

## Written Answers.

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

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*Questions Nos. 1 to 14, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Cabinet Committee Meetings

15. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Taoiseach when Cabinet Committee C - European Union, including Brexit - last met. [39627/17]

**The Taoiseach:** As outlined to the House in July, the Government agreed a new streamlined Cabinet Committee structure and approved the establishment of 6 new Committees, one of which is Cabinet Committee C.

This Cabinet Committee will cover issues relating to the European Union, and will assist the Government in its ongoing consideration of Brexit. Cabinet Committee C will also support the Taoiseach's participation as a member of the European Council.

The Cabinet Committee, which I chair, met on 11 September.

The date of the next meeting of Cabinet Committee C has not yet been confirmed.

Preparing for and dealing with Brexit in a way that delivers the best possible outcome for the country remains a top priority for the Government. Its potential consequences cut across very many areas of our national and economic life, and it is being dealt with in a whole-of-Government way, including through Cabinet Committee C.

Issues affecting the island of Ireland are being given priority and considerable attention by the EU Task Force led by Michel Barnier and by our EU partners. They fully share our concerns and approach and are working to ensure that progress is made on the Irish issues in the negotiations with the UK.

*Questions Nos. 16 to 19, inclusive, resubmitted.*

### Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements

20. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on his visit to Canada and his meeting with the Canadian Prime Minister in August 2017. [39677/17]

**The Taoiseach:** I travelled to Canada between 19-23 August.

My visit commenced in Montréal with an official welcoming ceremony and a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister. During our meeting we discussed the provisional implementation of CETA which commenced on September 21. We discussed the latest developments on Brexit and Ireland's priorities in the negotiations. Prime Minister Trudeau updated me on the latest state of play with regards to the NAFTA negotiations. In the context of a wider conversation on healthcare, I updated the Prime Minister on plans to hold a constitutional referendum on the Eighth Amendment. We also discussed Climate Change and reaffirmed both our countries' commitment to the Paris Agreement.

Following our meeting, Prime Minister Trudeau and I walked together in the Fierté Montréal Pride Parade. I also met with leaders and representatives of the Irish community in Montréal and wider Quebec region, before travelling to Toronto.

In Toronto I had a number of business engagements including a business breakfast event attended by 150 contacts of the joint hosts; Enterprise Ireland, the Ireland Canada Chamber of Commerce and the Ireland Funds. I attended a Tourism Ireland event with representatives of the travel industry and airlines, and a number of individual meetings with IDA and EI client companies. I also had the opportunity to meet with political and community leaders and members of the Irish diaspora, including representatives of the Irish Canadian Immigration Centre, at an Irish Community Reception.

Also in Toronto, I attended a ceremony to mark the start of construction of the new Dr. George Robert Grasett Park, which will be a memorial to the medical staff who gave their lives to aid Irish famine victims.

During my visit I also travelled to the US - Canada border where I was briefed on Customs arrangements there. While they employ a range of mechanisms to ensure smooth and efficient customs processing it was clear to me that it was not a satisfactory model for border arrangements on this island after Brexit.

Finally, I also had a number of international media engagements.

Overall, my visit to Canada was extremely positive and an excellent opportunity to further develop the strong links between our two countries.

### **Taoiseach's Meetings and Engagements**

21. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Taoiseach the outcome of his visit to Canada. [39689/17]

**The Taoiseach:** I travelled to Canada between 19-23 August.

My visit commenced in Montréal with an official welcoming ceremony and a bilateral meeting with the Prime Minister. During our meeting we discussed the provisional implementation of CETA which commenced on September 21. We discussed the latest developments on Brexit and Ireland's priorities in the negotiations. Prime Minister Trudeau updated me on the latest state of play with regards to the NAFTA negotiations. In the context of a wider conversation on healthcare, I updated the Prime Minister on plans to hold a constitutional referendum on the Eighth Amendment. We also discussed Climate Change and reaffirmed both our countries' commitment to the Paris Agreement.

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Overall, my visit to Canada was extremely positive and an excellent opportunity to further develop the strong links between our two countries.

*Questions Nos. 22 and 23, inclusive, resubmitted.*

### **Ministerial Advisers Data**

24. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Taoiseach the advisers he has employed; and the role of each. [39690/17]

**The Taoiseach:** There are nine Special Advisers employed in my Department. They are as follows:

- the Chief of Staff;
- the Spokesman and Communications Adviser to the Taoiseach;
- the Head of Policy and Programme Implementation;
- four Special Advisers to the Taoiseach; and
- two Special Advisers to the Government Chief Whip.

The Special Advisers working in my Department provide briefings and advice on a wide range of policy matters, as well as performing other functions as I may direct from time to time. They also liaise with other Special Advisers in each Government Department so that I remain informed on developments across Government.

### **Cabinet Committees**

25. **Deputy Paul Murphy** asked the Taoiseach if he will report on the rearranging of Cabinet Committees. [39676/17]

**The Taoiseach:** The Government has established the following six Cabinet Committees,

which I will chair -

Cabinet Committee A (Economy)

Cabinet Committee B (Social Policy and Public Services)

Cabinet Committee C (European Union including Brexit)

Cabinet Committee D (Infrastructure)

Cabinet Committee E (Health), and

Cabinet Committee F (National Security).

They will meet as appropriate according to their work schedules.

*Questions Nos. 26 to 33, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 34 to 41, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Action Plan for Rural Development Implementation**

42. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to the recently announced Action Plan for Rural Development, the extent to which she hopes to maximise opportunities for the development of the arts and a greater awareness of heritage and economic opportunities likely to arise therefrom; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40722/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Action Plan for Rural Development is the first whole-of-government strategy aimed at people living and working in rural Ireland. The Plan is now led by my colleague Michael Ring, the Minister for Rural and Community Development. It aims to unlock the potential of rural Ireland through a framework of supports at national and local level which will ensure that people who live in rural areas have increased opportunities for employment locally, and access to public services and social networks that support a high quality of life.

The Plan contains 276 actions which aim to improve both the economic and social fabric of rural Ireland spread across five pillars. Arts and Heritage are covered under the fourth pillar of the plan - Fostering Culture and Creativity in Rural Communities. The key objectives of this Pillar are to:

- Increase access to the arts and enhance cultural facilities in rural communities.
- Further develop and enhance culture and creativity in rural Ireland through the establishment of culture teams and creativity hubs as part of the Creative Ireland Programme.
- Promote the Irish language as a key resource in Gaeltacht and other rural communities.

Of the 275 actions in the Action Plan many relate to our natural and built heritage assets. These assets are an essential part of the fabric of rural Ireland and their promotion in the context of the future growth of the rural economy is essential. As is their contribution to local pride of place and wellness. In that respect, my Department is continuing to work closely with the Department of Rural and Community Development. A rural proofing has been inbuilt to all our heritage promotion programmes and initiatives.

These policy initiatives are supported by significant additional resources which are being directed towards the arts and culture sector.

In February this year I announced details of more than €9 million in capital funding for existing dedicated arts and culture centres across the country. The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is the most significant investment in arts and cultural centres in a decade and will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces.

In August I announced further capital funding of almost €750,000 for more than 60 arts organisations around the country. The funding is being made available under Stream 3 of the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. It was geared towards providing capital grants of up to €20,000 to not-for-profit organisations with a defined arts and cultural remit.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is flexible to ensure that a diverse number of arts organisations would benefit. As a result of the latest round of funding, more than 120 organisations in total have benefitted from this very worthwhile scheme.

A full list of successful projects under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 (Streams 1, 2 & 3) is available on my Department's website.

*Questions Nos. 43 and 44, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Hare Coursing Regulation**

45. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the repeat capture of hares for hare coursing; and the measures she will take to prevent this occurring. [40718/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The control of live hare coursing, including the operation of individual coursing meetings and managing the use of hares for that activity, is carried out under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My responsibility relates to the conservation status of the hare.

In August this year, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering its affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2017/18 coursing season, which extends from the end of September 2017 to the end of February 2018.

There are 22 conditions associated with the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club which have been developed and refined over the year. One of the conditions requires that hares must be released back into the wild during daylight hours after the coursing has concluded unless otherwise agreed, in advance, with the relevant National Parks and Wildlife Service officials.

It is also a condition of the licence that in all matters relating to coursing there must be full compliance with the Directives, Instructions and Guidance Notes issued by the Irish Coursing Club. One of the provisions of the Irish Coursing Club in that regard is that hares earmarked and released may not be taken up and coursed at any subsequent park meeting.

Therefore, while there may be a possibility that a released hare could be recaptured for a future coursing meeting, the conditions require that that hare should not be coursed again. The conditions of future licenses issued by my Department in respect of coursing meetings will be

kept under review in light of any issues brought to my attention by National Parks and Wildlife officials or by others and I will make any changes that I consider appropriate.

### **Built Heritage Investment Scheme**

46. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding available from her Department to local heritage groups in order support the conservation and protection of historical buildings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40706/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the roles of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

Financial support is delivered by my Department for the protection of heritage buildings under structured schemes which are administered via the local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is a scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures (i.e. structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures). This year the allocation is €3.5 million and the scheme is supporting in the region of 500 projects across the country, creating employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas.

The Structures at Risk Fund enables conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts and are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund has an allocation of €1.324 million in 2017 and is supporting 67 projects nationally. It seeks to encourage the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and to help to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually, having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. Grant schemes for 2017 are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website [www.heritage-council.ie](http://www.heritage-council.ie).

My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2017 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care throughout the country.

### **Heritage Sites**

47. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to act on recommendations of the report of the Moore street consultative group. [40527/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Moore Street Consultative Group was set up to bring together all relevant interests after the High Court ruling in March 2016.

The Group reported to me at the end of March 2017 with a set of recommendations for a potential way forward.

The Report has looked carefully at all relevant aspects, including the variety of State, public and private properties and interests on the street and, of course, the Moore St. traders.

The Report signals the potential for a successful outcome to be agreed between the relevant parties, balancing the perspectives of all the key stakeholders. I am fully supportive of this constructive approach and I want to see the work already done being continued so that we can progress to the next stage and see tangible results on the ground.

The primary recommendation of that Report was the establishment of a new Advisory Group to drive towards a resolution. I have established the Advisory Group and under an independent chairman, Dr Tom Collins, it has commenced its work.

The Advisory Group is drawn from among the membership of the former Moore Street Consultative Group. Its task is to engage with all stakeholders and bodies that have a role in bringing the recommendations of the report to fruition. Its objective is to secure an outcome that is acceptable to everyone and that provides an agreed framework for the future of Moore Street. These stakeholders include representatives of the 1916 relatives and the Moore St Traders. There will also be input from statutory bodies including my own Department, Dublin City Council, the Office of Public Works and the National Museum of Ireland.

Moreover, there will be a need for detailed dialogue with the owners of the wider Dublin Central site to explore how and to what extent the Forum's recommendations might be accommodated in the future development of the Moore Street area.

The Advisory Group has met on a number of occasions and I understand that it is planning a symposium of interests and perspectives in October, including a number of invited speakers in the fields of history, urban regeneration and street markets.

### **National Cultural Institutions**

48. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the salary scales of national cultural institutions, for example, the National Gallery, the National Museum, the Natural History Museum and the National Library; if those salaries have been reviewed; the number of posts in each institution that are paid above €75,000 to €100,000 and over €100,000, respectively; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40516/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am advised that employees of our National Cultural Institutions are public servants, and, as such, the salary scales attached to their posts are subject to Government policy on public sector pay. In the case of Director or CEO level posts, approval for the salary attached to each post is sought from my colleague, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

I am further advised that, in summary, salary scales in the National Cultural Institutions are as follows

There are:

- 12 employees on salaries between €70,000 and €75,000;
- 28 employees on salaries between €65,000 and €70,000;

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- 19 employees on salaries between €60,000 and €65,000;
- 23 employees on salaries between €55,000 and €60,000;
- 19 employees on salaries between €50,000 and €55,000;
- 46 employees on salaries between €45,000 and €50,000;
- 50 employees on salaries between €40,000 and €45,000;
- 95 employees on salaries between €35,000 and €40,000;
- 101 employees on salaries between €30,000 and €35,000;
- 105 employees on salaries between €25,000 and €30,000;
- 77 employees on salaries below €25,000.

There are 2 employees in the National Gallery of Ireland, 3 in the National Concert Hall, 4 in the National Library of Ireland, 9 in the National Museum of Ireland, 2 in the Chester Beatty Library and 2 in the Irish Museum of Modern Art on salaries between €75,000 and €100,000.

I am advised that there is 1 employee, in each instance the Director of the Institution concerned, in the National Concert Hall, the National Museum of Ireland and the National Library of Ireland on salaries over €100,000,

### **Forbairt Calaí agus Céanna**

49. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá á dhéanamh le forbairt na gcéibheanna ar Inis Oírr agus ar Inis Meáin; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [40465/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Maidir le forbairt Ché Inis Oírr, níos túisce i mbliana, thug mo Roinn cead do Chomhairle Contae na Gaillimhe na comhairleoirí RPS a cheapadh chun tabhairt faoi dhoiciméad tairisceana a réiteach do shuirbhéanna éagsúla atá riachtanach mar chuid den fhorbairt ar an gcé úd. Ach an próiseas tairisceana sin bheith curtha i gcríoch, roghnófar conraitheoirí chun tabhairt faoi na suirbhéanna sin.

Ag an am céanna, tá iarrtha ag mo Roinn ar Chomhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe tabhairt faoin bpleanáil d'fhorbairt Chéim III de Ché an Chaladh Mhóir.

Mar chuid den phlé idir mo Roinn agus Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe, socraíodh go maoineodh mo Roinn fostú Innealtóir Fheidhmeach shealadach chun déileáil leis an dá fhorbairt. Tuigtear do mo Roinn anois go bhfuil innealtóir aistrithe ag an gComhairle i dtreo na hoibre seo chun dlús a chur leis an obair. Aithníonn mo Roinn gur tionscadail thábhachtacha iad seo do phobal Inis Oírr agus do phobal Inis Meáin agus fanfaidh siad mar thosaíocht agamsa i gcomhthéacs fhorbairtí infreastruchtúir ar na hoileáin.

### **Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga**

50. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé ar intinn aici scéim na gcúntóirí teanga a dheisiú. [40523/17]



**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Bunaíodh Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga i 1999 ar bhonn píolótach chun tacú le hiarrachtaí scoileanna na Gaeltachta le deiseanna breise sealbhaithe agus saibhríthe teanga a chur ar fáil do lucht freastail na scoileanna sin. Ó shin i leith tá infheistíocht shuntasach ar bhonn bliantúil déanta sa scéim. Ag an bpointe ama seo, fostaítear cuntóirí fud fad na Gaeltachta faoi stiúir Muintearas agus Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne.

D'fhógair mé le gairid go bhfuil allúntas iomlán ar fiú €784,442 ceadaithe do Scéim na gCúntóirí Teanga don scoilbhliain reatha 2017/18. As an allúntas iomlán sin, tá €551,813 curtha ar fáil do Mhuintearas Teo agus €232,629 ceadaithe do Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne chun an scéim a riaradh thar ceann na Roinne sna ceantair Ghaeltachta atá faoina gcúram faoi seach.

I gcomhthéacs fhorfheidhmiú an *Pholasaí don Oideachas Gaeltacha 2017-2022* de chuid na Roinne Oideachais, atá á chur i bhfeidhm i gcomhar le páirtithe leasmhara, mo Roinnse san áireamh, agus an phróisis pleanála teanga mar a leagtar amach é faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, tá sé beartaithe athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar scéim na gcúntóirí teanga lena chinntiú go bhfuil sí in oiriúint le tacú leis an bpolasaí agus an próiseas pleanála teanga araon sa tréimhse ama atá le teacht.

Chuir sin, tá obair idir lámha ag mo Roinn faoi láthair chun go dtosóidh an t-athbhreithniú go luath. Beifear ag súil leis go mbreathnófar faoin athbhreithniú seo ar na bealaí a bhféadfaí an scéim a threisiú tuilleadh.

### **Built Heritage Investment Scheme**

51. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress on the built heritage investment scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40727/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The *Built Heritage Investment Scheme* (BHIS), which I launched in 2015, is one of a number of State financial supports that provide for the conservation and preservation of heritage structures.

