitted on guided tours”. However, whereas premises would be required to admit visitors on guided tours, there is no clear requirement that visitors must have participated in and completed such tours prior to purchasing alcohol products. This could be interpreted to mean that any person entering the premises, whether participating in a tour or not, would qualify as a visitor for the purpose of the Bill and be permitted to purchase alcohol products produced on the premises. I am sure this is not Deputy Kelly’s intention and the matter can also be addressed by a Government amendment on Committee Stage.

The Government is not opposing the Bill and I thank the Deputy for introducing it. I look forward to the rest of the debate.

**Acting Chairman (Deputy Eugene Murphy):** I thank the Minister of State for his contribution and brevity. I have a long list of speakers and I thank Deputy Fitzmaurice for allowing Deputy Mattie McGrath to proceed first because he has a hospital appointment.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I rise with pleasure to support my colleague’s Bill. I know it is short but much research has gone into it. The Bill is long overdue and I am glad the Government is not opposing it. That is a sign of some resemblance of the new politics in the context of which we are supposed to be operating. I note there will be some amendments but they sound quite reasonable. We will tease them out on Committee Stage.

I welcome the guests, whom I would describe as entrepreneurs, to the Gallery. Some are from Tipperary and some from elsewhere. We need such creative people with the vision, insight and courage to put their money where their mouth is and try to stimulate business. They have an idea, test it and design a product before trying to promote it. They put in the long hard

slog as that is what it takes to get something from farm to fork or, as in this case, from the grain to the good craft beers and alcohol products that the Bill aims to support. Activity in this industry has mushroomed. My neighbours, the family of a former colleague of the Minister of State, the late Deputy Theresa Ahearn, are setting up such an enterprise and the Minister for Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government, Deputy Coveney, launched it in Tipperary. It is on the finest land in the Golden Vale, where the finest of malting barley is grown. It has been stored since last September. It is the Tipperary Boutique Distillery and the name precedes it. We produce some of the best barley and other cereals in the south east and the rest of the country. It is very important that we support what is proposed and it gives me great pleasure to do so.

I am pleased Deputy Alan Kelly has clarified some issues that had given rise to concerns for some people. It is only people who visit and tour a brewery or distillery and who wish to sample or buy some of the products who should come under this legislation. The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Deputy Ross, is not here but we might have to stay a week in the townland if he gets the alcohol legislation he desires. Even the smell off us when we come out of the brewery would stop us from sitting into the car. I know there is talk of remote-controlled cars but the Government is supporting that legislation, which would be a death knell for rural Ireland. It is an important issue and I do not condone drink-driving or deaths and injuries from such activities. The legislation to which I refer is ridiculous and it would achieve the exact opposite of what the Bill seeks to achieve and what all the rural Deputies want to achieve. Ireland exists outside the Red Cow roundabout, or the “mad cow roundabout” as some people like to call it. The madness is on this side and the sensible people are outside it. They need to be allowed to breathe, live, work and create an economy for our families and ourselves.

I am not normally known for supporting or having a love-in with Deputy Kelly but this is certainly good legislation.

**Deputy Alan Kelly:** I second that.

**Deputy Mattie McGrath:** I support it and I compliment the Deputy. He mentioned his experience of Fáilte Ireland, which we all have, and we are trying to get out tourist products and promote our country. There are job losses every second week in our provincial towns but what we are talking about now is the best of rural Ireland. We have it in our culture. The Deputy’s colleague, Deputy Penrose, recently introduced a Bill regarding Irish song, dance and music. Bhí craic againn and this obair is the same; it is of the people and by the people. We are talking about people’s products, the capabilities and expertise that they have. These people have done their research and I have tasted the products from Deputy Kevin O’Keeffe’s constituents in Mitchelstown, Eight Degrees Brewing. It is good stuff and it would put hair on one’s chest. The name explains it. It is near the Minister of State’s constituency as well.

We must support these entrepreneurs and, as the Minister of State noted, licensing is a different issue if there are to be extended hours. We can see how liberal is the licensing regime for all kinds of alcohol in off-licences. I am 100% a supporter of the pubs, especially those in rural areas. They have their licences approved by eminent judges and are not objected to by the Garda. They look after their customers. Customers in off-licences can buy copious amounts of alcohol. I am not talking about those attached to the pub but rather the mushrooming of such sales in supermarkets and everywhere. I pity anybody recovering from alcohol addiction or anything else if they have to buy a loaf of bread, a pound of butter or 20 cigarettes. It is in front of people everywhere. There is legislation to deal with that as well and we must be delicate about it.

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We must support what we have left of rural Ireland and this is certainly an effort to do so. There are 450 people working in this sector already and it is mushrooming. People are willing to put their hands in their pockets, such as my neighbours, to develop a business and have another outlet for our own malting barley. That is instead of selling it. I am delighted to be able to support the Bill and I look forward to its passage through the House. I note the Minister of State has indicated the Government will not oppose it. There will be amendments in respect of the licensing laws in case people have what the kids might call a sleep-over. This is about a tourism product that is the best of the truly Irish, which can be shown to people from all over the world. Although I am not experienced in vineyards, I know my colleague, Deputy Wallace, is. I will allow him to pick up that topic. I have experience with corn since I was a búachaill óg, using the reaper-binder to make sheaves. Good practices have grown in the production of top-class grain, particularly malting barley. Ar aghaidh leis an mBille. I thank Deputy Fitzmaurice for allowing me contribute at this time.

**Deputy Michael Fitzmaurice:** As with the previous speakers, I welcome this Bill and I commend Deputy Kelly on putting it forward. This group has through the years ploughed a furrow when many people would not have taken notice of them. They had to go without much funding or backing and they did not have the media coverage that many drinks companies have. They had to try to spread the word on the basis of the few pounds they made. It is incredible to hear the stories of where their craft beers are being sold, even as far away as Russia. I commend them and yesterday I listened to the stories of ordinary people going out to set up a business and taking a risk; they now employ more people.

In fairness to the previous Government, it was said by the people in the craft brewing industry that they got a break they needed, which made a difference and meant they could invest back into the businesses. This was not a political point but they praised what was good. They saw the stumbling blocks to bringing in more revenue.