The scheme is operated via the local authorities. In 2016, the scheme supported over 270 projects across the country, creating over 17,000 days of employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas. The scheme also leveraged aggregate investment of just under €5.5 million, more than double the scheme's allocation of €2 million.

The 2017 *Built Heritage Investment Scheme* (BHIS) was announced in January 2017 with an initial allocation of €2 million. I was delighted to approve an additional €1.5 million for the scheme subsequently, bringing the total allocation for the 2017 scheme to €3.5 million.

Nationwide, more than 500 projects across 31 local authority areas received funding approval in 2017.

The vast majority of these projects are now on site with a number of them already completed. My Department keeps in close contact with all local authorities throughout the year to ensure the smooth running of the scheme and that the best possible use of funding is achieved by reallocating funding in cases where projects are unable to proceed.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is very popular and successful and I expect the full €3.5 million to be expended in 2017, supporting the owners of protected structures, creating

employment in traditional construction and leveraging and encouraging private investment in protecting our heritage buildings.

### **Scéim na mBóithre Áise**

52. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Aindrias Moynihan** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta aici maidir le scéim na mBóithre Áise a athoscailt chun feabhas a chur ar bhóithre sa Ghaeltacht. [40679/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Bhíodh ciste airgid ag mo Roinn faoina ndéantaí oibreacha feabhsúcháin ar bhóithre áirithe Gaeltachta i gcomhar leis na hÚdaráis Áitiúla. Mar gheall ar thosca airgeadais, tá an ciste agus an scéim faoinar ceadaíodh oibreacha den chineál seo ar fionraí anois agus níl beartaithe ag an bpointe ama seo é a athsheoladh.

Tuigfidh an Teachta go bhfuil ciste airgid ag na hÚdaráis Áitiúla chun oibreacha bóthair a dhéanamh, a chuimsíonn na ceantair Ghaeltachta agus neamh-Ghaeltachta araon timpeall na tíre.

### **Local Authority Funding**

53. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the support her Department is providing to local authorities to improve access and increase participation in arts and culture at a local level; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40705/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Funding for the arts at all levels is primarily a matter for the Arts Council. In this regard, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council in Budget 2017. The increase in the Arts Council's allocation in 2017 is €5 million, or 8%, and will assist the Council greatly in implementing its 10-year strategy Making Great Art Work (2016-2025).

Based on this strategy the Arts Council has developed a new approach to funding known as Making Great Art Work Funding Framework 2018-2020. The Arts Council has identified five funding categories that will enable it to deliver on its strategic goals. This includes the provision of funding to support local authorities in delivering arts experiences to people across Ireland

Under Pillar 2 of the Creative Ireland Programme - Enabling creativity in every community- my Department asked local authorities to develop a Culture and Creativity Plan for 2017, reflecting the overall structure and aims of the Creative Ireland Programme. In total over 750 events focussing on the arts, heritage, culture and the Irish language across all local authorities were listed in these plans of which 250 were directly supported by funding provided under the Creative Ireland Programme.

My Department also provides significant capital support for cultural facilities nationwide. So far this year I have announced details of €10.078 million in capital funding to a total of 122 arts organisations under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. This scheme is the most significant investment in arts and cultural centres in a decade and will target investment at a range of different facilities.

Details of the projects supported are available on my Department's website at [www.chg.gov.ie](http://www.chg.gov.ie)

## **Creative Ireland Programme**

54. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the role her Department played in the design of the artist's social welfare pilot scheme; if artists were involved in the design of the scheme; if concerns have been raised with her regarding the provision whereby artists must prove that they are genuinely seeking other work, taking part in courses or classes such as CV preparation, job searching or referral to Jobpath, Tús and jobs clubs, for example, particularly in view of the well documented lack of conventional jobs in the creative field; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40532/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The initiative, which is a key commitment under the Creative Ireland Programme, aims to assist self-employed artists who apply to the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection for Jobseekers Allowance. The pilot initiative, which will be reviewed after one year, applies to visual artists and writers. Design of the initiative involved extensive work between my own Department, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Arts Council, as well as consultation with artists' representative organisations; in this case Visual Artist Ireland and the Irish Writers Centre.

Under the new mechanism, the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will provide for the classification of self-employed professional artists in consultation with representative artists organisations such as the Visual Arts Ireland and the Irish Writers Centre.

This new mechanism allows artists to be classified as self-employed for the purposes of accessing social welfare supports. The normal checks and balances will apply to ensure the initiative is not open to abuse, but my hope is that this will make it much easier for professional artists to access social welfare supports when they need them.

Confirmation of self-employed artist status must be obtained from the Visual Arts Ireland or the Irish Writers Centre. Such artists would not be subject to the activation process for 12 months. The other conditions associated with jobseeker's allowance will continue to apply, as they do for all other claimants.

## **Commemorative Events**

55. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the progress she has made in fixing the date of the national famine memorial day; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40517/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** This year's National Famine Commemoration will take place on Saturday 30 September next at the Ballingarry Warehouse 1848 in County Tipperary. The National Famine Commemoration Day Bill, which inter alia proposes the establishment of a fixed date for the annual commemoration, passed Second Stage earlier this year. I understand that a date will be fixed for the scheduling of the Committee Stage of this Private Members Bill in the coming weeks.

## **Arts and Culture Capital Scheme**

56. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her attention has been drawn to the lack of artist run studio space and the fact that Ireland lags far behind other European countries in this regard. [40726/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am aware of the issue regarding the provision of affordable studio space, particularly as a result of the changing property market. My Department has had discussions with the Arts Council, Dublin City Council and the OPW to consider some possible short-term and longer-term approaches to the issue, both in relation to specific issues in Dublin and to wider national approaches.

So far this year I have announced funding of over €10 million under my Department's Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 to a total of 122 arts organisations around the country in 2017. This allocation included over €900,000 in funding for projects involving artist's studios and creative spaces.

In addition, as part of the Government's initiative on the North East Inner City, I awarded a grant of €35,000 last year to Fire Station Artists' Studios, Buckingham Street, to assist in providing additional studio space in conjunction with Dublin City Council.

The list of successful projects under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is available on my Department's website.

I will continue to keep the issue of artists studios space under review in the context of my Department's approach to capital expenditure.

### **Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla**

57. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta maidir le hAcht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla agus leis an dréachtbhille atá beartaithe, cén dáta a fhoilseofar an bille nua; cé na céimeanna atá riachtanach chun an bille a chur os comhair Chomhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus na nOileán; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [40680/17]

76. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén fáth a bhfuil moill mhór ar fhorbairt Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla. [40524/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimhir 57 agus 76 le chéile.

Foilsíodh Ceannteidil Bhille na dTeangacha Oifigiúla (Leasú) 2017 níos túisce i mbliana.

Faoi láthair, tá mo Roinn ag obair i gcomhréir le hOifig an Ard-Aighne chun an Bille a dhréachtú. Ag an am céanna agus, ó foilsíodh na Ceannteidil, táthar i mbun comhairliúcháin leis na Ranna Stáit ábhartha, eagrais Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta, An Coimisinéir Teanga agus páirtithe leasmhara eile le cinntiú go mbeidh an Bille is fear agus is éifeachtaí agam le tabhairt os comhair an Oireachtais. Tá na ceannteidil curtha faoi bhráid Comhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus na nOileán agus An Comhchoiste um Ealaíona, Oidhreachta, Gnóthaí Réigiúnacha, Tuaithe agus Gaeltachta chun scrúdú réamhrechtach a dhéanamh air chomh maith.

Táthar ag súil go mbeidh an Bille réidh le foilsiú sa chéad ráithe de 2018.

### **An Teanga Gaeilge**

58. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Catherine Connolly** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta maidir le Pleananna Teanga; go háirithe, cé mhéad plean atá faofa ag an Aire agus cé mhéad plean atá os comhair Údarás na Gaeltachta faoi láthair agus cén uair a chuirfear os comhair an Aire iad; agus an ndéanfaidh sí ráiteas ina thaobh. [40681/17]

68. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den Aire Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an gcuirfidh sí níos mó airgid ar fáil chun na pleananna teanga atá ullmhaithe ag na Comharchumainn sna Limistéir Pleanála Teanga Ghaeltachta a chur i bhfeidhm. [40522/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Tógfaidh mé Ceisteanna Uimhir 58 agus 68 le chéile.

Den 26 limistéar pleanála teanga Gaeltachta atá aitheanta faoin bproiseas pleanála teanga mar a leagtar amach é faoi Acht na Gaeltachta 2012, tá an próiseas tosaithe i ngach aon cheann díobh anois.

Tá pleananna teanga i leith: Gaoth Dobhair, Rann na Feirste, Anagaire & Loch an Iúir; Cois Fharraige; agus Cloich Chionnaola, Gort an Choirce, An Fál Carrach agus Machaire Rabhairtaigh ceadaithe le gairid - rud a fhágann go mbeifear ag tosú le feidhmiú pleananna sna ceantair sin go luath.

Tá pleananna teanga i leith na limistéar: Ciarraí Thiar; Ciarraí Theas; Na Déise; An Cheathrú Rua agus Múscraí á mbreithniú ag Údarás na Gaeltachta faoi láthair i gcomhar leis na ceanneagraíochtaí pleanála teanga ábhartha, i dtreo a bheith in ann iad a chur faoi bhráid mo Roinne chun críche faofa go luath.

Cé is móite den trí limistéar pleanála teanga atá suite in oirthear Ghaeltacht na Gaillimhe atá i mbun eagraíochtaí a roghnú go háitiúil faoin bproiseas faoi láthair (eadhon: Bearna agus Cnoc na Cathrach: an tEachréidh agus Oirthear na Gaillimhe) tá obair i ngach limistéar eile faoi láthair mar a bhaineann sé le ullmhúchán pleananna.

Maidir leis na Bailte Seirbhíse Gaeltachta, tá obair idir lámha cheana féin chun plean teanga a ullmhú faoin bproiseas i leith na mbailte: Daingean Uí Chúis, Leitir Ceanainn, Cathair na Gaillimhe agus Cathair Chorcaí. Táthar ag súil leis go mbeidh an próiseas tosaithe sna bailte: Béal an Mhuirthead, An Clochán Liath, Trá Lí agus Dún Garbhán idir seo agus deireadh na bliana

Ina theannta sin, tá obair idir lámha chun pleananna teanga a ullmhú i leith na líonraí Gaeilge: Baile Loch Riach, Co. na Gaillimhe; Inis, Co. an Chláir agus Cluain Dolcáin, Baile Átha Cliath.

Chun cabhrú le feidhmiú an phróisis, tá allúntas ar fiú €850,000 in iomlán é curtha ar fáil ag mo Roinn i mbliana. Den allúntas sin tá suim €735,000 curtha ar fail d'Údarás na Gaeltachta agus an fuilleach €115,000 curtha ar fáil d'Fhoras na Gaeilge.

Bainfear leas as an allúntas seo chun cabhrú le ceanneagraíochtaí pleanála teanga a gcuid pleananna a ullmhú. Chomh maith leis sin bainfear úsáid as chun tús a chur le feidhmiú pleananna aontaithe. Mar chuid den socrú beidh sé curtha ar chumas na limistéir faoi leith oifigeach pleanála teanga a fhostú go háitiúil chun cabhrú le feidhmiú a bpleananna, uair amháin go mbeidh sé faofa faoin Acht.

Fearacht gach réimse eile caiteachas poiblí beidh gá do gach páirtí leasmhar a bhfuil baint acu le hullmhú agus le feidhmiú pleananna faoin bproiseas in am trátha a gcuid tosaíochtaí a aithint laistigh den chistíocht atá agus a bheidh curtha ar fáil. Comhthreomhar leis an gciste pleanála teanga ar ndóigh cuimhnimis go mbeidh an infheistíocht shuntasach leanúnach atá á cur ar fáil ón státchiste ar leas na Gaeilge á cur chun fónaimh chomh maith ar mhaithe le tacú

le feidhmiú an phróisis pleanála teanga trí chéile.

Is féidir leis an Teach a bheith cinnte de go leanfaidh mé orm mar Aire Stáit a bhfuil leas na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta faoi mo chúram chun an cion is fear is féidir a fháil ón státhiste ar son an phróisis agus an rud atá ag a chroílár - an Ghaeilge.

Tá tuilleadh sonraí maidir leis an bproiséas trí chéile agus na tacaíochtaí praiticiúla eile atá á gcur ar fáil chun cabhrú leis ar fáil ar shuíomh na Roinne.

### **Animal Welfare**

59. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if the National Parks and Wildlife Service is using Larsen traps, which have been banned in many EU countries and banned here under the Wildlife Act 1976. [40694/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** A significant number of native Irish breeding birds, particularly ground-nesting birds, are of priority conservation concern due to steep declines in their breeding population. This includes the Curlew, which has declined by 97% in Ireland since the late 1980s and needs substantial effort if it is to be saved from extinction as a breeding species here. Research has shown that one of the key reasons for the declines of Curlew and other ground-nesting birds is excessive predation rates, including by members of the crow family, in particular Grey Crows and Magpies. It is estimated that there are more than half a million of both species in Ireland, and that their population is artificially high. They are both difficult species to control effectively.

Magpies and Grey Crows are controlled, in a managed and localised way, by professional operatives on contract to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to help rare and threatened species rear their young. Larsen traps are used as part of this effort.

The use of Larsen traps is permitted in Ireland subject to compliance with the Wildlife Acts (Approved Traps, Snares and Nets) Regulations 2003, and Section 35(5) of the Wildlife Acts.

The Wild Bird Declarations which I signed in April of this year and which run to May of 2018 makes it lawful to hunt Grey Crows and Magpies with cage traps (including Larsen traps) once the conditions set out in the declarations are met during the periods and for the reasons set out in the declarations.

### **Arts Promotion**

60. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the assistance her Department is providing to rural counties such as Sligo and Leitrim in order to increase participation in arts and culture; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40716/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Funding for the arts at all levels is primarily a matter for the Arts Council. I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council in Budget 2017. The increase in the Arts Council’s allocation in 2017 is €5 million, or 8%, and will assist the Council greatly in implementing its 10-year strategy Making Great Art Work (2016-2025) across the country.

The Creative Ireland Programme – Clár Éire Ildánach 2017 – 2022 was launched on the 8 December 2016. Funding of €5m for the implementation of the programme was provided in

Budget 2017.

This is a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national well-being. This will focus on boosting cultural provision and participation in communities and harnessing the goodwill and engagement generated by the 2016 commemorative programme.

The programme is based on five pillars:

- Enabling the creative potential of every child
- Enabling creativity in every community
- Investing in our creative and cultural infrastructure
- Establishing Ireland as a centre of excellence in media production
- Unifying our global reputation

Under the 2nd Pillar Enabling creativity in every community- each local authority, with the support of my Department, has now established a Culture Team bringing together arts officers, librarians, heritage officers, museum curators, archivists and other relevant personnel led by a Director of Services, with a nominated person as 'Creative Ireland Co-ordinator'.

In terms of capital investment, in February this year I announced details of more than €9 million in funding for existing dedicated arts and culture centres across the country. The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is the most significant investment in arts and cultural centres in a decade and will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces. Under Streams 1 & 2 of this scheme the Hawk's Well Theatre, Sligo was awarded funding of €550,000. The Dock, in partnership with Leitrim County Council, was awarded funding of over €178,000 and North Leitrim Glens were awarded €50,000 .

In August I announced further capital funding of almost €750,000 for more than 60 arts organisations around the country under Stream 3 of the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme. This scheme is geared towards providing capital grants of up to €20,000 to not-for-profit organisations with a defined arts and cultural remit. Under this stream Anaglyph Ltd (Leitrim Sculpture Centre) in Leitrim was awarded €20,000, while the Michael Coleman Heritage Centre CCE and Teach Morrison Outreach Centre CCE, both in Sligo, were awarded €20,000 and €7,550 respectively.

A full list of successful projects under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 (Streams 1, 2 & 3) is available on the Department's website at: <http://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/grants-and-funding/>

### **Arts Funding**

61. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to hold a further round of the arts and culture capital scheme in 2018 to support local arts centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40715/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In February this year I announced details of more than €9 million in capital funding for existing dedicated arts and culture centres across the country under Stream 1 and 2 of the Arts and

Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. This is the most significant investment in arts and cultural centres in a decade and is targeting investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces.

In August I announced further capital funding of almost €750,000 for 60 arts organisations around the country under Stream 3 of the Scheme for minor capital improvements and equipment upgrades.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is flexible to ensure that a diverse number of arts organisations can benefit. As a result of the latest round of funding, more than 120 organisations in total have benefitted from all 3 Streams of the Scheme.

As part of the Creative Ireland Programme, I want to enable creativity in every community. In that regard, this investment is an important way of supporting the arts in the regions and ensuring that people right across the country can access quality cultural facilities.

A full list of all successful projects under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is available on my Department's website at:

<http://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/grants-and-funding/>

I hope to run a further round of the scheme in the future, subject to available resources.

### **Heritage Sites**

**62. Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which she and her Department continue to support, maintain, preserve and promote heritage sites throughout the country with particular reference to the need to ensure that nothing is lost that can be preserved for future generations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40723/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the role of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

Financial support is provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes for the conservation and protection of heritage buildings. These schemes are administered via the local authorities and include the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Structures at Risk Fund.

Under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, my Department has established and maintains the Record of Monuments and Places, which affords legal protection to over 120,000 recorded archaeological sites and monuments in the State. Anyone proposing works to a monument that is included in the Record of Monument and Places must give my Department two months prior notice before works can start.



As Minister, I am the owner or guardian under the National Monuments Acts of approximately 1,000 national monuments located at approximately 750 sites and in such cases there is a statutory duty to maintain the national monument. Such maintenance is undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW). Local authorities are responsible under the National Monuments Acts for maintaining the national monuments of which they are owners or guardians.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department manages an extensive conservation and recreational property portfolio of some 79,000 hectares. Our 6 National Parks account for circa 60,000 hectares with another almost 20,000 hectares of nature reserves and other heritage sites.

While the existing National Parks are managed from a conservation perspective, it is also recognised that they are ‘core assets’ which play a very important role in Ireland’s tourism industry. As part of my Department’s continuing commitment and contribution to improving our tourism product, we have been exploring ways to optimise the sustainable tourism potential of heritage sites under our control in a way that is compatible with conservation objectives.

In this context, it should be noted that in late 2016 my Department negotiated the extension of Wicklow Mountains National Park by purchasing almost 4,900 acres of Dublin Uplands at Glenasmole at a cost of €800,000. The purchase underpins the Government’s on-going commitment to the preservation of our natural heritage for future generations of citizens and visitors alike to enjoy. In addition, my Department, in conjunction with Fáilte Ireland, launched a strategic investment partnership earlier this year with the aim of developing tourism projects and improving visitor experience at our National Parks.

### **Creative Ireland Programme**

63. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the actions she will take in the coming year to increase children’s access to music, art and drama; and the funding she will dedicate to same. [40728/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The *Creative Ireland Programme*, which I launched in December 2016, places a special focus on “Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child”. Building on the Arts in Education Charter, this will involve the development of an integrated plan – *Creative Children* – to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding by 2022. My Department officials continue to work with relevant Departments and other stakeholders to develop this plan. The plan will be a primary driver of actions in this area in 2018.

I am pleased to say that continuing professional development through teacher - artist partnerships is ongoing and in July 2017 there was a significant increase in the number of courses taking place across twenty one Education Centres throughout the country.

In addition, the Arts Council commissioned report *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People: Insights from the Growing Up in Ireland Study*, which was published in September 2016, concluded that arts and cultural participation leads to a range of positive outcomes for children, both in terms of their cognitive development and their well-being. This study found that schools are important arenas for access to arts/culture and school emphasis on culture has a positive impact on student engagement in these activities.

This year the Arts Council increased funding in this area from €3.1m in 2016 to €3.7m in 2017 on foot of the significant increase of support of €5m which I secured for the Arts Council as part of Budget 2017. I also provided an additional €70,000 to the Arts Council to assist in

the expansion of the Teacher Artist Partnership this year.

In terms of next steps, my Department is working closely with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Youth and Children Affairs and the Arts Council in preparing the *Creative Children* plan to deliver the objectives of Pillar 1 of the Creative Ireland Programme. This plan will be launched later in the year.

### Arts and Culture Capital Scheme Applications

64. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when she expects to announce successful applicants under stream 3 of the arts and culture capital scheme which is targeted at small voluntary arts centres; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40529/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Stream 3 of the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is geared towards providing capital grants of up to €20,000 to not-for-profit organisations with a defined arts and cultural remit. I opened this scheme for applications in May 2017 with a closing date was 16 June 2017.

Grants under this scheme will make a significant difference to individual arts and culture organisations which include small arts centres, theatres, galleries, museums, heritage centres, archives as well as artist studios and creative and performance spaces.

I am happy to inform the Deputy that on 4 August this year I announced funding for 60 projects under the scheme. Funding of more than €745,000 will be made available to these projects over the coming year. A wide variety of projects will benefit including IT related projects, new lighting and sound systems, seating, staging and storage and the improvement of digital facilities.

In addition to this funding which I announced last month, I also provided funding of over €9 million under Stream 1 and 2 of the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme earlier this year. This is benefitting a further 62 organisations. This investment is an important way of supporting the arts in the regions and ensuring that people right across the country can access quality cultural facilities.

Details of all grants are available on my Department's website

### Commemorative Events

65. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a new commemorations committee will be set up; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40525/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am committed to re-establishing the Oireachtas All Party Consultation Committee on Commemorations. I have written to the Ceann Comhairle to arrange for the nomination of members and also to the Leader of the SDLP to invite representation from that party to the committee. I expect that the practical arrangements to reconstitute the group will be completed shortly.

In the period leading up to the 1916 centenary commemorations, the All Party Consultation Committee on commemorations was instrumental in promoting an open, consensus-based and honest approach, which allowed all narratives to be heard and ensured that the State reflected

appropriately on all of the major historical events as they unfolded. The work of the Committee complemented the work of the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations which also advised the Government on its approach based on the authentic history of the period.

The Government will continue to mark significant events throughout the second half of the Decade of Centenaries. I believe that both the All Party Committee and the Expert Advisory Group have a significant contribution to make in relation to the second half of the Decade of Centenaries and I am looking forward to continued positive engagement and consultation with both groups over the coming period.

### **Regional Airports**

66. **Deputy Eamon Ryan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to develop the runway on Inishbofin; and her further plans in respect of the use of both the Inishbofin and Cleggan runway. [40713/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** Earlier this year, my Department undertook a public consultation process whereby it sought submissions from interested parties in relation to the future use of airstrips and surrounding sites in the ownership of the Department on Inishbofin and at Cleggan, County Galway. A large number of submissions were received and these are currently being reviewed by my Department. The submissions received will inform my Department in its deliberations about the future of the facilities.

### **Creative Ireland Programme**

67. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the Creative Ireland Programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40528/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** On 8 December 2016, the Creative Ireland Programme was launched as the Government's Legacy Programme arising out of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and as the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a high level, high ambition, 5-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022 (building up to the centenary of the foundation of the State) which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. The programme is being led by my Department in partnership with other Government Departments and Agencies, local authorities, the third level sector, arts and culture organisations (including the National Cultural Institutions) and relevant NGOs. The launch document for the programme identified ten actions for 2017, under five specific pillars:

- Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child
- Enabling Creativity in Every Community
- Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure
- Ireland as a centre of Excellence in Media Production
- Unifying our Global reputation

There has been significant progress in relation to the delivery of the ten actions identified for 2017 as follows:

1. a national plan to enable every child in Ireland to access tuition in music, drama, art and coding.

My Department is in the process of drawing up a five year plan for the period 2018 to 2022 in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Arts Council. This will be launched later this year.

2. A Culture and Creativity plan in every county

Each of the 31 local authorities has produced a 2017 Creative Ireland Plan and is in the process of drawing up a more detailed 2018 Creative Plan setting out a five year plan for local creativity.

3. A Culture Team, Director-led, configured to local needs in each county.

Culture teams based on local needs have been established in all 31 local authorities.

4. Cruinniú na Casca programme

The first Cruinniú na Cásca - Ireland's new national culture day - was launched on Easter Monday with the theme "Inclusion and Diversity". Consideration is now being given for approach to the Cruinniú in 2018.

5. The Departments of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Social Protection will work together to devise a mechanism to assist self-employed artists who have applied for Jobseekers allowance

A pilot scheme in relation to this measure was launched in May by both Departments.

**6. A plan for the development of each National Cultural Institution to 2022**

These plans are currently being finalised.

**7. A five year capital investment programme for the culture and heritage sector .**

Work is progressing on the preparation of this plan.

8. An industry wide, long term plan, for Ireland as a global hub for the production of Film, TV Drama, and Animation.

Work is progressing on the preparation of this plan in the context of an economic study of the industry commissioned by my Department, the Irish Film Board, the Department of Communications, Environment and Climate Action and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Employment.

9. A unified international identity and communications programme for Ireland .

This programme is underway. On 17th March the then Taoiseach launched a new portal website for Ireland - Ireland.ie - which has since been liked/viewed/shared more than 2m times around the world.

10. A new Creative Ireland Forum conference to showcase the best national and international thinking will have taken place.

This forum is planned to take place in December

My Department, together with its other partners, is now in the process of drawing up plans for 2018 and beyond in respect of the five pillars of the programme

*Question No. 68 answered with Question No. 58.*

### **Departmental Funding**

69. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on whether the State investment in a centre (details supplied) is value for money. [40521/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** In February 2016, my Department approved a grant to the local authority in question towards the cost of construction of the project referred to by the Deputy, subject to the standard conditions that apply to all such capital grants.

I understand that the options for developing the proposed project are now under review. My Department is liaising with the local authority on the matter and will consider any new proposals which may emerge from the review, when submitted by the local authority.

The onus to ensure compliance with the Public Spending Code, published by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform falls in the first instance on the project sponsor, which in this case is the local authority concerned. My Department will be satisfying itself that the project is in compliance with the relevant requirements of the Code before releasing any funding to the local authority in question.

### **Animal Welfare**

70. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the capacity in which NPWS officers are using Larsen traps; the time of year in which they are being used; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40526/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I replied to a similar question from the Deputy last week, which provided a substantive answer to the issues raised in relation to the regulated use of Larsen traps as part of my Department's work to protect rare and threatened ground nesting birds from predator species such as the Grey Crow.

A number of native Irish breeding birds, particularly ground-nesting birds, are of priority conservation concern due to steep declines in their breeding population. This includes the Curlew, which has declined by 97% in Ireland since the late 1980s and needs substantial effort if it is to be saved from extinction as a breeding species here. One of the main reasons for the declines of Curlew and other ground-nesting birds is excessive predation rates, including by members of the crow family, in particular Grey Crows and Magpies. It is estimated that there are more than half a million of both species in Ireland, and that their population is artificially high.

As part of the conservation work carried out by my Department's National Parks and Wildlife Service, Magpies and Grey Crows are legally and humanely controlled, in a managed and localised way, to help protect rare and threatened species and to help them to rear their young. Larsen traps are used as part of this effort for Curlew, Red-throated Diver, Red Grouse, Lapwing, Redshank, Snipe, Corncrake and other species where predation is judged to be a signifi-

cant factor in their decline. Traps can be used throughout the year, as appropriate, in response to threats to vulnerable ground-nesting species.

The use of Larsen Traps complies with the provisions of the Wildlife Act 1976 (Approved Traps, Snares and Nets) Regulations 2003 (SI No. 620/2003).

### Arts Council Funding

71. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department will support the Arts Council to move to a longer term funding model for smaller arts organisations as recently discussed in the media. [40729/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I understand that the Deputy may be referring to the new funding framework (*Making Great Art Work Funding Framework*) as recently announced by the Arts Council. The Arts Council is statutorily independent in relation to its funding and executive decisions.

The strategic context for the Arts Council's support of arts participation and all other art-forms and areas of arts practice is set out in *Making Great Art Work: Arts Council Strategy (2016 –2025)*. A key commitment in the Council's Three-Year Plan 2017–2019 was to review its funding programmes, schemes and initiatives under its *Making Great Art Work* priorities. Such a review would assist the Council in how it invests in art and arts practice in a more effective way. It would also help streamline the supports available to artists and to arts organisations, and simplify and clarify the application, assessment and decision-making processes operated by the Council. The *Making Great Art Work Funding Framework* was the outcome of this review. Further details of the funding framework can be accessed on the Arts Council's website.

I will continue to support the Arts Council, as set out in the Programme for a Partnership Government, which contained a commitment to work to progressively increase funding to the arts, including the Arts Council and the Irish Film Board, as the economy continues to improve. To this effect in Budget 2017, I secured significant additional funding for the Arts Council. The increase in the Arts Council's allocation in 2017 is €5 million, or 8%. This will assist the Council greatly in implementing its 10-year strategy *Making Great Art Work (2016-2025)* including under its new funding framework .

### Recreational Facilities Provision

72. **Deputy Tony McLoughlin** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her views on the way in which Waterways Ireland can support recreational opportunities in rural counties through the development of blueways and greenways; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40717/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Waterways Ireland is responsible for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of 1,000 km of the inland navigable waterway system throughout the island, principally for recreational purposes. This is a significant recreational resource and Waterways Ireland has been proactive in the development of Blueways and Greenways as a means to attract new visitors and in response to the growth for recreational activities such as walking, canoeing and cycling.

Waterways Ireland with partners in Monaghan County Council, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and East Border Region Ltd. are currently in the development

phase of constructing a 22km greenway between Smithborough in Co. Monaghan and Middletown in Co. Armagh along the route of the Ulster Canal. The project is funded by the INTER-REG VA programme and will be one of the first cross-border Greenways in Ireland.

Blueways have been successfully in operation on the Shannon since October 2014 linking Drumshanbo with Carrick-on-Shannon. Waterways Ireland recently opened an iconic Blueways Boardwalk on Acres Lake at Drumshanbo which is already attracting large volumes of users. The Shannon-Erne Blueway was opened in May 2016 linking Leitrim Village with Belturbet, Co Cavan, providing 70km of paddling journeys, 25km of walking trails and 8 km of cycling. Waterways Ireland, in conjunction with Local Authorities and other partners, are continuing to extend the Blueways offering on the Shannon and Shannon-Erne.

On the Barrow navigation, Waterways Ireland have submitted planning proposals to upgrade the Barrow towpath. This will provide a 112km trail from Lowtown in Co. Kildare to St Mullins in Co Carlow.

Work on developing the Royal Canal towpath as a walking and cycling destination is expected to be completed by December 2018 when the 145km route can be marketed as one of the largest Greenways/Blueways in Europe.

On the Grand Canal 21km of towpath has been upgraded with a further 110km yet to be completed. Waterways Ireland are again working with Local Authorities, Leader Groups, the National Transport Authority and the National Trails Office to ensure planning and funding are progressed to upgrade all of the Grand Canal towpath.

Clearly, the development of greenways and blueways presents valuable opportunities for rural communities to attract more visitors. Their value lies not only in the recreational opportunities that they offer but also in their potential to stimulate local businesses and regenerate local areas. Greenways and blueways also provide an effective model for partnership between the private, community and voluntary sectors and relevant State bodies.

### **Creative Ireland Programme**

73. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the status of the process to instate a new director of Creative Ireland; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40725/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I intend to fill the position of Director of the Creative Ireland programme through an open competition, managed by the Public Appointments Service (PAS). I am advised that applications for the position will be sought shortly.

### **Hare Coursing Regulation**

74. **Deputy Mick Barry** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will report on the issuing of hare coursing licences for the coming season. [40719/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The control of live hare coursing, including the operation of individual coursing meetings and managing the use of hares for that activity, is carried out under the Greyhound Industry Act 1958, which is the responsibility of my colleague, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine. My responsibility relates to the conservation status of the hare.

Last month, my Department issued licences under the Wildlife Acts to the Irish Coursing Club, covering some 87 affiliated coursing clubs, to capture and tag hares for use at regulated hare coursing meetings for the 2017/18 season, which extends from the end of September 2017 to the end of February 2018.

There are a total of 22 conditions which are associated with the licences issued to the Irish Coursing Club which have been developed and refined over the year. These conditions cover such items as not coursing hares more than once a day, not coursing sick or injured hares and releasing hares in daylight hours after meetings.