Deputy Kelly spoke about the craft brewers and distilleries. I never knew until yesterday that there were people making wine in Ireland. In Dublin, there is a winery. It is good to see people doing such work and employing people in areas where one might not have seen a lot of tourists because one or two jobs in a rural part of the country make a huge difference to people. In breweries such as Black Donkey in Ballinlough, Galway Hooker and those in the different small towns around the country, I note their enthusiasm for getting their name out there and driving it forward.

This Bill provides an opportunity to help everyone in a town. It is not alone that it may help the brewers so that they could give a tour of their premises. The reality is that these brewers do not have the money to be buying licences and all that goes with it. Maybe the big brewers, who can have 1.8 million visitors a year, can afford that but it would be so important if these get only a fraction of those visitors, as was stated earlier on, to come in, be able to buy what they are producing and sit down and have a taste of it. It is not a threat to publicans because it is clearly stated that it would be over at 6 p.m. There would be a knock-on effect on the town or village concerned. Some of this enterprise is in villages. There are not populations of 10,000 in a lot of the towns I know of where these are operating. Maybe a small place could set up cooking food and the visitors will probably go into the local pub. These are the economic benefits one brings to areas that may get more people working.

There was another side yesterday that I was fascinated with - one learns as one listens to people. They spoke about the different types of malting barley that can be grown in different

parts of the country, be it Carlow, Cork, Wexford, Galway or Roscommon, and the different tastes of it. It was said that some of the bodies that we have in place to do research were not overly interested in it. I said we should get colleges involved because I learned yesterday that there is one country in the world that can produce a malting barley for which you can get up to €1,200 a tonne. If we could crack that nut for our farmers - maybe we would have to mix different varieties - not alone the breweries but the farming community here would do well. The more one can diversify into different areas, to put it simply, the less people who will be trying to eat out of the one trough. That opportunity is there. I encourage the Minister for Education and Skills, Deputy Bruton, to get colleges involved or help those brewers. It is sad to see, if we are pumping money into certain organisations or groups in this country, that they are not bothering their I-will-not-say-what to research all of these matters. Every way that we can put people working or making people's lives better in different parts of the country is so important and at the end of the day, it generates more revenue for the Government and results in fewer out of work.

Also, it is good to see today for the first time ever in the new politics the two Tipperary Deputies are agreeing. Both of them are backing it. Around the House, it is good to see that a bit of commonsense prevails. When one sees something good, one should go and back it. One should forget about the political side to it. These are ordinary people out there who, like any person who sets up a business, take the risk. They have to go in and borrow a few euro. Sometimes when one goes in and tells them that one is thinking about brewing one's own beer, they could look at you twice. Funnily enough, the banking system thinks that there might be only one or two big players in the market because it was commercialised, but these are like artists. They are unique. They try everything. A few months ago I attended a brewery launch and it was my first taste of it. In fairness, it was well done. There are different varieties. There are so many different brewers all over the country full of enthusiasm for what they are at. I noted the love of their work. Every incentive should be given to them.

They were adamant that politicians make sure of one thing. It was made clear by Government previously that it did not want the breaks that they got to be used for the wrong reasons, such as to drop prices. They were told to put it back into their businesses and they adhered to it. In fairness to them, as I heard earlier, one does not want disorderly behaviour or whatever. It is my opinion - I have not met everyone but I have met many of them, in fairness, through Deputy Kelly - that they are people with a vision of where they are going, with a love of what they are doing and who will create more employment and will definitely bring more revenue in for the country and especially to the parts of Ireland that have been harder hit than most and where jobs are so important.

I welcome the Bill. I congratulate Deputy Kelly on bringing it in. I hope it is not undermined in Committee with too many amendments to it. I note there is a good amendment about assurances for those making whiskey. This is another side of it. Irish whiskey, at one time, was all over the world. We had a name for it. The more we can do for that, and even the wine makers which was a new development we learned of yesterday, the better. We should ensure that all of these people get the incentives. If we could bring 1 million of those 1.8 million down the country, it would be good for rural areas and for creating a lot of jobs.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Deputy Wallace is next. There is eight minutes per Member, given the number of Members who are now offering.

**Deputy Mick Wallace:** I too welcome Deputy Kelly's Bill. Fair play to him for bringing it



forward. It is a breathe of fresh air. It is a straightforward and logical Bill that will be of great benefit to Ireland's burgeoning microbreweries, distilleries and cideries, tourism throughout the country, Irish industry and exports.

Currently, if one visits a brewery, it is illegal for the brewery to sell its own product directly to the public in whatever form it likes. This Bill would allow for the establishment of tap rooms in the brewery during hours that will not have an adverse effect on publicans. The financial benefit for these producers in being able to sell a percentage of their product while retaining the cut that normally goes to the distributor and publican would not be insignificant. The Bill will do away with the main obstacle that has been holding Ireland back from being an internationally famous beer, whiskey and cider tourism destination.

The quality of the range of craft drinks products in Ireland is improving all the time. There are more breweries, cideries and distilleries coming online all the time and many in the planning stages at present. There is plenty of room for more. Currently, Irish microbreweries only occupy 2% of the beer market but, as Deputy Kelly pointed out yesterday, the breweries that make up 2% employ more people than the two biggest brewers in Ireland which control 65% of the market combined. If Irish microbreweries reached 4% of the market, there is potential to create hundreds of jobs here. One need only look at the US to see the potential for such home-grown breweries and distilleries. The US, the home of capitalism, now has over 5,000 breweries and they occupy 12% of the market. It goes to show what is possible here.

There are relatively untapped industries connected to the craft drinks market that will get a boost from the craft drinks industry. Already, breweries such as White Gypsy have worked with Minch Malt to start developing the quality of their product, such as the malt being grown with farmers around the Hook Head peninsula in Wexford. Obviously, this all is very parish pump of me, but I should name some of the farmers involved: Mr. Martin Foley, Mr. Jim Colfer, Mr. Kevin Creane, Mr. Vivian Tubritt, Mr. Pádraig Colfort, Mr. Tom Harpur, Mr. Vivian Roe and Mr. Joe Chapman.