Hare coursing meetings are monitored, as resources allow, by conservation rangers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department in order to ensure compliance with the conditions of the licences.

### **Heritage Sites**

75. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will withdraw from the appeal to the High Court Moore street decision to allow the development of the Moore Street battle field site into a high quality historic and heritage area. [40520/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The decision to appeal the High Court decision was taken by Government. As the High Court judgments give rise to much wider concerns for my own Department about the administration of the National Monuments Acts and for other Departments and official bodies in relation to public and social infrastructure provision, the orders of the High Court in all three sets of proceedings have been appealed. The appeals have been lodged on the advice of those other Departments and bodies and in accordance with clear and unambiguous advice from the Attorney General. The High Court proceedings in no way interfere with the ability of the Moore Street Advisory Group to work towards a consensus-based plan for the future of the site and its surrounding area.

The appeals are being processed through the Courts and, as such, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the matter at this juncture.

*Question No. 76 answered with Question No. 57.*

### **Departmental Funding**

77. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding available from her Department to local heritage groups to support the conservation of protected structures and buildings; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40714/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built heritage, is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the roles of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

Financial support is delivered by my Department for the protection of heritage buildings under structured schemes which are administered via the local authorities.

The Built Heritage Investment Scheme is a scheme for the repair and conservation of protected structures (i.e. structures on the local authority Record of Protected Structures). This



year the allocation is €3.5 million and the scheme is supporting in the region of 500 projects across the country, creating employment in the conservation and construction industries, while helping to regenerate urban and rural areas.

The Structures at Risk Fund enables conservation works to heritage structures, in both private and public ownership, which are protected under the Planning and Development Acts and are deemed to be at significant risk of deterioration. This fund has an allocation of €1.324 million in 2017 and is supporting 67 projects nationally. It seeks to encourage the regeneration and reuse of heritage properties and to help to secure the preservation of protected structures which might otherwise be lost.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually, having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. Grant schemes for 2017 are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website [www.heritage-council.ie](http://www.heritage-council.ie).

My Department is also providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2017 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care throughout the country.

### **Commemorative Events**

78. **Deputy Seán Haughey** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the commemorations that are planned or being co-ordinated in her Department for 2018; and her plans to commemorate the Good Friday Agreement's 20th anniversary. [40541/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government will continue to mark significant events throughout the Decade of Centenaries based on the inclusive, open and consultative approach that has become the hallmark of the Decade of Centenaries commemorative programme. The Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations will continue to advise and support the Government in its plans.

A number of significant historical events took place in 1918, which will be marked by the State next year, including but not limited to:

- The death of John Redmond on 6 March 1918;
- The great loss of life which resulted from the sinking of the RMS Leinster on 10 October 1918;
- The ending of World War I; and
- The outbreak of the Spanish Flu pandemic

Next year, the State will also mark the centenary of the introduction of universal suffrage, when, for the first time, women were allowed to vote in the General Election of 1918. 2018 also marks 100 years of women in Irish political life and Sinéad McCool, who previously curated the Women of 1916 Exhibition, is working with my Department to develop a special exhibition to mark this occasion.

I can advise the Deputy that appropriate plans to mark the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement will be developed, in consultation with my Government colleagues, key officials and the Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

79. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Taoiseach the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; and the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred. [40806/17]

**The Taoiseach:** On 14 June 2017 the Government appointed Deputy Joe McHugh as Government Chief Whip and Minister of State at my Department and at the Department of Culture, Heritage, and the Gaeltacht with special responsibility for Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and the Islands, and Deputy Paul Kehoe as Minister of State at my Department and at the Department of Defence with special responsibility for Defence.

On 20 June the Government appointed Deputy Pat Breen as Minister of State at my Department and at the Departments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Trade, Employment, Business, the EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection, Deputy Helen McEntee as Minister of State at my Department and at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with special responsibility for European Affairs.

At my request, on 5 July, the Government made an Order delegating my statutory functions in relation to the Central Statistics Office under the Statistics Act 1993, the Civil Service Regulation Acts 1956 to 2005 and the Public Service Management (Recruitment and Appointments) Act 2004 to the Government Chief Whip, Deputy McHugh.

### **Commissions of Investigation**

80. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Taoiseach the timeframe for the publication of the interim report into the Commission of Investigation on the National Asset Management Agency, under section 38(1) of the Commission of Investigation Act 2004. [40852/17]

**The Taoiseach:** As required by its terms of reference, the Commission provided me with an interim report on 12 September i.e. within three months of the date of its establishment on 13 June. The report was published on my Department's website on 21 September, following consultation with the Attorney General and the Sole Member of the Commission.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

81. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the number of Ministers of State attached to her Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by her and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40792/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** On 20 June, the Taoiseach appointed Mr. John Halligan T.D. and Mr. Pat Breen T.D. as Ministers of State with responsibility for policy areas under the remit of my Department.

On 26 July, the Government made orders for the delegation of Ministerial functions to Ministers Halligan and Breen at my request.

Minister Halligan has been delegated responsibility for Innovation, Research and Development (IRD), and will oversee implementation of the Government's national strategy in this area, Innovation 2020. He has been given responsibility for the delivery of IRD programmes across the agencies of my Department and the development of a successor to the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions. He has also been delegated responsibility for sectoral research initiatives that my Department is involved in, Ireland's engagement with the EU's Framework Programme for Innovation and Research, Horizon 2020, and maintaining an Intellectual Property framework aimed at promoting and rewarding creativity, supporting innovative activity and improving the business environment.

Minister Breen has been assigned responsibility for Industrial Relations legislation, the industrial relations machinery of the State and for ensuring a renewed focus on Occupational Health and Safety matters and on Chemical Policy matters. He has also been delegated responsibility for the Digital Single Economy, Ireland's engagement with the International Labour Organisation and for a range of issues of relevance to business and Small and Medium Enterprises, including leading efforts to reduce the administrative burden on business.

### **IDA Ireland Offices**

82. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation if she has given consideration to reopening the IDA offices in Taipei to expand Ireland's trade and investment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40845/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** IDA Ireland's offices in Asia Pacific include:

- Korea
- Japan
- China
- India

The Agency and I are fully committed to exploring all opportunities to increase investment in Ireland by Asian companies. This month I am leading a joint IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland trade and investment mission to Singapore and Japan, where I will focus on deepening our relationship with existing IDA Ireland clients in the region to secure further investment and jobs for Ireland. A key objective of this mission is also to present Ireland as a post-Brexit solution for Asian companies.

While the Agency does not have a physical office in Taiwan, it does have a presence in the region, with all foreign direct investment activity currently being handled from the IDA's ASEAN office in Singapore."

83. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation the steps she and Enterprise Ireland will take to promote Irish business in Taiwan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40875/17]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Business, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** In January 2017 Enterprise Ireland published its strategy for the period 2017-2020. The strategy was developed in the context of Brexit and focuses on supporting clients to both Build Scale and Expand Reach. Enterprise Ireland's strategy seeks to inspire and drive Irish enterprise to 'Build Scale, Expand Reach' and has ambitious targets. Despite economic and market uncertainties, Enterprise Ireland's strategic aims are to:

- Assist clients to create 60,000 new jobs by 2020 and to sustain the existing record level of jobs

- Grow annual exports by €5bn to €26bn per annum

- Increase the level of spend in the Irish economy by €4bn to €27bn per annum by 2020.

Enterprise Ireland will deliver on its ambitious targets by:

- **Innovation:** Driving innovation in Irish enterprise to unprecedented levels through new

- supports to reach the target of €1.25bn in R&D expenditure per annum by 2020.

- **Competitiveness:** Improving the competitiveness of Irish companies through Enterprise Ireland's Lean programmes and new client engagement model, which will provide targeted supports based on agreed milestones.

- **Diversification:** Increasing the diversification of Enterprise Ireland's client company exports into new markets, with two-thirds of exports going beyond the UK. This includes a major focus on the Eurozone where Enterprise Ireland are targeting a 50 per cent increase in exports.

- **Ambition:** Inspiring more companies to have global ambition.

Marketplace services for Irish companies targeting Taiwan are provided through Enterprise Ireland's office in Hong Kong and locally in Taipei via a consultancy arrangement, which is managed by the Enterprise Ireland Hong Kong Manager.

Enterprise Ireland has adopted a sectoral approach to the "Greater" China market. Enterprise Ireland works in close co-operation with the Embassy Network and colleagues from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and other state agencies in China.

The Enterprise Ireland Team is working proactively on key sectors across the region where there is a good fit between the market opportunity and the clusters of "market ready" clients in Ireland. Such sectors include:

- Education Services

- Financial Services

- Software and Services

- Telecoms/Mobile Comms

- Semi Conductor Chip Design

Taiwan, accounted for €15.2m of total Enterprise Ireland client exports in 2016 – 1.6% of

total client exports to “Greater China”. This is almost evenly split Food and non-Food exports.

The Enterprise Ireland strategy is to service the market based on client demand via a well connected consultant (“pathfinder”) based in Taipei. This consultant will also interface as and when necessary with the Government, and the local trade and representative organisations – including the EU representative office.

Typically, Enterprise Ireland Executives also visit the market once a quarter to meet contacts in government and to meet private sector organizations to maintain awareness of Ireland as a source of world class products and services. The current arrangements have proved to be effective and efficient for Enterprise Ireland clients as the level of client company interest in Taiwan does not warrant any higher level of in-market support at this time.

Enterprise Ireland will continue to make regular market visits in Taiwan in support of client companies which are growing exports and creating and sustaining employment in Ireland.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

84. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Finance the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40799/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There are two Ministers of State appointed to the Department of Finance:

- Deputy Michael D’Arcy is Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance; and

- Deputy Patrick O’Donovan is Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and eGovernment.

No formal Delegation of Ministerial Functions Orders have been signed. This position is kept under review in light of the requirements of the respective roles.

### **Financial Services Ombudsman Data**

85. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Finance the number of complaints made to the Financial Services Ombudsman since the passing of recent legislation amending the six-year rule that have been deemed admissible under the new rules; the number still under consideration; the number that are new complaints; the number that were previously refused under the old rules; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40815/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** Firstly, I must point out that the Financial Services Ombudsman is independent in the carrying out of his duties. I have no role in the day to day workings of the office.

However, the Financial Services Ombudsman has informed me that the number of complaints made to the Financial Services Ombudsman since the passing of recent legislation

amending the six year rule is 76.

Of those 76 complaints, 68 are in progress in Financial Services Ombudsman's dispute resolution process (a meditative, not an adjudicative process) and 8 are still under consideration. 44 are new complaints and 32 are re-submitted complaints that had been refused under the old rules.

### Vehicle Registration Data

86. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance the number of new motor homes registered in each of the years 2009 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40840/17]

87. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider the removal of VRT for motor homes as a means to try and stimulate more economic activity in the area and to encourage job retention and creation in the sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40841/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 86 and 87 together.

I am informed by Revenue that the number of new motor homes registered in each of the years from 2009 to 2016 and to date in 2017 is provided in the following table:

Year	Total
2009	190
2010	231
2011	35
2012	34
2013	34
2014	45
2015	55
2016	95
2017 (to date)	120

Motor homes are classed as Category B vehicles and therefore are subject to a rate of VRT of 13.3% of their Open Market Selling Price (OMSP). This compares to Category A (passenger) vehicles which are charged at rates between 14% and 36% of their OMSP depending on the level of CO2 they emit. Motor homes also receive preferential treatment vis-à-vis Category A vehicles in relation to the application of annual motor tax.

There are a number of objectives of the Irish Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) system. VRT is an important source of revenue for the State. It also seeks to reflect the negative externalities caused by using the vehicle in the State. These externalities are the costs to society and to the environment that, without the tax, would not otherwise be reflected in the price of the vehicle and for which the consumer would not otherwise have to pay.

In the case of motor vehicles, these include environment externalities such as air pollution, which is why one of the bases for imposing VRT is the vehicle's carbon emissions. Other externalities which VRT seeks to reflect, include the costs to society of providing and maintaining the road infrastructure, traffic control, relevant emergency services, and vehicle registration and licensing. The funds raised through VRT go towards compensating the Irish State for these

significant costs.

### **Tax Yield**

88. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Finance the estimated extra yield that would apply in 2018 from no changes to rates (details supplied); and the extent to which these have been counted in the fiscal space calculations for 2018. [40993/17]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** My Department is currently reviewing the tax revenue forecasts for 2018 and later years in the context of preparations for Budget 2018.

As part of this process, the White Paper on the estimates of Receipts and Expenditure (the “White Paper”) will be published in advance of the Budget 2018, and will contain a tax revenue forecast for the forthcoming year based on a position of no-policy change. It should be noted that a no-policy change does include around €170 million, which relates to carryover of taxation measures already introduced in Budget 2017.

The individual tax-head yields, on a no-policy change basis, are driven by the growth rate of the respective tax bases (GNP, consumer spending, etc.). My Department is currently reviewing its macroeconomic forecasts as part of the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council endorsement round.

The White Paper for the year ending 31 December 2018 will be laid before the Oireachtas at midnight on Friday, 6 October 2017.

### **Public Sector Pay**

89. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the estimated extra cost of public pay agreements in 2018; and the extent to which these have already been counted in the fiscal space calculations for 2018. [40996/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** The Mid-Year Expenditure Report 2017 outlined an amount of €0.3bn to be allocated from the Lansdowne Road Agreement and €0.2bn from the Public Service Stability Agreement 2018-2020 in 2018.

The allocation of these central provisions to Departments, in line with our obligations under the EU fiscal rules, is a matter that is subject to ongoing assessment in the context of the expenditure out-turns for 2017 and the estimates for 2018.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

90. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40804/17]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Paschal Donohoe):** There are three Ministers of State appointed to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform:

- Deputy Patrick O'Donovan is Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Public Procurement, Open Government and eGovernment;

- Deputy Michael D'Arcy is Minister of State at the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for Financial Services and Insurance; and

- Deputy Kevin "Boxer" Moran is Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with special responsibility for the Office of Public Works and Flood Relief.

No formal Delegation of Ministerial Functions Orders have been signed. This position is kept under review in light of the requirements of the respective roles.

### **Flood Relief Schemes Status**

91. **Deputy Joe Carey** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the position regarding a flood relief scheme (details supplied) in County Clare; when it will move to construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40817/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Kevin Boxer Moran):** The Ennis South Scheme is being progressed by Clare County Council (CCC) with funding from the Office of Public Works (OPW). When completed the scheme will provide protection for 74 residential and 10 non-residential properties in the area.

CCC invited tenders for the proposed works on 7 March 2017. The tenders have been received and assessed by CCC and its consultants. A report has now been submitted by CCC to the OPW on the outcome of the tender process. The OPW remains committed to progressing the Ennis South scheme and is working closely with CCC to ensure that this happens in the shortest possible timeframe.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

92. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40797/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Two Ministers of State were appointed at my Department, Mary Mitchell O'Connor T.D. as Minister of State with responsibility for Higher Education and John Halligan T.D. as Minister of State with responsibility for Training, Skills, Innovation and Research and Development.

There are two Delegation of Functions Orders in place. These Orders were made on 18 July 2017 and are available at [www.irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie) website. They have also been forwarded to the Deputy.

S.I. No. 333/2017 - Education and Skills (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2017  
- John Halligan, Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills

S.I. No. 334/2017 - Education and Skills (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No. 2)



### **Schools Refurbishment**

93. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a fund exists which allocates moneys to schools in order to carry out minor refurbishment works, redecoration and or renovations to interior school classrooms and indoor facilities in order to meet the needs of students that suffer from respiratory diseases and or conditions whereby breathing may be negatively impacted by environmental factors such as carpets and other textiles; if so, the way in which a school may formally apply for funding in such circumstances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40827/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department administers a number of grants which together aim to improve and maintain school buildings and which can be used to address the issues raised.

The Minor Works Grant for primary schools and the Capitation grant for post primary schools may be used to improve the physical infrastructure and appearance of schools without needing to deal directly with the Department.

The Summer Works Scheme (SWS), which is demand based, is designed to allow schools, on a devolved funding basis, to carry out necessary improvement works that will upgrade existing school facilities, which can be carried out during the summer months or at other times that avoid disrupting the operation of the school.

My Department also administers an Emergency Works Grant, and its purpose is solely for unforeseen emergencies or to provide funding to facilitate inclusion and access for special needs pupils. An emergency is deemed to be a situation which poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or the environment which is sudden, unforeseen and requires immediate action and in the case of a school if not corrected would prevent the school or part thereof from opening.

The Summer Works Scheme application form is published on my Department's website as and when each new Scheme is announced while the Emergency Works Scheme application form is permanently available on my Department's website.

### **School Staff Appeals Mechanism**

94. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way in which a school (details supplied) can appeal against the loss of an extra teacher in view of the fact that at the time it was assessed it did not have sufficient numbers but now has enough pupils to warrant the extra teacher; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40844/17]

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

The staffing schedule operates in a clear and transparent manner and treats all similar types of schools equally irrespective of location.

Staffing arrangements for the 2017/18 school year are set out in circular 0017/2017 which is available on my Departments website.

The staffing schedule includes an appeals mechanism for schools to submit an appeal under certain criteria to an independent Appeals Board. Details of the criteria for appeal are contained in the staffing schedule, Circular 0017/2017.

The Primary Staffing Appeals Board meets three times per year. The third and final meeting for the 2017/18 school year will take place in October, 2017. The closing date for receipt of applications to this meeting is Wednesday, 11 October.

The Appeals Board operates independently of the Department and its decision is final.

### **Speech and Language Therapy Provision**

95. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address a situation in a school (details supplied) whereby the school's speech and language class can accommodate only seven pupils, the same number as could be accommodated 20 years ago. [40862/17]

96. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans to address the severe shortage of speech and language places for children in north County Dublin schools. [40863/17]

97. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that children refused a speech and language place on grounds of capacity shortage must undergo another psychological assessment and another speech and language assessment the following year at a cost to the HSE; his views on whether a better use of resources would be to provide speech and language places for all children that need them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40864/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 95 to 97, inclusive, together.

My Department provides an extensive range of supports for pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD) including provision for the establishment of special classes for Specific Speech and Language Disorder in primary schools. Speech and Language Therapy services are provided to these classes by the Health Service Executive (HSE).

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE), which is an independent statutory agency, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports, including the establishment of additional special classes in various geographical areas, where a need has been identified. The NCSE operates within the Department's criteria in allocating such support and applications meeting the criteria are approved by the NCSE. Applications meeting the criteria are approved by the NCSE.

The criteria for enrolment in a Special Class for pupils with SSLD are set out in my Department's Circular 0038/2007. A full-time teacher is assigned to each class, and classes operate with a reduced pupil-teacher ratio of 7:1. A minimum number of five eligible pupils is required for a school to retain a SSLD class. Eligible pupils may spend up to two years in such classes.

An enhanced capitation grant is provided to schools operating special classes for pupils with SSLD. In general, children who meet the criteria for enrolment in Special Classes for pupils with SSLD are eligible for free transport to the SSLD class nearest to his or her place of residence, subject to the terms of the school transport scheme.

The NCSE continues to monitor and review the requirement for special class places in particular areas and has capacity to establish such new special classes where necessary, subject to the willingness of schools to open classes. The NCSE welcomes expressions of interest from schools in opening special classes to meet the demand for special class provision. In deciding on the location of a special class SENOs take into account both the present and the future potential need for special class provision and they must be satisfied that the special class is sustainable and appropriately located. SENOs liaise with relevant professionals in their area to arrive at an informed decision. The opening of a Speech and Language class is, however, contingent on the HSE being in a position to provide Speech and Language therapy to the students in the class.

The Report of the Special Education Review Committee, also known as the SERC Report, provides the basis on which my Department sets the criteria for special education supports for children with special educational needs including children with specific speech and language disorder (SSLD). It is stated in the SERC Report that ‘ *Pupils with specific speech and language disorders are those whose non-verbal ability is in the average range band or higher and whose skill in understanding or expressing themselves through the medium of spoken language is severely impaired. Their disability is not attributable, however, to factors such as defective hearing, emotional or behavioural disorders or a physical condition. The disorders may involve difficulty with one or more of the main components of communication through spoken language, receptive and/or expressive, such as the patterning and production of speech sounds, the message content, the syntax and grammar; or the use of speech in interacting with other people.*’

The criteria for specific speech and language disorder are set out in my Department in Circulars 08/99, 08/02 and 02/05 and these criteria are consistent with the recommendations in the SERC Report. Appendix 1 of Circular 02/05 Organisation of Teaching Resources for Pupils who need additional Support in Mainstream Primary Schools states the following in relation to specific speech and language disorder:

- *Such pupils should meet each of the following criteria:*
- *The pupil has been assessed by a psychologist on a standardised test of intelligence that places non-verbal or performance ability within the average range or above.*
- *The pupil has been assessed by a speech therapist on a standardised test of language development that places performance in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development at two standard deviations or more below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level.*
- *The pupil’s difficulties are not attributable to hearing impairment; where the pupil is affected to some degree by hearing impairment, the hearing threshold for the speech-related frequencies should be 40Db;*
- *Emotional and behavioural disorders or a physical disability are not considered to be primary causes.*
- *Pupils with speech and language delays and difficulties are not to be considered under this category.*

- In the case of specific speech and language disorder it is a pupil's non-verbal or performance ability that must be within the average range or above. (i.e. non-verbal or performance IQ of 90, or above).

- The pupil must also have been assessed by a speech and language therapist and found to be at two or more standard deviations (S.D.) below the mean, or at a generally equivalent level (i.e. - 2 S.D. or below, at or below a standard score of 70) in one or more of the main areas of speech and language development.

Two assessments, a psychological assessment and a speech and language assessment are necessary in this case."

The enrolment of pupils in an SSLD special class is managed locally by an Admissions & Discharges Committee, comprising the Speech and Language Therapy Manager, Speech and Language Therapist, Class Teacher and Principal.

It should be noted that pupils who are not enrolled in a special class for SSLD and who meet the criteria for Specific Speech and Language Disorder, as outlined in Circular 0038/2007, may qualify for additional teaching support under the School's Special Education Teaching Support provision, where he/she is enrolled in a mainstream school.

A new model for allocating support to pupils with special educational needs has been implemented from September 2017. Circular 0013/2017 for primary schools which was published on 7 March 2017 sets out the details of the new model for allocating special education teachers to schools. The revised allocation model replaces the generalised allocation process at primary and post primary school level for learning support and high incidence special educational needs, and the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) allocation process which provided additional resource teaching supports to schools, to support pupils assessed as having Low Incidence disabilities. Guidelines for schools on the organisation, deployment and use of their special education teachers have also been published; <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Special-Education/Guidelines-for-Primary-Schools-Supporting-Pupils-with-Special-Educational-Needs-in-Mainstream-Schools.pdf> . One of the benefits of this new approach is that schools will have greater flexibility as to how they will deploy their resources.

Pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder (SSLD) may, therefore, attend a special class for pupils with SSLD with speech and language therapy services provided in class by the HSE or attend a mainstream school with additional teaching supports and speech and language therapy through the primary care service.

The Programme for a Partnership Government states that a new model of In-School Speech and Language Therapy will be established. It also contains a commitment to examine the adequacy of the present policies and provision, and their scope for improvement, particularly in relation to speech and language difficulties and early intervention. A joint working group, made up of the Department of Health, the Department of Education and Skills, the Health Service Executive and the National Council for Special Education, has been established to develop the proposed model. When finalised, the proposed model will represent a significant change in the way in which services are delivered.

## Departmental Expenditure

98. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of improving the staffing schedule in primary schools to reduce class sizes by one point each year in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[40879/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Budget 2017 represented the start of a major reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade. The budget provided for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post primary schools in the 2017/18 school year.

Each 1 point adjustment to the staffing schedule is estimated to cost in the region of €15m - €18m per annum.

It is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government. However, I recognise that there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each Budget.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

99. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of reducing the effective pupil-teacher ratio in non-DEIS schools to 18:1, with a comparable reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio in DEIS schools and no change to the staffing of fee charging schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40880/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Budget 2017 represents the start of a major reinvestment in education, and the first phase of implementation of the Action Plan for Education, aimed at becoming the best education system in Europe within a decade. The budget provided for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post primary schools in the 2017/18 school year.

It is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government. However, I recognise that there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each Budget.

The pupil teacher ratio in all Free Scheme post primary schools is 19:1 in the 2017/2018 school year. Each 1 point adjustment to the pupil teacher ratio in these schools is estimated to cost in the region of €60m per annum.

### **Capitation Grants**

100. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of increasing primary and post-primary school capitation rates by €10 per child; the overall cost of a 5% increase to capitation rates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40881/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The estimated cost of increasing the rate of capitation by €10 per pupil in primary schools is circa €5.9m.

The estimated cost of increasing the rate of capitation by €10 per pupil in post-primary schools is circa €3.7m.

The estimated overall cost of a 5% increase to capitation rates in primary and post-primary schools is circa €10m.

The Action Plan for Education outlines hundreds of actions to be implemented over the 3

year period 2016 to 2019 which include restoring capitation funding as resources permit.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6 in 2016 and €5 in 2017 in order to enable primary schools implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

### **School Staff**

101. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of increasing with effect from September 2018, the substitution provided to primary schools with teaching principals sufficient to ensure that all teaching principals can avail of one full day of administrative duties each week; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40882/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Circular 12/2016, which is available on the Department website, outlines the number of days that teaching principals may take as release time in a school year in order to assist them fulfilling their principal duties. Under these arrangements my Department pays for a substitute teacher to be employed by a school to facilitate administrative functions to be undertaken by the teaching principal. Under the current arrangements the number of days that principal teachers may take as release time in each school year ranges between 15 and 25 days depending on the size of the school.

The additional cost of substitution for one day per week for all teaching principals would be in the region of €12m per year.

Any further enhancements to the Principal Release Time Scheme, will have to be considered in the context of the budgetary process.

### **Student Grant Scheme Expenditure**

102. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of reinstating postgraduate student grants in September 2018; the projected full year cost on the basis of the previous system that was in place; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40883/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy will be aware of the Programme for Government commitment to increase financial supports for postgraduate students with a particular focus on those from low income households.

In response to this commitment, I secured additional funding of €4 million in Budget 2017 to facilitate the reinstatement of full maintenance grants, from September 2017, for the most disadvantaged post graduate students.

This will benefit approximately 1,100 of the most disadvantaged postgraduate students who meet the eligibility criteria for the special rate of maintenance grant, from September 2017, and it reverses the budgetary cut that was imposed on this cohort of students in 2012.

However, if the maintenance grants and eligibility for full fees were reintroduced for postgraduate students, the total estimated cost would be approximately €44m. This excludes the above 2017 budget measure.

This costing assumes that the actual number of post graduate grant holders (2,141 in 2016/17) will increase to the level prior to the introduction of 2012 Budget measure (6,027 students).

### Third Level Fees

103. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of reducing the student contribution rate by €250, €500 or €1,000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40884/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Based on the number of students that qualified for free fees funding in the academic year 2015/16, and taking into account overall expected increases in student numbers, it is estimated that the net cost to my Department of reducing the Student Contribution by €250 would be €18.4m; by €500 would cost €36.8m and by €1,000 would cost €73.6m.

These figures take into account the resulting reduction to my Department's Student Grant Scheme budget.

While the student contribution now stands at €3,000, it is important to recognise that the state pays this contribution (or part of it) on behalf of almost 50% of undergraduate students. Tax relief provisions are also available so that second and subsequent siblings do not have to bear the full cost. In addition, higher education institutions have provisions in place to allow students to pay the contribution in two moieties.

It should be noted that the Report of the Expert Group on Future Funding for Higher Education, published in 2016, outlined the need for an increase in investment in higher education across current, capital and student support budgets including a recommendation for an increase of €1 billion in core funding for higher education institutions by 2030.

The Report is currently being considered by the Joint Oireachtas committee for Education and Skills and I look forward to receiving their recommendations which will assist in facilitating informed decision-making and the building, where possible, of a consensus approach for the future direction of funding for higher education. Accordingly, no policy decisions are being taken in this area pending the outcome of examination of the Cassells report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and Skills.

The Government is committed to providing a more sustainable funding model for higher education, as evidenced by the fact that Budget 2017 provided the first increase in investment in higher education since 2009, involving €36.5 million extra funding in 2017 and €160 million extra over 3 years. In addition the Government is exploring the possibility of an employer-Exchequer funding mechanism which could realise up to €200 million in additional annual funding by 2020.

### Student Grant Scheme Expenditure

104. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the cost of decreasing the non-adjacent rate of third level grants from 45 to 24 kilometres; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40885/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The cost of reversing the change to the adjacent rate of the Student Grant, reducing it from 45 kilometres to 24 kilometres; is estimated to be in the region of €25m. This calculation is based on student grant hold-

ers for the academic year 2016/17.

Prior to the introduction of the 45 km rule, circa three-quarters of all maintenance grant holders qualified for the higher non-adjacent grant support. The above costing assumes that a change to the 24 km rule will result in a similar number of students qualifying for the higher non-adjacent grant support.

### **Special Educational Needs Staff**

105. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the concept of streamlining; if there is such a concept in the provision and allocation of special needs assistants; and the meaning of same in terms of the provision of special needs assistants. [40894/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the concept of streamlining in relation to the provision of Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support has not been drawn to my attention heretofore.

My Department's policy is that children with special educational needs should be included in mainstream placements with additional supports provided, unless such a placement would not be in their best interests or in the interests of the children with whom they are to be educated, as is provided for under Section 2 of the Education of Persons with Special Needs Act 2004. Some children may be supported in a special class attached to a mainstream school. These students have the option, where appropriate, of full/partial integration and interaction with other pupils. Other children may have such complex needs that they are best placed in a special school.

My Department, therefore, provides for a range of placement options and supports for schools, which have enrolled pupils with special educational needs, in order to ensure that wherever a child is enrolled, s/he will have access to an appropriate education.

My Department's SNA scheme is designed to provide recognised schools with additional adult support staff to cater for the care needs of pupils with disabilities in an educational context, where the nature of these care needs have been outlined in professional reports as being so significant that a pupil will require adult assistance in order to be able to attend school and to participate in education and also to minimise disruption to class or teaching time for the pupils concerned, or for their peers, and with a view to developing their independent living skills.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE which is an independent statutory body) of which, its functions include planning and co-ordinating the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs in conjunction with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE). The NCSE, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs), is responsible for processing applications from schools for special educational needs supports as required, including Special Need Assistance support as required. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support as set out in accordance with Circular 30 of 2014.

Responsibility for deciding on the quantum of educational supports and resources to be allocated to schools to support individual pupils rests with the NCSE. In making allocations to schools, the NCSE takes into account the assessed individual needs of all children with identified needs in the school. It should be noted that SNA allocations are not made to individual children, but are made to schools to support the care needs of children with assessed special educational needs in the school.



An additional 975 SNA posts have been made available for allocation to schools from September 2017 which is a 7.5% increase to meet the demands for the new school year. A total of 13,990 SNA posts are now available at a gross annual cost of €458 million. This is more SNAs than we have ever had previously and will ensure that all children who qualify for SNA support can continue to receive access to such support. In total, the number of SNAs available has increased by over 32% since 2011, when 10,575 posts were available.

Details of SNA allocations which have been made to schools have been published by the NCSE on their website at [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie).

The organisation of supports within schools is a matter for each individual school to manage, taking into account each child's individual needs. It is a matter for schools to allocate support as required, and on the basis of individual need, which allows schools flexibility in how the supports, including SNA support, is utilised.

Parents who have concerns regarding the manner in which the supports which have been provided to support their child's education are being applied in school should, in the first instance, raise this matter directly with their school Principal or the Board of Management of the school.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

106. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the measures he proposes to implement to honour the commitments in the programme for a partnership Government regarding a reduction in the pupil-teacher ratio in junior and senior infants, the annual increases in capitation rates and the reduction in primary school class sizes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40989/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Budget 2017 set out the resources available for schools in the 2017/18 school year. The budget provides for over 2,400 additional teaching posts for our primary and post-primary schools in the current school year.