As the Minister of State knows, it is not often I do a bit of parish pump politics here, but high quality hops are grown in the UK and can also thrive here. All that is needed is a bit of increased demand on the island. Fair play to the farmers in the region of the Hook for putting their necks on the line on this.

In terms of tourism, the Bill is essential if Ireland is to become a craft drinks destination. Irish breweries are spread across the length and breadth of the country and are generally not concentrated in cities. The Bill will create another reason for people to travel around the island and, importantly, to places that may not yet be on the beaten track for tourism. Publicans who stock the product of their local brewery will benefit from extra trade when the brewers close at 6 p.m. and recommend the local as a place to try more of their products and those of other producers. The Guinness brewery tour is Ireland's top tourism attraction with more than 1.5 million visitors a year. It is about time certain Irish companies got a share of that tourism trade. Currently, we are dominated by foreign breweries here in the forms of Heineken, Carlsberg and Diageo. It is about time we helped our own.

The current law in this area is an outdated and unworkable relic of British rule which allows a brewery to sell directly only where the amount of beer is in any quantity not less than 4.5 gallons or two dozen reputed quart bottles, meaning about 19 litres. The existing legislation is stifling the growth of breweries by preventing them from maintaining control of the sales of

the product they create. As such, I commend Deputy Alan Kelly and the work of Metalman, O'Hara's and White Gypsy on getting the Bill this far. As the Minister of State knows, I am a member of the justice committee and I will certainly help the Bill to move forward. I got into an argument with the Minister for Finance a few weeks ago when he was looking for me to declare my interest when I talk about Cerberus. I have an interest in the truth being told about that, but I will declare my interest in craft breweries. We still operate four wine bars and the only beer we sell there is craft beer. We started off selling solely beers from Italy and we have learned a great deal from the Italians. We are also selling beer from Kinnegar, Donegal, Rascal's from Dublin and the Porterhouse and the Irish beer is getting better all the time. Things are improving. In Italy, we went around vineyards to source wine. The idea that one would not be able to buy products from a vineyard is unthinkable. Italy is full of wine bars and the fact that producers can sell at source is not a problem for them. It is a simple matter of commonsense. I have been to umpteen craft breweries around Italy and one can buy beer there and take it away. It just makes sense and brings trade to small villages.

As has been pointed out before now, most craft breweries in Ireland are not in the big cities but are all over the place. In Wexford alone, there are four companies, YellowBelly, Clever Man, Arhurstown and Jack Doyle's, and every county has numerous craft brewers. The craft breweries got off the mark in Italy about 20 years ago and I remember visiting a few in 2000. At that time the big multinationals started to buy out anyone who got good at what he was doing because they were afraid of craft brewers. However, it reached a point where there was a craft brewery opening in Italy every day of the year and they had to stop. The market is growing and I do not see it being a problem under any circumstances for the Irish publican. It will actually develop an appreciation for the taste and quality of real good beer and help them in the long term.

This notion that people drinking craft beer in an industrial estate where a brewery has been set up might lead to anti-social behaviour is nonsense. People who drink craft beer drink much less than they do of commercial chemical beers. Let us call a spade a spade. Heineken, Guinness, which, God knows, I drink myself sometimes, and Carlsberg are chemical commercial beers and one can drink gallons of them. One cannot do that with craft beer because there is so much more substance and quality to it. One cannot drink it in the same quantities. In fact, therefore, promoting craft breweries in Ireland will actually be good for the health of the Irish people. Not only will they be drinking fewer chemicals, but they will also be drinking less alcohol. It is a win-win for the Government given that our health bill in 2014 to deal with alcohol abuse was €3.6 billion. It is about time the Government joined the dots and started to promote craft beer.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** It looks like Deputy Wallace is going to be the poster boy of the craft beer industry.

**Deputy Pat Deering:** I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak to and support the Bill. I compliment Deputy Alan Kelly for bringing it forward. As he said, it is a commonsense Bill. I welcome the people from the industry who are in the Gallery and who have taken a day off from their businesses to support the Bill. There are 63 microbreweries around the country, the number having spiralled in the last few years. They have added greatly to the rural economy. One of the first was O'Hara's in Carlow which had humble beginnings 21 years ago and now employs over 60 people having moved to bigger premises in recent years. O'Hara's sells its products in 150 pubs and in 25 countries around the world. It is a huge achievement for a company that started from humble beginnings just over 21 years ago. The company also has

the future possibility of developing a visitor centre which will hopefully add to the community. Just a mile down the road from O'Hara's is Walsh's whiskey distillery which opened only last year. It is a huge €25 million development which also has the possibility to develop a visitor centre over the next number of years.

What will this do for the rural economy? The huge tourism potential has already been mentioned. Between the two premises I have mentioned, it is hoped to attract 100,000 visitors in the next few years to a rural part of the country, Carlow, which is not traditionally known for its tourism possibilities. Along with the tourism potential of Ireland's Ancient East, Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland must join the dots to tie in the microbreweries and distilleries to ensure that it is not just Dublin, Cork and Galway, but the Carlows of this world that attract badly needed tourists to generate more income for local areas. We have heard a great deal of talk over the last number of years of the decline of rural Ireland, including post offices and small schools. Microbreweries are an important element in the rejuvenation and regeneration of rural Ireland. Approximately 400 people are involved in these businesses. Between them, O'Hara's and Walsh's distillery will employ over 100 people in the next two years in the small area of Bagnelstown in County Carlow. If a foreign direct investment company launched a big project in the morning employing 100 people in Ireland, we would all be jumping up and down at how great it was. These are sustainable jobs for the future which are crucial to rural Ireland and it is vital that we support them going forward.