Budget 2016 provided for an improvement in the staffing schedule in primary schools by 1 point, from 1 teacher for every 28 pupils to 1 teacher for every 27 pupils for the 2016/17 school year and it should be noted that the current staffing schedule of 27:1 for primary schools has restored it to the position it was at prior to the fiscal crisis. The staffing schedule for post primary will be 19:1 for the 2017/18 school year.

The Action Plan for Education outlines hundreds of actions to be implemented over the 3 year period 2016 to 2019 which include restoring capitation funding as resources permit.

The process is underway for restoring grant funding that is used by schools to fund the salaries of ancillary staff. The ancillary grant was increased by €6m in 2016 and €5m in 2017 in order to enable primary schools implement the arbitration salary increase for grant funded school secretaries and caretakers and to also implement the restoration of salary for cleaners arising from the unwinding of FEMPI legislation.

The Programme for Government has a commitment to reduce class sizes at primary level and it is my intention to make further improvements to class sizes over the life of the Government.

However, I recognise that there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each Budget.

## **Budget 2018**

107. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will give consideration to issues identified as a priority for budget 2018 by a trade union (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40990/17]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Decisions in relation to Budget 2018 will be taken as part of the estimates process and will be announced on Budget day.

The 2017/18 school year brings a significant increase of over 5,000 in teacher numbers in our schools compared to the 2015/16 school year.

While I am aware of the issues outlined, there are needs across the system which have to be balanced in the decisions made in each Budget.

## **Trade Relations**

108. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to develop positive economic relations with Taiwan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40876/17]

111. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he has given consideration to reopening a trade office in Taiwan. [40873/17]

112. **Deputy James Browne** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade his plans to develop positive trading relations with Taiwan. [40874/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 108, 111 and 112 together.

Ireland, like all EU Member States and the EU itself, adheres to the One China policy and does not recognise Taiwan as a State. As a result, Ireland does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, but does engage with Taiwan on an economic and cultural basis.

Ireland enjoys a strong trading relationship with Taiwan. According to the Central Statistics Office, total bilateral trade between Ireland and Taiwan stood at €1,133 million in 2015, the latest year for which full trading statistics are available.

The scale and configuration of the State's mission network in promoting Ireland's interests and values in a fast-changing world is under continual review by my Department and by the Government. The ambition set by the Taoiseach to double our global footprint by 2025 responds to the scale and complexity of challenges that we face as a country in the years ahead. Following the Taoiseach's announcement, my Department has begun to examine options to expand our footprint and influence internationally in consultation with other Departments and agencies.

Enterprise Ireland services Taiwan from its office in Hong Kong while IDA's ASEAN office in Singapore currently covers Taiwan with regard to the potential for inward Foreign Direct Investment. Market intelligence in relation to Taiwan indicates that the current footprint is appropriate.

## Ministerial Responsibilities

109. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40800/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There are two Ministers of State at my Department, Ciarán Cannon T.D. and Helen McEntee, T.D. Minister Cannon was appointed Minister of State with special responsibility for the Diaspora and International Development at my Department on 15 June 2017. Minister McEntee was appointed Minister of State with special responsibility for European Affairs at my Department on 20 June 2017.

The Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 1977 provides for the delegation of statutory Ministerial powers and duties to Ministers of State. This may be done at the request of the Minister concerned, by Government Order. My statutory powers as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade relate to consular, passport and other technical matters and it is not the practice, nor is it considered necessary, to delegate these functions.

## Subsidiary Protection

110. **Deputy Frank O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if a decision has been reached on the legal status of a person (details supplied) in view of the conclusions of the legal proceedings surrounding subsidiary protection residence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40846/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As the Deputy will be aware, the legal status of any non-national in the State is a matter for the Irish immigration authorities which comes under the remit of the Department of Justice and Equality. Clarification is being sought from the Department of Justice and Equality on whether residence under Subsidiary Protection could be reckoned for the purposes of Section 6A of the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act (as amended) and how such residence should be calculated.

The Passport Service remains in close contact with the Department of Justice and Equality and the Office of the Attorney General for a final position on the matter.

*Questions Nos. 111 and 112 answered with Question No. 108.*

## Deportation Orders

113. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the position regarding the deportation from Israel on 9 September 2017 of four persons (details supplied). [40877/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am aware of the deportation of these four persons. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade was notified immediately by one of the persons, and we have since received letters from each of them about this incident.

The leader of the group has led study groups to the West Bank for over ten years, a total of

17 tour groups involving over 400 people. These groups met a range of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs and other interlocutors, and studied issues on the ground relating to the occupation of the West Bank. She had as usual advised the Department in advance of the dates and itinerary of the tour, so that our missions would be aware of a large group of citizens touring the area.

No detailed reason for refusing admission to Israel was given to them, other than a generic explanation that it was for immigration reasons, and in the case of the leader also because of unspecified 'public security, public safety or public order' considerations. Thirty-three of the group entered Israel, but four were deported.

No report or allegation has ever been made to the Department of Foreign Affairs of any concerns about the activities of these study groups. The group leader has also stated that she has never taken part in any demonstration in Palestine, nor have any of her groups' programmes included attendance at a demonstration.

The Ambassador in Tel Aviv has already called to the Israeli Foreign Ministry and requested an explanation for this action. We are awaiting a response. I will ensure that the Deputy, and the persons concerned, are notified when we hear more.

### **North South Inter-Parliamentary Association**

114. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade when the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association last met. [40676/17]

**Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The operation of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association is a matter, in this jurisdiction, for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The establishment of a North South parliamentary forum was envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. Following an agreement by working groups of both the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly on 4 July 2012, the inaugural plenary session of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association was held in the Seanad Chamber on 12 October 2012. The most recent plenary session of the North South Inter-Parliamentary Association took place on 2 December 2016 in Belfast.

At present, the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association is unable to meet and this will remain the case until the Northern Ireland Assembly is fully reconvened.

I am continuing to work with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and each of the political parties to support an agreement as soon as possible, on the formation of a new power-sharing Executive within the mandate of the current Assembly.

The Government is determined, as co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement, to do everything in our power to ensure that all of its institutions can operate fully and effectively.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

115. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of Ministers of State attached to his department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40803/17]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will be aware, Ministers of State are appointed by the Government, on nomination of the Taoiseach.

In accordance with the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1977, the Government may delegate, by way of an Order, to a Minister of State any of the powers and duties of the relevant Minister of the Government under any particular Act or any particular statutory power or duty. Such orders can be made in cases where a Minister of State would be expected to carry out statutory functions on behalf of or in addition to a Minister. However, the role and functions of Ministers of State of course often encompass broad areas of responsibility rather than being limited to those powers formally delegated under statute.

As you will appreciate the Department of Justice and Equality has a broad remit and I welcome the support provided by various colleagues who have been assigned to my Department as Ministers of State.

Earlier this year, Mr. David Stanton TD was reappointed Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Equality, Immigration, and Integration. In July 2017, I received Government approval to delegate powers and duties to Minister of State Stanton TD. These powers and duties are set out in Statutory Instrument 351 of 2017. Minister Stanton's responsibilities include human rights and equality, matters relating to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme, reception and integration matters, various EU funding matters, and matters relating to youth justice, gambling and firearms that fall under the responsibility of the Department of Justice and Equality.

Mr. Finian McGrath TD also remains Minister of State attending Government and Minister of State at the Departments of Social Protection, Justice and Equality and Health with special responsibility for Disabilities. The Office of Minister of State McGrath is located in the Department of Health. I understand that certain statutory functions have been delegated to Minister McGrath by both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection.

Mr. Pat Breen TD was appointed Minister of State at the then named Department of Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Employment and Social Protection, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for Trade, Employment, Business, EU Digital Single Market and Data Protection in June 2017, having served as Minister of State for Employment and Small Business from May 2016. His Office is located in the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation. Minister Breen's responsibility within my Department is in respect of Data Protection matters. However, I will continue to lead on the legislative passage of the Data Protection Bill.

### **Asylum Applications Data**

116. **Deputy John Lahart** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons that applied for asylum in each of the years 2000 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of persons that were rejected; the number of persons that left voluntarily; the number of persons awaiting a decision, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40808/17]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department that the figures requested by the Deputy are set out in the following table:

*Questions - Written Answers*

Year	Applications Received	Refused/Rejected	Voluntarily Returned
2000	10,938	N/A[1]	83
2001	10,325	3,891	109
2002	11,634	5,992	158
2003	7,900	5,313	260
2004	4,766	7,560	182
2005	4,323	5,224	138
2006	4,314	2,448	87
2007	3,985	3,425	77
2008	3,866	2,769	93
2009	2,689	4,237	136
2010	1,939	3,572	140
2011	1,290	1,686	145
2012	956	931	120
2013	946	771	89
2014	1,448	511	59
2015	3,276	885	30
2016	2,244	1,352	57
2017*	1,675	30	33

\*End August 2017

The figure for 2017 for Refusals/Rejected applications is expected to increase substantially for the remainder of the year as the single procedure under the International Protection Act takes effect. On 31 August 2017, there were 4,694 applications on hand with the International Protection Office. The International Protection Appeals Tribunal had 300 Appeals pending on this date.

[1] Please note that a dedicated Unit was established in INIS on 20 November 2000 following the commencement of the Refugee Act 1996 but did not issue any decisions until the following year.

Section 2 of the International Protection Act 2015 defines a refugee as “a person...who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside his or her country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it”

The Irish system for assessing applications for international protection is independent and complies fully with international standards, characterised by a high level of transparency and oversight with each application being dealt with in full compliance with due process. Persons that seek International Protection in Ireland lodge their application with the International Protection Office in the first instance. If they are not satisfied with the decision issued by that office they may appeal to the International Protection Appeals Tribunal which is also an independent body. Refusals to grant asylum are accompanied by written reports that set out the reasons why the application has been refused. Applicants also have access to free legal aid and to the Irish Courts where they may challenge the decision made in their case by way of Judicial Review in the High Court, Supreme Court and ultimately the Court of Justice of the European Union.

## **Garda Vetting Applications**

117. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if a Garda vetting application by a person (details supplied) can be expedited; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40998/17]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan):** As the Deputy will understand, the processing of vetting applications by the Garda National Vetting Bureau is an operational matter for the Garda Authorities and is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012-1016 and other relevant law. My Department has no role in the processing of individual vetting applications.

I am informed by the Garda Authorities that a vetting application was received by the National Vetting Bureau from a registered organisation in respect of the person referred to by the Deputy on 20 September 2017. The application was processed and returned to the liaison person in the relevant organisation on 22 September 2017.

It will be necessary for the applicant to contact the registered organisation concerned to ascertain the current position.

## **Commemorative Events**

118. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will discuss with the management of the National Museum in Collins Barracks the erection of an exhibition commemorating An Gorta Mór with a selection of relevant artefacts presently in storage, detailing the famine and consequences of it and the National Famine Commemoration Day; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40530/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As Chair of the National Famine Commemoration Committee, I am responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place to commemorate the Great Irish Famine. In carrying out these functions, my main focus is to ensure that the victims of the Irish Famine are respectfully and appropriately remembered and also to raise awareness of current food security issues worldwide. This year's National Famine Commemoration will take place on Saturday 30 September next at the Ballingarry Warehouse 1848 in County Tipperary.

Decisions in relation to the curation and presentation of exhibitions at its various locations permanent, are a matter for the National Museum. I would also remind the Deputy that there are many local museums and other entities around the country that display material relating to this period in our nation's history, such as the very significant Irish National Famine Museum at Strokestown Park, County Roscommon.

## **Ministerial Responsibilities**

119. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of Ministers of State attached to her Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by her and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40795/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Government Chief Whip Joe McHugh T.D. is the only Minister of State currently attached to my Department. Details of the responsibilities delegated by me to Minister of State McHugh are set out in Statutory Instrument No. 315 of 2017, signed by the Taoiseach on 5 July 2017. This Statutory Instrument is available on [www.irishstatutebook.ie](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie).

### **Metal Detectors**

120. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to liberalise the status of metal detecting here; her further plans to adopt a system similar to that used in the UK; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40816/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The use or possession of detection devices for archaeological purposes in Ireland is regulated under section 2 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987. I am satisfied that the statutory provisions in place under our National Monuments Acts continue to provide a suitable framework in which to control undesirable treasure-hunting and illicit damage to archaeology and in these circumstances I do not propose to change the law in this respect.

The experience in the 1970s and earlier part of the 1980s was that the absence of specific statutory provisions regulating use of detection devices for archaeological purposes, and their possession on known archaeological sites, greatly contributed to an upsurge in improper and illicit removal of archaeological objects, causing serious harm and loss to our national archaeological heritage.

It was against that background that the Oireachtas enacted section 2 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act 1987. I consider that the current level of statutory regulation, and the manner in which this is implemented, is reasonable, appropriate and necessary given the threat posed by illegal metal detectorists that is causing irreparable damage to our national heritage.

There is no outright prohibition on the use of detection devices for archaeological purposes in the Irish State under the National Monuments Acts. Rather it is an activity that is subject to statutory regulation which may be carried out lawfully if done under, and in accordance with, a consent granted by me.

### **Údarás na Gaeltachta Data**

121. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of capital projects authorised by Údarás na Gaeltachta in County Donegal in each of the years 2013 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the amount spent in respect of each; the number of these projects which qualified for grant aid funding under the percent for art scheme; the detail of each such commission; if moneys allocated for such commissions as part of the scheme in respect of the years has yet to be spent; if so, the amount, in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40828/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Joe McHugh):** The Deputy will appreciate that the information being requested is comprehensive and, accordingly, it has not been possible to collate same in the time available.

Údarás na Gaeltachta has been requested to supply the relevant information as soon as possible. I will arrange for it to be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is to hand and within the



timeframe set down in Standing Orders.

### National Parks and Wildlife Service Data

122. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of staff employed in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; the number of inspections undertaken by the NPWS regarding wildlife in the same years; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40833/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The total number of staff employed in the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) of my Department in each of the years requested by the Deputy is as outlined in the table. In addition, my Department recruits a number of seasonal staff each year to meet demand during the busy tourist season at the National Parks.

Year	Number of Staff
2014	295
2015	276
2016	283
2017 (September)	307

In relation to inspections, I am further advised that, on an on-going basis, officials of my Department carry out scientific research, survey work and monitoring of compliance with national and European law in relation to nature conservation across the country, as well as conducting patrols and site visits to enforce the various provisions of these Acts, as required. Given the nature and volume of this work it is not possible to quantify the total number of inspections in the manner requested. However, if the Deputy has a specific query in respect of any of this work I would be happy to provide further details.

### Hare Coursing Regulation

123. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if she will report on the monitoring of coursing trials around the country; if breaches of trial rules have taken place in 2015 and 2016 and to date in 2017; the repercussions for breach of a club's rules (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40834/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** Hare coursing meetings are monitored, as resources allow, by conservation rangers of the National Parks and Wildlife Service of my Department in order to ensure compliance with the conditions of the licences. Available resources precluded to monitoring of coursing trials in 2015 or 2016. One such trial has already been monitored in 2017. A report on that trial is currently being finalised and will be published by my Department.

### Waterways Ireland Feasibility Study

124. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht further to Parliamentary Question No. 730 of 2 May 2017, if there have been further developments in respect of the full feasibility study regarding the planned extension of the Erne navi-

gation from Belturbet to Killykeen and Killeshandra; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40909/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I am informed by Waterways Ireland that there have been no further developments in relation to a full feasibility study regarding any potential extension of the Erne navigation from Belturbet to Killykeen and Killeshandra.

As the Deputy will be aware from my earlier reply, there have been a number of studies undertaken since the late 1980's to examine the feasibility of extending the navigation upstream from Belturbet to Lough Oughter and Killeshandra. Based on the results of these studies, and review of the environmental information obtained in the process, Waterways Ireland consider that the environmental designations of this lake complex make the feasibility of the proposed navigation unviable.

### **Waterways Ireland Expenditure**

125. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the funding provided in her Department's Estimates for 2017 for the restoration of the Ulster Canal; the expenditure to date; the projected expenditure by year end; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40910/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** One of my priorities since taking Ministerial office has been the restoration of the Ulster Canal. I secured Government approval to restore a 2.5 km stretch of the Ulster Canal from the Shannon-erne Waterway to the International Scout Centre at Castle Saunderson, Co Cavan on 24 February 2015.

The project, which comprises three work phases, is being undertaken by Waterways Ireland.