This is also very important from an agricultural point of view. Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe has highlighted the plight of the tillage industry in the last year in particular but also across previous years. This is another way to promote the tillage industry and the malt industry. Deputy Fitzmaurice mentioned education, which is crucial. IT Carlow has taken the innovative step of launching the first bachelor of science degree in brewing and distilling in Ireland. The course commences in September and is hugely innovative not only for County Carlow but for the country. Not only can students literally spend their college years drinking beer, whiskey and whatever else, they can now be rewarded for doing so where they enrol in this first alcohol-making course. It is a great idea. Not only is there tourism potential and potential for rural Ireland, there is also educational potential, which is very important. It is important that we support the Bill. As Deputy Alan Kelly said, it is a common-sense Bill. It is the last piece of the jigsaw required to make sure this is a sustainable business for the future and the third leg of the stool required. It is important that a common-sense approach be taken to the Bill which I am glad to support.

**Deputy John Lahart:** With my colleagues, I support the Bill and thank Deputy Alan Kelly for introducing it. There was an interesting article in *The Irish Times* two years ago. The business of producing craft beer has since moved on and advanced. The article mentioned Seamus O'Hara and O'Hara's beer. It looked as far back as 1996, when the outlook for the discerning beer drinker, as described in the article, was very bleak. It recalled that Ireland once had a very proud brewing tradition, with dozens of small breweries dotted throughout the country. By all accounts, in 1850 at the end of the Famine there were 95 breweries, but by 1960 that figure had whittled down to eight. Guinness bought up many of those remaining.

My interest in this debate stems from one of the old brewing companies, the Priory brewing company, which was located in Tallaght village and run by the Dominicans. It was not unusual in days gone by for religious orders to run their own brewing companies. What is interesting is that Partas, a local social enterprise group in Tallaght village, as one of its social enterprises, will launch a new Priory brand of beer in the coming months. The Priory microbrewery will

be established in the village and take its name from the Dominican Priory in Tallaght village. This speaks particularly to the point made by Deputy Alan Kelly about playing into the narrative of tourism development. This is not just happening in rural Ireland but in urban Ireland also. Areas of south County Dublin have fledgling and developing tourism potential. This is one particular story, which is why I have an interest in speaking about the topic today. I have another interest which I will mention towards the end of my contribution.

*The Irish Times* article also discussed the results of what my generation had lived with for 30 or 40 years - “a dreary beer landscape dominated by tasteless imported mass market lagers, unlike any in Europe where the culture of small local breweries has survived”. As Deputy Mick Wallace outlined, in the two years since the article was written, while it is still the case in Ireland that there is a drab and dreary presentation of mass produced beer and most pubs and off-licences continue to serve and stock only the major brands, there has been a sea-change which is gaining momentum and accelerating.

It is good to have a healthy debate and positive discussion in the Dáil about drink. The debates about it in the House are justifiably and legitimately centred on the abuse of alcohol by sections of society and its consequences. I could be wrong, but I associate craft beers with discerning responsible drinkers who care, think a little and reflect on the beer they want to drink and know a little about it. As Deputy Mick Wallace knows, this is something we would champion if it was about wine drinkers, but when it comes to beer drinkers, the idea that someone could actually have a degree of discernment in selecting the type of beer he or she wishes to drink is not common. It is welcome that we can have a positive discussion in the Chamber about drink and speak about it in a positive and very refreshing way.

The previous speaker spoke about the brewing company O’Hara’s. It is one of the more successful brands. I came across a bottle of O’Hara’s beer on a visit to Japan many years ago. The craft beer industry in Ireland only took off when our former colleague, Brian Cowen, introduced tax incentives for microbreweries in 2005. His decision gave the industry the incentive it needed to compete in a world dominated by large brewing conglomerates with very deep pockets. I understand that in 2015, 1,800 people were employed in the brewing industry in Ireland, 200 of whom were employed in microbrewing. In 2017 the number involved has increased to almost 500. It is certainly a burgeoning small industry. Year on year, the craft brewing industry is expanding by between 40% and 50%. It accounts for between 1.5% and 2% of the overall beer market. As Deputy Mick Wallace rightly stated, it still has huge potential. There are a number of regulatory changes that would support the further development of the market. Deputy Alan Kelly alluded to this and referred to it as one of the primary reasons for introducing the Bill. Enabling local microbreweries to sell their products to legitimate and bona fide visitors to their premises is one step in promoting this. A total of 479 people are employed in production in microbreweries.

This is a personal contribution rather than one on behalf of Fianna Fáil. I have not been lobbied in any shape, form or manner on any aspect of the Bill, but I ask the Minister of State to examine the ten-to-six deadline. Microbreweries may be happy with this, but from a personal perspective, I wonder whether in rural Ireland, particularly in the summer months, this a little too punishing a schedule for buses and coaches which may arrive at these premises. They may take a tour but, unlike visitors who arrived ten minutes earlier, they may not taste the product. If microbrewery representatives are happy with the hours of 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., that is fine, but I seek a justification for having a deadline of 6 p.m. With regard to an aspect mentioned by the Minister of State, to be honest, I cannot see people turning up at microbreweries in their droves

posing as visitors to have a pint-----

**Deputy David Stanton:** The Deputy would be surprised.

**Deputy John Lahart:** -----or a glass of spirits, particularly in the afternoon.

**Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly:** At 4 p.m.

**Deputy John Lahart:** My time absolutely flew, but I did want to mention Oliver Hughes. My late mother was from west Kerry where we have the great success story that is Dingle gin and whiskey. Reputationally, it is a huge success story and shows what microbreweries can do.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I suspect Members are getting thirsty listening to all of these references.

**Deputy Eugene Murphy:** Deputy John Lahart could have had a couple of pints during his ten minutes. It might seem strange to my colleagues that somebody who does not consume alcohol is so supportive of the Bill. Apart from the odd time when I drink it for medicinal purposes, I do not consume alcohol. Much of the reason is I spend most of my life driving a vehicle on the road. Someone can no longer go and have a drink and then drive because the laws have become so tight. Every so often something happens which ignites a spark and what Deputy Alan Kelly has done is highly significant. If nurtured and supported properly, it could become a huge factor, not alone in creating employment but also as a tourism product. In the run-up to the support for this Bill, I visited a brewery in Ballinlough in County Roscommon, owned by Mr. Richard Siberry. It was probably one of the most fascinating journeys that I made in my constituency for some time. It is amazing to go into these small breweries and see how they operate. The small number of people who work there are very enthusiastic. I welcome people from the various breweries throughout the country. They are not looking for open-ended hours to serve beer. The Bill is very tight and Deputy Kelly has done well. They will only sell their own products on the premises. They are so excited that this could become reality. They would be able to sell the products and maybe discuss it over a cup of coffee. I believe that they will become major tourist attractions.