The works to complete the project are in the 3rd and final phase of delivery. The contract to create a new 250 km section of canal and the construction of a new road bridge north of the existing Derrykerrib Bridge is progressing well.

The Contractors are currently on site with completion anticipated by autumn 2018 subject to weather conditions and Water levels over the 2017 /2018 winter. The temporary access road is complete and work has started on the canal wall excavations.

To the end of August 2017, a total of €2,004,447.66 has been spent on the entire Ulster Canal project. A further expenditure of €954,065 is forecast to the end of 2017.

### **Arts Promotion**

126. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans to generate interest in the arts throughout the country, including rural areas with particular reference to the desirability of local talent, commitment and investment which can be supplemented by her department; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40923/17]

135. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department continues to provide funding for the arts at local and community level, directly or indirectly, particularly in view of the recent Action Plan for Rural Development; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40933/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 126 and 135 together.

On 8 December 2016, the Creative Ireland Programme was launched as the Government's Legacy Programme arising out of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and as the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a high level, high ambition, 5-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022 (building up to the centenary of the foundation of the State) which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. The programme is being led by my Department in partnership with other Government Departments and Agencies, local authorities, the third level sector, arts and culture organisations (including the National Cultural Institutions) and relevant NGOs. The launch document for the programme identified ten actions for 2017, under five specific pillars:

- Enabling the Creative Potential of Every Child
- Enabling Creativity in Every Community
- Investing in our Creative and Cultural Infrastructure
- Ireland as a centre of Excellence in Media Production
- Unifying our Global reputation

I am glad to report that there has been significant progress in relation to the delivery of the ten actions identified for 2017. With regard to Pillar 2, which is focused on local communities, a Culture Team has been established in each of the 31 local authorities and each local authority has produced a 2017 Creative Ireland Plan and is in the process of drawing up a more detailed 2018 Creative Plan setting out a five year plan for local creativity.

These policy initiatives are supported by significant additional resources which are being directed towards the arts and culture sector.

For example, this year I announced details of more than €10 million in capital funding to a total of 122 arts organisations around the country under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018. This is the most significant investment in arts and cultural centres in a decade and will target investment at a range of different facilities, including arts centres, theatres, galleries and museums, as well as artists' studios and creative spaces.

The Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 is flexible to ensure that a diverse number of arts organisations would benefit.

A full list of successful projects under the Arts and Culture Capital Scheme 2016-2018 (Streams 1, 2 & 3) is available on my Department's website at the following link <https://www.chg.gov.ie/arts/creative-arts/grants-and-funding/>

### **Heritage Promotion**

127. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht her plans for enhancing the awareness of the value of culture and heritage in all areas throughout the country, capitalising on historical sites or venues; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40924/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** As

the Deputy will be aware, the Creative Ireland Programme was launched last December as the Government's Legacy Programme arising out of the Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme and as the main implementation vehicle for the priorities identified in Culture 2025/Éire Ildánach.

The Creative Ireland Programme is a high level, high ambition, 5-year initiative, from 2017 to 2022 (building up to the centenary of the foundation of the State) which aims to place creativity at the centre of public policy. The programme is being led by my Department in partnership with other Government Departments and Agencies, local authorities, the third level sector, arts and culture organisations (including the National Cultural Institutions) and relevant NGOs.

As part of the Programme each of the 31 local authorities has established a Creative Ireland team and produced a 2017 Creative Ireland Plan, all of which were formally launched in May 2017. Each local authority is now in the process of drawing up a five year setting out a vision for local creativity. These plans will be able to showcase the strong cultural and heritage offerings available throughout the country including cultural venues and sites, heritage sites and trails, art galleries etc.

The overall aim of these plans will be to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation so that individually and collectively, in our personal lives and in our institutions, we can realise our full creative potential.

### **Heritage Promotion**

128. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the degree to which to her Department has evaluated the economic potential of various local, historical and heritage sites throughout the country with a view to their utilisation for educational and tourism purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40925/17]

130. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number of heritage sites throughout the country which have been archaeologically excavated to facilitate visitor and educational interest; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40927/17]

131. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if her Department continues to examine historical sites throughout the country which might benefit from archaeological excavation; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40928/17]

132. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department has identified extra sites throughout the country suitable for archaeological investigation and excavation to ensure greater access and availability for tourism and educational purposes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40929/17]

134. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she is committed to improving access to historical sites and structures with a view to attracting a greater number of interested enthusiasts, tourists, school children and students; if parking at such locations is a priority; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40931/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 128, 130 to 132, inclusive, and 134 together.

My Department oversees the protection, preservation, conservation and presentation of our

heritage assets. The archaeological and built heritage goals of my Department's National Monuments Service and Built Heritage and Architectural Policy Section working with key stakeholder agencies, are to conserve and manage our unique heritage for the benefit of present and future generations. My Department also works in close partnership with the Office of Public Works (OPW) which manages the State's portfolio of heritage properties on my behalf.

The role of heritage in driving tourism is well known, with research by a number of bodies, including Tourism Ireland providing objective data on its economic return, which is substantial as the ever-increasing record number of visitors to this island are drawn in many instances by its heritage and culture. Data indicates that some 6.63 million visits were recorded at OPW managed sites in 2016, an increase from just over 2 million visits in 2008. Over 80,000 children availed of the OPW's *Free Schools Visits* programme during 2016 and free access was also given to all children under the age of twelve throughout the summer season.

Our built and archaeological heritage also plays a critical role in assisting communities across the country in sustaining pride of place as well as employment. Guidance on the extremely popular *Adopt a Monument* scheme has been issued by the Heritage Council in recent months providing a framework and guidance to community groups who wish to actively engage with their heritage.

My Department is working with the OPW and Fáilte Ireland through a Strategic Partnership Agreement aimed at delivery of capital and non-capital initiatives at key heritage sites in my ownership. The priority goal is to improve the experience of visitors, of tourists, of school children and the general public alike, through improvement of interpretation, access and facilities, including car-parking, in line with the conservation agenda of each site.

My Department's heritage officials are also working with colleagues in the Department of Rural and Community Development to ensure that built heritage across the country is receiving investment through local and community-led projects that are helping to drive heritage tourism and economic renewal throughout rural Ireland.

In terms of identifying sites, the Archaeological Survey of Ireland within my Department's National Monuments Service continues its work in mapping our archaeological resource of over 140,000 monuments across the country, assisted by the notification of potential new sites by members of the public and our 3rd level education sector.

Excavations are carried out at national monuments in my ownership or guardianship to facilitate conservation works and to improve presentation for educational and tourism purposes. Recent excavations carried out for such purposes have included St. John's Castle, Carlingford, Co. Louth, Glendalough Co. Wicklow and at the Rock of Cashel, Co. Tipperary. All such archaeological excavations are of course undertaken under licences issued by me in accordance with the National Monuments Acts. Such licences are only issued to suitably qualified archaeologists who submit proposals that comply with standards of best practice.

My Department also supports a country-wide programme of research excavations through the Standing Committee for Archaeology in the Royal Irish Academy. Current projects include excavations at Caherconnell in the Burren, Co. Clare which has become a busy tourist attraction and at Ballynamindra Cave in Co. Waterford. A number of other research excavations, predominantly organised by the academic sector, have been recently licensed at sites in counties Cork, Kerry, Clare, Galway, Sligo and Mayo.

## Heritage Sites

129. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department continues to ensure the protection of listed sites and buildings for the benefit of future generations; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40926/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My role, as Minister, with regard to the protection and management of our built heritage is set out in the provisions of relevant legislation, as are the role of local authorities and the responsibilities of owners as regards heritage assets.

Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, provides for the protection of architectural heritage. The Act gives primary responsibility to planning authorities to identify and protect the architectural heritage by including relevant structures on the Record of Protected Structures. Inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures places a duty of care on the owners and occupiers of protected structures and also gives planning authorities powers to deal with development proposals affecting them and to seek to safeguard their future.

My Department also maintains the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), a State initiative to identify, record, and evaluate the post-1700 architectural heritage of Ireland, uniformly and consistently as an aid in the protection and conservation of the built heritage. I recommend structures rated as being of regional importance or above to the planning authorities for inclusion on the Record of Protected Structures. However, the making of an addition to, or a deletion from, a Record of Protected Structures is a reserved function of the relevant planning authorities.

Financial support is provided by my Department through a number of structured schemes for the conservation and protection of heritage buildings. These schemes are administered via the local authorities and include the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Structures at Risk Fund.

Under the provisions of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, my Department has established and maintains the Record of Monuments and Places, which affords legal protection to over 120,000 recorded archaeological sites and monuments in the State. Anyone proposing works to a monument that is included in the Record of Monument and Places must give my Department two months prior notice before works can start.

As Minister, I am the owner or guardian under the National Monuments Acts of approximately 1,000 national monuments located at approximately 750 sites and in such cases there is a statutory duty to maintain the national monument. Such maintenance is undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW). Local authorities are responsible under the National Monuments Acts for maintaining the national monuments of which they are owners or guardians.

My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the OPW in 2017 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care.

The Heritage Council, which my Department funds, also provides grants for the protection and preservation of the built heritage. It is primarily a matter for the Heritage Council to decide how its funding should be allocated across the range of research, education and conservation programmes it supports annually, having regard to competing priorities for limited resources. Grant schemes for 2017 are advertised by the Heritage Council on its website [www.heritage-council.ie](http://www.heritage-council.ie).

*Questions Nos. 130 to 132, inclusive, answered with Question No. 128.*

### **Heritage Sites**

133. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which her Department continues to liaise with the Office of Public Works to ensure that heritage sites and buildings continue to be protected and in cases in which it is necessary sealed to prevent water damage; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40930/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** My Department is providing €350,000 of funding to the Office of Public Works (OPW) in 2017 to assist in the conservation and presentation of historic buildings and national monuments in State ownership. In the current year my Department is also providing almost €900,000 under its Structures at Risk Scheme to local authorities to address heritage infrastructure.

My Department's National Monuments Service works in close collaboration with the OPW on survey, excavation and research work to optimise the protection, management, interpretation and presentation of national monuments in State care throughout the country.

My Department's liaison with the OPW includes regular meetings at a central, regional and district level, addressing conservation and management issues at our key properties, including our World Heritage sites. In addition, my Department regularly liaises with the OPW through our strategic partnership with Fáilte Ireland. The goal of this substantial capital and non-capital investment in key heritage properties owned by the State is to improve the experience of visitors, of tourists and the general public, through improvement of interpretation, access and facilities, including car parking, in line with the conservation agenda of each site.

*Question No. 134 answered with Question No. 128.*

*Question No. 135 answered with Question No. 126.*

### **Film Industry Promotion**

136. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the extent to which she continues to encourage internationally the use of Ireland as a film location with obvious beneficial economic implications; the particular difficulties encountered in this regard; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40934/17]

**Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Heather Humphreys):** The Irish Film Board is the national development agency for Irish film making and the Irish film, television and animation industry. Its statutory remit is to assist and encourage the making of film in the State and the development of a film industry in Ireland. The Film Board supports writers, directors and production companies across these sectors by providing investment loans for the development, production and distribution of film, television and animation projects.

The Film Board also supports the Irish screen industries at major international markets and festivals, promotes inward investment, the use of Ireland as a location for international production and provides support for companies filming in Ireland. The Board liaises with IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland to maximise opportunities for the promotion of Ireland as a location for film productions as well as a tourism destination. Information on its funding scheme is available on the Irish Film Board website at [www.irishfilmboard.ie](http://www.irishfilmboard.ie).

In Budget 2017, I secured an increase of €2 million for the Irish Film Board, bringing the total allocation for 2017 to over €16m. This increase in funding will allow the Board to invest more in Irish talent and follows on from a very successful year for the Irish film sector, particularly the indigenous film sector, in 2016.

The other primary mechanism through which the Government supports the film industry is Section 481 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 - the film tax relief scheme. My Department's investment in the film sector will also help to maximise the benefits brought about by the Government's enhancement of the Section 481 film tax credit system, including the decision to increase the cap for eligible expenditure on film projects to €70 million, as announced as part of Budget 2016.

The twin approach of direct funding and tax expenditure measures maximises the benefits of Government's support to the audiovisual industry.

In addition to the supports outlined above the Creative Ireland Programme 2017 – 2022 which was announced in December 2016 is a cross-Government initiative to mainstream culture and creativity in the life of the nation and to promote individual, community and national well-being.

The objective of the fourth pillar of the Programme – establishing Ireland as a centre of excellence in media production – is to elevate the creative industries including media, architecture, design, digital technology, fashion, food and crafts together on an all of government basis. The initial focus of the Creative Ireland programme this year is to undertake to develop an industry-wide, long-term plan for Ireland as a global hub for the production of Film, TV Drama and Animation by the end of 2017. This objective is also reflected in the Action Plan for Rural Ireland given the importance of the film industry to rural Ireland.

In this regard, my Department has commissioned an economic analysis of our screen based creative industries, in partnership with the Departments of Communications, Climate Action and Environment and Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. This study will examine the economic impact including employment and the potential of the Irish film, TV and animation sector. Following an open tender process, Olsberg SPI Ltd in association with Nordicity, was selected to conduct the study in November last year. The commissioning of the study was also a commitment in the Action Plan for Jobs 2016.

The recommendations of the economic study will inform the development of the plan envisaged under the Creative Ireland Programme for an industry-wide, long term plan, for Ireland as a global digital hub for the production of film, TV Drama and animation.

On 5 May last, I hosted a very successful Media Production Workshop at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham which attracted attendance by representatives of the film, broadcast, animation and gaming industries. The outcomes of this event will also input into the consultant's study and the proposed Government plan. It is intended that the economic study will be completed shortly and that the Government plan based on the study will be published by end of the year.

### **Constitutional Amendments**

137. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health his plans to hold the referendum on the Eighth Amendment before the end of May 2018. [40867/17]

138. **Deputy Bríd Smith** asked the Minister for Health the timeframe in 2018 for the referendum on the issue of the Eighth Amendment to the Constitution. [39622/17]



**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 138 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, the Government established a Citizens' Assembly, in line with its Programme for Partnership Government commitment, to consider a number of matters including constitutional reform. The Assembly first considered the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Article 40.3.3), and submitted its final report, setting out its recommendations, to the Oireachtas on 29 June 2017.

The Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution is now considering the report of the Citizens' Assembly in order to recommend to the Oireachtas the policy direction it should consider on the issue. The first public meeting of the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, chaired by Senator Catherine Noone, was on 20 September. The Committee is to report its conclusions and recommendations to both Houses of the Oireachtas within three months of its first public meeting, which would therefore be due on or before 20 December 2017. The Joint Committee's report will then be debated in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Government has agreed to hold a referendum on the Eighth Amendment in May or June 2018 subject to the timely passage of a Constitutional Amendment Bill on the matter by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

139. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Health the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40801/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have delegated responsibilities to the three Ministers of State assigned to my Department as follows:

Finian McGrath T.D., Minister of State for Disabilities at my Department, has been delegated responsibility for all legislation, policy and funding relating to the provision of specialist health and personal social services to persons with a disability. The Order S.I. No. 335 of 2017 Health (Delegation of Ministerial Functions)(No. 2) Order 2017 delegating these functions was signed by the Taoiseach on the 18 July 2017.

Catherine Byrne T.D., Minister of State has been delegated responsibility for Communities, the National Drugs Strategy and Health Promotion. The Order S.I. No. 339 of 2017 Health (Delegation of Ministerial Functions)(No. 4) Order 2017 delegating these functions was signed by the Taoiseach on 18 July 2017. I have also assigned responsibility for Social Inclusion issues to Minister Byrne on a non-statutory basis.

Jim Daly T.D., Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People has been delegated responsibility for all legislation, policy and funding relating to the provision of mental health services for adults, children and adolescents, including the strategy on suicide prevention. Minister Daly will also be responsible for all services for older people, including the Nursing Support Scheme. The Order S.I. No. 340 of 2017 Health (Delegation of Ministerial Functions)(No. 3) Order 2017 delegating these functions was signed by the Taoiseach on 18 July 2017.

## Nursing Staff

140. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the transfer arrangements for public health nurses (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40810/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I have asked the HSE to respond to the Deputy directly on this matter.