There are one or two breweries, or maybe more, in most counties now. They all seem to be working quite successfully. Deputy Kelly mentioned that 439 jobs have been created already at these small breweries in the Twenty-six Counties. That is quite a significant figure. If any of us found out in our constituency tomorrow that some employer was going to come in and create between 400 and 500 jobs, there would be céad míle fáilte and a sense that it was fantastic. This brewing business is in its infancy. I believe that in a few years, with proper support from the State for this type of development, those figures could go to 1,500 or 2,000. I believe it can become a significant employer and that it will not do any damage to pubs. I know a number of pubs that are distributing and selling those craft beers. I do not think there is going to be any conflict there. There is going to be no difficulty if breweries close at a certain time in the evening.

There is an explosion in the number of these breweries throughout the country. I acknowledge what Deputy Lahart said about former Deputy Brian Cowen and what he did for the business back in 2005. There is no reason all those breweries cannot flourish. We have our local enterprise offices, LEOs, in every county, which provide mentoring. We have supports that were never really there. The enthusiasm that is coming from the people who are running these little breweries gives a feel-good factor. The Bill just removes a significant barrier that needs

to be taken away.

This is a great idea. I admire the people who are championing it. I admire the way they have gone to their Deputies and not lobbied, but just let us know what exactly is going on and what is happening in the premises. I would say to anyone who has not been to one of these small breweries to go and take in the enthusiasm and listen to the people. When I visited Richard's brewery in Ballinlough in Roscommon, he took me into this little cold room and pointed to three pallets of beer going to America, which were his first export lot. He was so excited about that. Roscommon people were always known as the sheep stealers. I do not ever accept that title. One of Richard's craft beers is entitled Sheep Stealer. I do not mind. As long as he sells enough bottles of Sheep Stealer and creates his little tourism hub and more employment, I will be happy and I am supportive, as is my party, of this Bill from Deputy Kelly.

**Deputy Kevin O'Keeffe:** I, too, commend Deputy Kelly on bringing this Bill before this House. I am delighted to learn that he has the full backing of Fáilte Ireland.

As late as yesterday evening, I had the honour of being invited to the Jameson distillery on Bow Street along with Deputy Rock. We went on a tour of the history of the Jameson distillery to find out how its products are made and to go to a tasting session. We were brought into the shop afterwards to be shown the finished product that is for sale. I talked to people there, who are seeing increased numbers of people going through the premises, with the distillery having recently been refurbished and reopened. I am delighted that we can get some of these people down into rural Ireland and that is why I support this Bill. We have seen phenomenal growth of microbreweries and distilleries and I am delighted that Deputy Kelly has mentioned that he will probably extend the terms of reference in order that more operators can avail of this opportunity. Allowing on-site sale will help make these businesses more sustainable and, it is hoped, create more jobs down the road. I wholeheartedly support the rural pub industry and trade. I am delighted that there are restrictions on the opening hours of these operations. Even the daytime trading would be good enough to make it sustainable and viable. It is to be hoped the people who call at these businesses will also call into other businesses and attractions in those localities. That is why I would advise support of this Bill.

Another issue here is the tillage sector, as mentioned by Deputy Deering. We see the current crisis with prices for cereals. We would need more grain for more breweries, which would help to make the farming sector more sustainable. My own town, Mitchelstown, has a successful microbrewery called Eight Degrees Brewing, which is trading successfully. It feels that if it can get the tourists calling, it will help exports and help the business grow. We call to the wineries if we go abroad. We go into the winery or the farm, through the mechanism and we bring home a few bottles. We will probably go to the local off-licence or shop and see if we can find that wine again if we like it. That is why people leave their names in these businesses. The further people travel, the further we can export some of these products.

I thank my constituency colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy David Stanton, for speaking on behalf of the Government in support of this Bill. It is to be hoped we can bring it through Committee Stage as soon as possible, as Deputy Kelly requested. It is important we get this Bill through the Dáil as soon as possible to get these businesses up and running, to be stronger and have a firmer footing in the rural communities where they operate.

**Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly:** I thank Deputy Kelly for introducing this Bill. Fianna Fáil will be supporting the Bill. On a personal note, as a great fan of craft beer, I am delighted to

be speaking on it and to be supporting the beer, or supporting the Bill. I beg your pardon. A Freudian slip.

*(Interruptions).*

**Deputy Stephen S. Donnelly:** Unlike vineyard owners and wine producers in France, craft brewers and distillers in Ireland are not allowed to sell their products on site. This Bill allows for the sale of the product on site, which is great news, because the craft brewing industry in Ireland is going from strength to strength and shows little sign of slowing down. Turnover has increased a staggering elevenfold between 2011 and 2016, and there is real potential for further development of the craft beer industry, in both numbers and output. An increase in the number of production breweries to more than 100 and a fivefold increase in output is possible over the longer term. There are about 90 microbreweries in Ireland at the moment. Any sober analysis of the industry would conclude that the microbreweries of Wicklow are outstanding and, it would be argued, probably the best in the country. I am proud to be able to point to that from personal experience. Wicklow Wolf in Bray is going from strength to strength. Manor Brewing Company in Manor Kilbride was the winner of the Alltech brews award. Wicklow Brewery in Redcross has won a number of awards since being established about three years ago. Brother Brewing in Kilcoole is the all-Ireland craft beer multi-award winners. That is to name but a few. All these are successful businesses and many are already engaged in running tours of their breweries. This Bill will empower them too sell their product at the point of origin, which makes for a much more powerful and eminently sensible tourist offering in a brewery.

While Fianna Fáil supports the Bill, and I am personally delighted to do so, Ireland has a long way to go in ensuring that alcohol consumption is reduced. The binge-drinking culture must be dealt with along with the serious negative health effects we can see around the country.

The Bill before us, however, would allow brewers to sell their product to those visiting brewery sites. It seems to be a logical and sensible proposal, which I am delighted to support.

**Deputy James Lawless:** My party will be supporting the Bill and I am delighted to do so also. The legislation is pro-enterprise and favours small local businesses. Like Deputy Lahart, I wish to acknowledge the foresight of the former Taoiseach and uachtarán of Fianna Fáil, Brian Cowen, who in 2005, when he was Minister for Finance, included the microbrewery tax credit in the Finance Bill. It goes to show that great things can grow from small seeds.

According to the latest figures, 479 people are employed in the microcraft brewing industry and 167 jobs were created in the sector last year. It is an industry that has taken off, capturing the public imagination, as well as people's taste buds and the entrepreneurial spirit.

This far-sighted, sensible and positive Bill is a tribute to Deputy Alan Kelly. I spoke to him about it in some detail before Christmas when he introduced it on First Stage. I also wish to pay tribute to the local entrepreneurs who have brought their enterprises to this stage. Microbreweries are trading successfully and enjoying a renaissance given the support they attract from the public. Their success is almost a problem because they are limited in terms of supply.

I see what has happened in my constituency of Kildare North where there has been a virtual explosion of interest in craft beer. The Kildare Brewing Company is coming to my own local, Lock 13, in Sallins. I am also familiar with Trouble Brewing in Kill, the Rye River Brewing

Company in Celbridge and Kelly's Mountain Brew in Clane. Their products have different tastes and textures, but are all doing extremely well both locally and in the wider market. Such small breweries face a common quandary, however, in that they cannot sell their products on the premises. This Bill seeks to address that difficulty.

Many parts of the country are facing challenges because town centre retail outlets are struggling. The hospitality and tourism sectors, however, are booming. This legislation could breathe new life into those sectors, thus fulfilling their potential for further growth.

I am most familiar with the Lock 13 and Kildare Brewing Company example, which sits on the banks of the Grand Canal in Sallins. We are attempting to build a greenway there to attract tourists who wish to cycle or walk along the canal. Once this Bill is enacted, visitors will be able to stop at the brewery, take a tour, sample craft beer, purchase supplies and then cycle on their merry way back up to Dublin or elsewhere. It is a 100% winning formula which supports local industry and promotes tourism, as well as involving all the amenities the area has to offer. That in itself is a fantastic initiative.

In the past, beer was the poor cousin of wine and spirits but that culture is beginning to change. Some weekend newspapers now carry columns on beer, including notes on taste and other aspects of these beverages. Beer is thus being subjected to the same degree of forensic investigation that wines have been for many decades.

It is good to celebrate food and drink, including emporiums, markets and artisan stalls, which can add so much to the local economy. Such services can make an area or town unique, with local produce that can be enjoyed, tasted, savoured and sampled. This new found sophistication in culinary items and drinks is to be welcomed.

I have attended brew nights when brewers speak on the various products that are available for sampling. In addition, brewers are investing in training their staff and this trend can only increase with visitors arriving in breweries as a result of this Bill when it is, hopefully, passed. It all provides for a higher order of experience both for customers and staff who can advise on the different types of beer, their ingredients and brewing processes. I welcome that extension to the craft beer industry which is similar to what has happened in the wine sector for many years.

Amsterdam has its Heineken museum, while Edinburgh has the whisky museum which I have had the pleasure of visiting. Dublin is most famous for the Guinness Hop Store which is a fantastic tourism site that attracts thousands of visitors every day.

This legislation will open up added potential around the country featuring visits to many breweries in many counties. Some 23 of the 26 counties are currently hosting microbreweries. There are four in my own constituency and probably a few more in south Kildare. The Ceann Comhairle might be familiar with them. I am sure that many more will emerge as this idea takes off.

The Bill is a common sense measure which ticks a number of boxes. Essentially it is pro-enterprise, pro-tourism and pro-indigenous development. The majority of ingredients used are sourced locally, thus providing local employment. There is also an export potential and local enterprise offices are involved in those opportunities.

I commend Deputy Kelly for bringing this Bill to Second Stage. I look forward to the microbrewing industry taking off as a result of the legislation being passed in due course. If I were



to take a rare day off I might even sample one of the microbreweries myself.

**Deputy Brendan Ryan:** I congratulate Deputy Kelly for bringing this Bill before the House. He did so in consultation with the operators in the business. I welcome them to the Visitors Gallery today. Many speakers in this debate have congratulated Deputy Kelly although his chair is empty. That is because he is attending the Committee of Public Accounts this afternoon. He has passed on his apologies for his absence.

The craft beer sector is booming with an elevenfold increase in annual turnover since 2011. There has been an almost 30% increase in production by micro-breweries last year. However, those producing beer, cider and spirits are prevented from selling those products on their own premises. The Bill before us seeks to address that anomaly and would remove that barrier for these important Irish businesses which are operating in a growing sector.

Craft brewing and distilling employ around 1,000 people directly and indirectly. They operate in nearly every county, including one in Lusk in my own constituency. I am referring to Mr. David Llewellyn who describes himself as a fruit grower, wine maker, cider maker and vinegar maker. That description outlines the potential for where this business could go.

Many microbrewers who see the tourist potential want to open visitor centres to attract more customers for their products. For those who do, or who have done so, current legislation requires that they either have a pub licence or an off-licence to sell their produce. This is obviously overly restrictive. The legislation before us today is simply common sense, as so many people have said. The simple objective is to remove a regulatory barrier to growth and support an expanding industry here in Ireland.

It will have a very positive impact on tourism around the country, increasing the number of tourist “things to do locally” in nearly every region and craft beer tourism has a huge potential which will be enhanced by the passing of this legislation. The craft brewers themselves have highlighted this potential in a recent report for Bord Bia and the Independent Craft Brewers of Ireland. I note the words of support from individuals and groups right around the House, including from the Minister of State, and I welcome that support. As Deputy Kelly himself noted, can a situation be imagined in Italy, France or Spain where tourists visiting vineyards could not buy a product at the end of it?

The Bill is, however, restrictive in its detail. It restricts sales to between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sales can only be of products brewed on site and fines would ensue to ensure owners do not sell alcohol that is not brewed on site. There is also a clause preventing the licence holders applying for the types of exemptions and extensions to opening hours that pubs and clubs can apply for. Sales on Good Friday and Christmas Day are also disallowed, as they are for pubs and off-licences. I anticipate we will have a further debate on that at some stage in the future, particularly in regard to Good Friday, but that is for another day.

I will not repeat all of the statistics that Deputy Kelly and others have produced, but I would like to pick out some highlights and points of note from the industry itself. There are around 90 microbreweries operating in the Republic, of which 62 are production microbreweries and at least 28 are contracting companies. The number of microbreweries has more than quadrupled since 2012. Thirteen new production microbreweries commenced production in 2015 compared with a total of 20 in the previous year. This highlights the phenomenal growth in new enterprises in the last two years. Thirty-three of the 62 production breweries referred to

commenced production in 2014-2015. The sector has recently been in high growth. The total turnover of craft beer producers in 2015 is estimated at €40 million and for 2016 is projected to be €59 million. In the five years since 2011, turnover has increased elevenfold.

These are powerful statistics. This is phenomenal growth. It is time to let this industry off the leash. The players themselves see the potential for growth. We need to help them along part of the way by the passing of this modest and simple legislation and the case for the change in the law needs no further argument. Everybody has made the case. I think it is accepted right across the board. I look forward to the passing of this Bill and its speedy passage through Committee and all Stages in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

I thank the Minister of State for his contribution at the beginning in which he indicated the Government will not oppose the Bill. While that is very commendable, I would really like to see the Minister of State and the Government grasping this, running with it and seeing its potential, rather than simply not opposing it. I recognise the gaps the Minister of State has identified in terms of risks of potential abuses, the need for court certificates, the potential impact on young persons, planning issues and fire certificates. All those are valid issues to raise but accepting and not opposing the Bill is positive for what Members are doing today. It is a statement that the Government will not oppose it because it is not perfect, it knows the legislation can be improved and that can be done on Committee Stage. I would ask the Minister of State to do so quickly. The people in the Gallery are waiting for action and I hope the Minister of State can deliver.

**Deputy Noel Rock:** I thank the Ceann Comhairle for affording me a little bit of time to speak on this Bill. First, I welcome the various brewers who are here in the Gallery today, some of whom I got to meet thanks to a talk Deputy Kelly organised to inform Members of the House on this important Bill. I will open by paying tribute to one of the first pioneers of craft brewing in Ireland, a gentleman called Oliver Hughes, who unfortunately passed away a few months ago. He was the founder of the Porterhouse chain. Members might have seen its pubs based throughout Dublin or indeed its beer stocked in a number of outlets and supermarkets throughout the country. Oliver sadly passed away but I know he would have been proud of this Bill and of the progress that the industry is making in Ireland.

The industry is making great strides and while it currently has 2% of market share, it is growing exponentially year on year and one can see that the ceiling is quite a bit away. If one looks at the USA by way of example, the craft beer industry controls approximately 13% of the market by volume but approximately 20% of the market by value. This really illustrates the high-value product these producers are putting together. On employment, the statistic to which I believe Deputy Kelly made reference earlier that craft brewers in Ireland combined now employ more individuals than the two biggest breweries goes to show how much labour goes into this product.

On entering the Chamber, I noted that on the Fianna Fáil bench opposite is Deputy O’Keeffe from Cork, who can be clearly associated with the constituency from which Eight Degrees Brewing comes, as can the Minister of State sitting in front of me. Similarly, Deputy Donnelly can be associated with the constituency from which Wicklow Wolf comes and Deputy Lawless can be associated with the constituency from which Trouble Brewing comes. It goes to show that, much like Deputies, craft beers are very much geographically associated. One can very clearly see how the idea of craft beer tourism or something akin to the whiskey trail could take off in Ireland. I think the Bill is prescient in that sense, in that it can spark the idea of a real

tourism industry in Ireland in a way that we have not necessarily seen before. I think that is important.

Even though I have referenced Trouble Brewing in this speech already, I think there is anything but trouble brewing in the Chamber today. We can quite clearly see that all parties are effectively singing off the same hymn sheet. Tribute should be paid to both Deputy Kelly for having the prescience to put together this Bill - it is a very good Bill which I wish I had thought of myself - but also to the former uachtarán of Fianna Fáil, Brian Cowen, who had the prescience to put together the tax package that allowed the craft beer industry in Ireland to grow. The previous Government enhanced those incentives year on year, effectively expanding the hectolitre capacity under which craft brewers could operate with a slight tax exemption. That was important.

Scale is important for this industry. There are a lot of brewers right around the country who are trying to operate, grow and get to a point where they can create their product and, more importantly, export their product. We want to support that where at all possible. Ireland has a great reputation as a fantastic food and drink exporter. I think in the years ahead we are going to see that reputation enhanced to include being a fantastic craft beer exporter as well. I fully support anybody who has the get-up-and-go to establish a brewery and to try their best to export their product.

In terms of tourism and helping the scale of the craft brewing industry, this is a great thing. In terms of helping employment, and rural employment in particular, this is a fantastic thing. The spread of breweries around the country is exemplary. As was referenced earlier, there are only three counties without craft breweries right now. I could practically guarantee that were Members to have this discussion in a year's time, those three counties would be filled in as well.

Ultimately, this is positive and I fully support it. I look forward to seeing it implemented as soon as possible and I pay tribute once again to Deputy Kelly and to those people who are doing this work and making it happen day in and day out.

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy David Stanton):** I have listened carefully to all the points made by Deputy Kelly and others during this debate and as I sat here I was thinking about the town of Cobh in my own constituency, to be parochial, which is to be visited by 67 cruise liners this year. There were 136,000 visitors to the Jameson Experience in Midleton last year. That number will increase again in the current year. The whole tourism side of this area is huge and growing. I contend that this particular Bill brought forward by Deputy Kelly will add to the tourism potential.

Deputy Lahart earlier raised issues with respect to late opening. As far as I am aware, the microbrewers have not requested this. My understanding is that work would finish at 6 p.m. and late opening would conflict with existing licensed premises, which would not be good. It might encourage other activities, such as parties, to occur in microbreweries, even though I do not think that is the intention. A finish time of 6 p.m. seems reasonable.

Reference was made to antisocial behaviour. Courts will be involved in granting licences and people will have an opportunity to object at the beginning of the process if they so wish, which is important to note.

As I said at the outset, the Government will not oppose the Bill but will table appropriate amendments on Committee Stage in order to ensure that, as far as possible, the Bill will not

have any unforeseen or undesirable consequences that would not serve the interests of the sector or those who work in it. It is a common-sense Bill.

Budget 2017 provided upfront relief for microbreweries. Under that relief, such a brewery could produce up to 20,000 hl of product and the excise duty would be 50% of the normal rate. The previous budget increased the limit for microbreweries to 30,000 hl. The Government has been very supportive of the sector. The sector has grown and has now reached a point where it is seeking some extra assistance.

Visitors and tourists are also looking for a change. As colleagues said, anyone visiting a winery or brewery on the continent or elsewhere can buy product. It is something people expect, and those who visit Ireland are puzzled that they cannot do so. Everybody who has spoken has supported the Bill. It will solve that problem and allow such sales to take place legally.

I again thank everyone who contributed and also Deputy Kelly for bringing forward the Bill.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** I join others in thanking Deputy Kelly for his initiative in bringing forward the Bill. There is a wide level of agreement in the House today. Unlike other Bills which have come before the House and have been agreed, but have then gone into the equivalent of a legislative deep-freeze, I ask that Minister of State, Deputy Stanton, use his good offices to ensure that this legislation is passed. It is a fairly simple Bill and there has been a very good debate on its provisions.

The proposal is welcomed by those involved in microbreweries and microdistilleries, but also among the general public. Many people in Ireland are very used to seeing advertisements when they holiday abroad promoting visits to vineyards and wine estates. In parts of eastern Europe and Germany tours of breweries are part of the tourism offer. It is important to recognise that, given the development of microbrewing and distilling, there is a significant additional offering for tourists on wet or nice days in Ireland. Unfortunately, from a tourism point of view we have our wet days. Breweries and distilleries are interesting places to visit, and people can learn about local history including agriculture and production. The Guinness Storehouse is very popular and refers to the history of brewing. I understand it is probably the number one visitor attraction in Ireland. The Wild Atlantic Way has captured the imagination of European and American tourists. A complimentary number of microbreweries taking advantage of that tourism exposure would be very positive.

I associate many people involved in craft brewing with being of the hipster generation, particularly the men involved. It is interesting to see younger people, especially men, taking a significant interest in brewing beer. That can lead to others becoming involved in craft brewing.

Many speakers referred to rural areas. Given that all of our large cities have very long brewing and distilling traditions, the sectors have taken off in Dublin and other cities, especially those which have a significant tourism industry. I hope that following the development of the craft brewing sector some of the crafts associated with the sector which have disappeared, such as coopers who make barrels, return.

I have visited quite a number of craft breweries and distilleries. A large amount of attention has gone into their design so that local or other visitors have a very pleasant experience. The Bill adds the legal capacity to serve people alcohol in that environment, which makes a lot of sense.

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Distilleries, breweries and vineyards in other countries are not just about drinking. Rather, they often involve eating formally or informally. Such visits are very much part of pleasant experiences for local people and visitors.

Given the kind of work that Bord Bia has done in recent times, there is a lot of scope for having a vibrant industry. A couple of years ago, some economic and business commentators began to wonder whether the sector had peaked. I do not think that is so. There is capacity to have a sustainable industry. An attractive tax package is in place, as stated by the Minister of State, which has been important in consolidating the development of the industry.

In terms of craft distilleries, I am delighted that a number of the most prominent distillers are women, including the craft distillery in Midleton. That example has been followed on the craft brewery side.

I ask that the Government not allow the Bill to gather dust on a shelf. It would be very helpful if it could be passed within a relatively short period. Anything that adds to the capacity of a vibrant indigenous business to create job satisfaction for those involved in the industry is positive.

There is significant investment in the sector. The Bill will help to give a stronger base to the sector, given that it will be possible to serve product on premises within designated times. That will make it easier for promoters to access appropriate finance.

Craft beers tend to be slightly more expensive than the traditional mass produced beers and, in a certain sense, that is what has partly led to the link with the preparation of fine foods. In Stoneybatter in Dublin, for instance, for a long number of years we have had Mulligan's, which was a standard sawdust pub. Nowadays it is largely a restaurant that specialises in serving craft beers and one that I am happy to say seems to be extremely popular. This example has been replicated in pretty much every county in Ireland. When we think of counties such as Carlow, which has many fine tourism attractions, something such as craft brewing and distilling adds an extra dimension.

I congratulate Deputy Alan Kelly again for introducing the Bill and note that what is contained in it is carefully crafted. The 6 p.m. deadline ensures that everything will be run properly. It also means that these will not become large event areas and that the type of growth provided for will be consistent with the way the industry, which is smaller in scale, has developed. Pearse Lyons and Deirdre Lyons, who have been so involved in Alltech, are much associated in terms of their origin with Dublin city centre. Their efforts in terms of restoring the old church on James's Street and promoting a wider knowledge - going back a few years - in terms of craft brewing competitions and so on have been extremely helpful. It is to be hoped that all this craft brewing will also help farmers in terms of demand for their grains. On behalf of the Labour Party, I thank the Minister of State and everyone else who has contributed to the positive tone of today's debate. We look forward to returning shortly on Committee Stage and to seeing the Bill enacted.

Question put and agreed to.

**Intoxicating Liquor (Breweries and Distilleries) Bill 2016: Referral to Select Committee  
[Private Members]**

**An Ceann Comhairle:** As this is a Private Members' Bill, it must, under Standing Orders 84A and 141, be referred to the Select Committee on Justice and Equality.

**Deputy Joan Burton:** I move:

That the Bill be referred to the Select Committee on Justice and Equality pursuant to Standing Orders 84A(3)(a) and 141.

Question put and agreed to.

The Dáil adjourned at 5.05 p.m. until 2 p.m. on Tuesday, 28 March 2017.