## Transport Support Scheme

141. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Health when a replacement scheme will be announced for the motorised transport grant and the mobility allowance in view of the fact that this has been discussed for the past four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40814/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** Conscious of the reports of the Ombudsman in 2011 and 2012 regarding the legal status of both the Mobility Allowance and Motorised Transport Grant Scheme in the context of the Equal Status Acts, the Government decided to close both schemes in February 2013.

The Government is aware of the continuing needs of people with a disability who rely on individual payments that support choice and independence. In this regard, monthly payments of up to €208.50 have continued to be made by the Health Service Executive to 4,700 people who were in receipt of the Mobility Allowance.

The Government decided that the detailed preparatory work required for a new Transport Support Scheme and associated statutory provisions should be progressed by the Minister for Health and the *Programme for a Partnership Government* acknowledges the ongoing drafting of primary legislation for a new Transport Support Scheme. I can confirm that work on the policy proposals for the new Scheme is at an advanced stage. The proposals seek to ensure that:

- There is a firm statutory basis to the Scheme's operation;
- There is transparency and equity in the eligibility criteria attaching to the Scheme;
- Resources are targeted at those with greatest needs; and
- The Scheme is capable of being costed and is affordable on its introduction and on an ongoing basis.

The next step is to seek Government approval to the drafting of a Bill for the new Scheme

## Nursing Homes Support Scheme Data

142. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health the number of fair deal beds in CH08 by county; the annual cost of same by county; the number of contracted beds in CH08 by county; the cost of each contracted bed; the additional costs for contracted beds; the private nursing homes by county providing contracted beds; and the annual cost of contracted beds by county in tabular form. [40831/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service

matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **HSE Staff Data**

143. **Deputy Imelda Munster** asked the Minister for Health the detail of the management structure and or organisational chart for CH08 by each pillar, including primary care, mental health, social care, health and well-being; and the annual costs of same by pay and non-pay categories. [40832/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **HSE Staff Recruitment**

144. **Deputy Peter Burke** asked the Minister for Health when a position (details supplied) will be filled. [40837/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In relation to the query raised by the Deputy, as this is a service issue, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Medicinal Products Licensing**

145. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 535 of 20 September 2017, if his attention has been drawn to the impact that the changes of the prescribing of Lidocaine have had on persons with fibromyalgia; if the HSE medicines management programme has investigated the impact that changes to the prescription of pain medication has on persons with fibromyalgia; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40839/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) Act 2013, the HSE has statutory responsibility for the administration of the community drug schemes; therefore, the matter has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Neuro-Rehabilitation Policy**

146. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the implementation of the national neuro-rehabilitation strategy; if his attention has been drawn to an organisation's (details supplied) campaign and its call for specific investment of €7 million in 2018 to address the underfunding of neuro-rehabilitation services here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40842/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Health Service Executive Social Care Division and the Health Service Executive Clinical Programme and Strategy Division are working in tandem to progress the implementation of the National Policy and Strategy for the provision of Neuro-rehabilitation Services in Ireland. This is in line with the commitment to publish an implementation plan as outlined in the Programme for a

Partnership Government and the commitment in the Health Service Executive National Service Plan 2017 and the Health Service Executive Social Care Operational Plan for 2017.

Given the level of feedback received by the Executive following a consultation process in 2016 in respect of the Implementation Framework, the Framework document needs to be enhanced and expanded by the HSE to ensure engagement of the whole health system, i.e. engagement across the acute hospital, post-acute and community levels of care. The Health Service Executive is committed to publishing a draft Implementation Plan before year end.

The enhanced Implementation Framework will be completed by members of the National Working Group and overseen by the National Steering Group. I am happy to inform the Deputy that the first meeting of the reconstituted National Steering Group was held on Tuesday 26 September 2017.

Full terms of reference for both the National Steering Group and the National Working Group are in development. The terms of reference will provide guidance on the roles and functions of the groups, to ensure that all members have clarity in terms of accountability and responsibilities.

Funding for the implementation of the Strategy will be considered by my Department in the context of the ongoing discussions with the HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform as part of the Estimates Process for Budget 2018.

### **HSE Properties**

147. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the status of the refurbishment of the HSE property in Drogheda Street, Monasterevin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40847/17]

148. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the amount that has been spent on the refurbishment of the HSE property in Drogheda Street, Monasterevin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40848/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 147 and 148 together.

Your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply as the management of the healthcare property estate is a service matter.

### **HSE Properties**

149. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the long-term plans for the HSE property on Drogheda Street, Monasterevin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40849/17]

150. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the reason the HSE property on Drogheda Street, Monasterevin is not reopening; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40850/17]

151. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 351 of 27 June 2017, the reason this Deputy received confirmation that the HSE property in Drogheda Street, Monasterevin would be reopening; and if he will make a statement

on the matter. [40851/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 149 to 151, inclusive, together.

As these are service matters I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Hospital Staff**

152. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 444 of 14 February 2017, the public hospitals that are resourced with at least one clinical nurse specialist whole-time equivalent that is specific to the HSE's outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy OPAT programme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40854/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospitals Data**

153. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 444 of 14 February 2017, the number of persons that were IV antibiotic inpatients in each public hospital in 2016; the number of hospital bed days that were taken up by IV antibiotic inpatients in each public hospital in 2016; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40855/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospitals Data**

154. **Deputy Noel Rock** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 444 of 14 February 2017, the number of persons that were community-based IV antibiotic patients via the OPAT programme; the number of persons on the self-care OPAT programme; the number on the nurse led OPAT programme; the number of hospital bed days that these groups of persons accounted for in 2016, by hospital, in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40856/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

155. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Health if a hospital appointment will be expedited for a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40871/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Ser-

vice Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **HSE Staff Remuneration**

156. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 466 of 20 September 2017, if the 2015 circular on sleepover pay rates and its funding in the 2015 service plan applies to all HSE-funded section 38 and section 39 organisations in the sector. [40872/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** HSE HR Circular 027 / 2014 applies to HSE staff and staff employed by agencies that are funded by the HSE under section 38 of the Health Act 2004 who undertake sleepover duties as set out in the circular.

### **Nursing Staff Provision**

157. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the measures he proposes to implement in view of the shortage of nursing personnel at a hospital (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40902/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In response to the particular query raised, as this is a service matter, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Medical Card Data**

158. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health the number of medical cards that have been issued as a result of the new arrangements for persons that have been approved for the domiciliary care allowance arising from the changes in the budget; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40905/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** As this question relates to service matters, I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply.

### **General Practitioner Data**

159. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of general practitioners required based on the population of a town; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40907/17]

160. **Deputy Fiona O'Loughlin** asked the Minister for Health the number of general prac-

tioners in each town in County Kildare; the population of each town in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40908/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 159 and 160 together.

As these questions relate to service matters, I have arranged for the questions to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Disability Services Provision**

161. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Health the progress in responding to a number of issues relating to delays in providing services for children with disabilities as outlined by a service provider (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40913/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Finian McGrath):** The Deputy may wish to note that I have been in contact with the Health Service Executive concerning the issues raised and as the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have also arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Hospital Appointments Status**

162. **Deputy Joan Collins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40935/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** Under the Health Act 2004, the Health Service Executive (HSE) is required to manage and deliver, or arrange to be delivered on its behalf, health and personal social services. Section 6 of the HSE Governance Act 2013 bars the Minister for Health from directing the HSE to provide a treatment or a personal service to any individual or to confer eligibility on any individual.

The scheduling of appointments for patients is a matter for the hospital to which the patient has been referred. Should a patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he or she should take the matter up with the consultant and the hospital involved. In relation to the specific case raised, I have asked the HSE to respond to you directly.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

163. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the length of public waiting lists for non-essential surgeries (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40984/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** I acknowledge that waiting times are often unacceptably long and I am conscious of the burden that this places on patients and their families.

Reducing waiting times for the longest waiting patients is one of this Government's key priorities. Consequently, Budget 2017 allocated €20 million to the NTPF, rising to €55 million

in 2018.

Over recent years activity in acute hospitals has increased, with the total number of discharges of inpatients and daycases rising around 34% between 2006 and 2015. Last year alone there was a 4% increase in inpatient and daycase activity over 2015, and in 2016 1.69 million patients received inpatient or daycase treatment in our hospitals, an increase of almost 40,000 on the previous year.

Clinical need will determine that some patients require care more urgently than others and it is appropriate that patients are prioritised on this basis. However, in order to provide a fair and equitable service, it is also essential that waiting times are reduced by addressing the needs of those patients longest waiting through effective chronological scheduling.

In order to reduce the numbers of long-waiting patients, I asked the HSE to develop Waiting List Action Plans for 2017 in the areas of Inpatient/Daycase, Scoliosis and Outpatient Services. The Inpatient/Daycase Action Plan is being delivered through a combination of normal hospital activity, as well as insourcing and outsourcing initiatives utilising NTPF funding. Under the Inpatient/Daycase Plan, since early February, over 23,800 patients have come off the Inpatient/Daycase Waiting List.

The NTPF has advised that to date 5,901 patients have been authorised for treatment in private hospitals under its initiatives, 2,235 patients have accepted an offer of treatment in a private hospital and that 1,112 patients have received their procedure. The NTPF has also indicated that 2,841 patients have been authorised for treatment in public hospitals under the Plan's insourcing initiatives, 910 offers of treatment have been accepted and 285 patients have been treated.

Under the Outpatient Plan, since early February, more than 84,200 patients have come off the Outpatient Waiting List .

### **Organ Donation**

164. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his views on the situation regarding the implementation of a soft opt-out organ donation system; his further views on whether it is a matter of urgency in view of the death rates on organ transplant waiting lists; and if the public consultation process on same as committed to can be expedited [40985/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** In July 2017 the Government approved the preparation of a General Scheme and Heads of a Human Tissue Bill. The General Scheme will include provisions for an opt-out system of consent for organ donation. Under this system, consent will be deemed unless the person has, while alive, registered his/her wish not to become an organ donor after death. However, the next-of-kin will always be consulted prior to removing any organ.

One of the aims of the legislation is to make organ donation the norm in Ireland when people pass away in circumstances in which donation is a possibility. The introduction of an opt-out system of consent for organ donation will be accompanied by a publicity campaign aimed at raising awareness of organ donation and encouraging discussion among families of the intentions of family members in relation to organ donation.

A public consultation on the proposed Human Tissue Bill commenced on 28 August 2017. The consultation questionnaire is available online at <http://health.gov.ie/consultations> and the closing date for submissions is 9 October 2017.



## Addiction Treatment Services

165. **Deputy Maureen O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health his views on Naltrexone implants as a possible treatment for those persons that suffer from opiate addiction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40986/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Catherine Byrne):** I assume the Deputy is referring to Naltrexone implants which block the effects of opiate drugs. Naltrexone implants are not currently licensed in this country.

The HSE has informed the Department of Health that its current Clinical Guidelines for Opioid Substitution acknowledge that Naltrexone may be a useful adjunct to psychosocial treatment for suitably motivated patients, but is not generally recommended where psychological support cannot be secured.

## Home Help Service Data

166. **Deputy Thomas Byrne** asked the Minister for Health the number of persons that have been approved home help or a home support package but that are on a waiting list to receive either due to a lack of available staff in County Meath. [41003/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Jim Daly):** As this is a service matter I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

## Departmental Funding

167. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Health if an increased budget will be made available to support the volunteering infrastructure; if in this context additional funding will be made available in 2018 for the volunteer centres in counties Longford and Westmeath that have a significant increase in activity in 2017 (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [41004/17]

**Minister for Health (Deputy Simon Harris):** The Department of Health does not directly fund volunteering organisations. Any funding provided would be by the Health Service Executive in the context of Budget 2018 and in the HSE National Service Plan.

## Ministerial Responsibilities

168. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40791/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** There is one Minister of State attached to my Department. Minister Andrew Doyle was appointed on 20 June 2017, with special responsibility for Food, Forestry and Horticulture and has been working in my Department since that date. Minister Doyle’s responsibilities include: the implementation

of the 2014-2020 Forestry Programme, delivering on the horticulture actions identified in Food Wise 2025, including capital investment for developments in the sector, support for the Organic sector including the delivery of new capital investment for this sector as part of the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS II) under the Rural Development Programme. Other responsibilities include the implementation of the Indecon Report recommendations for the Greyhound sector and exploring the potential for energy crops.

I will shortly be bringing a memo to Government regarding the Delegation of Ministerial Functions to Minister Doyle.

### **GLAS Payments**

169. **Deputy Paul Kehoe** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when persons (details supplied) will receive a payment in full; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40835/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The person named was approved into GLAS 1 with a contract commencement date of 1 January 2016.

During the 2016 checking process an issue presented on the computerised crosscheck of Department databases. Department officials are actively working to resolve this issue with a view to further processing the application for the 2016 payment as soon as possible.

### **Tuberculosis Eradication Programme**

170. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 7 of 30 November 2016, the progress on the development and roll-out of a tuberculosis vaccination programme for badgers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40870/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** As I mentioned in my response to parliamentary question number 7 of 30 November 2016, it is my Department's intention to deploy a full badger vaccination strategy as soon as robust scientific evidence becomes available to demonstrate that such a programme is practicable and will deliver an outcome equivalent to the existing wildlife programme.

A number of field trials have been taking place throughout the country, involving the vaccination of badgers by intramuscular injection with the human BCG vaccine. The field trials are now coming to a conclusion and the preliminary results are currently being evaluated. Based on those results I expect to be in a position to make an announcement on the future role of a badger vaccination programme before the end of the year.

### **GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme**

171. **Deputy Niamh Smyth** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the criteria, deadline and other information in respect of the 2017 GLAS farm outbuildings scheme. [40906/17]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Michael Creed):** The second tranche of the GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Scheme closed for applications on 18 Novem-

ber 2016. Grant offers issued to over 80 successful applicants in May 2017 for works to be undertaken this year.

I plan to open a further tranche of this very successful scheme later this year for works to be undertaken in 2018. The Scheme is administered by the Heritage Council on behalf of my Department and all further information, such as that sought, will be available once the new Tranche has been opened.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

172. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40794/17]

**Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Deputy Denis Naughten):** There is one Minister of State attached to my Department. I have assigned designated powers to Minister of State, Seán Kyne T.D. under Statutory Instrument No. 314 of 2017, Communications, Climate Action and Environment (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2017. The designated functions in question relate to:

- the Natural Resources area including Mineral and Petroleum Exploration Production and Mining,
- Inland Fisheries and
- the Geological Survey of Ireland.

Other responsibilities relating to Digital Development are also being assigned to Minister of State Kyne but they will not involve any statutory functions.

This order was approved by Government on 11 July 2017. A copy of this Statutory Instrument has been forwarded to the Deputy. It can be found at: [www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/314/made/en/print](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/si/314/made/en/print).

### **Heritage Promotion**

173. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the degree to which he encourages the creation of historical or heritage journeys in respect of various heritage sites throughout the country in a way similar to the development of the Wild Atlantic Way and other similar initiatives; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40932/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Brendan Griffin):** My Department's role in relation to tourism lies in the area of national tourism policy. It is not directly involved in the management or development of individual tourism projects, including the development of Experience Brands such as the Wild Atlantic Way and Ireland's Ancient East. These are operational matters for the Board and Management of Fáilte Ireland.

I have referred the Deputy's question to Fáilte Ireland for further information on this mat-

ter and for direct reply to the Deputy. Please contact my private office if a reply has not been received within ten days.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

174. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40807/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** There has been no statutory delegation of functions to Minister of State Brendan Griffin. The Minister of State's functions were assigned on an administrative basis. He was allocated general responsibility for sport, with a focus on:

- the Sports Capital Programme;
- the Local Authority Swimming Pool Programme;
- engagement with Sport Ireland, National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships in relation to
  - promoting participation in sport, recreation and physical activity and
  - the promotion of high performance sport;
  - oversight of the National Sports Campus; and
  - engagement with the institutions of the European Union on sport matters, including attendance at the Council of Ministers when significant sports issues are to be discussed and attendance by a Minister is required.

Minister of State Brendan Griffin also has general responsibility for domestic tourism, with a particular focus on:

- development of tourism product;
- domestic tourism marketing;
- Tourism generating events including festivals, sports, business, and cultural tourism.

In addition to the allocated responsibilities, Minister of State Brendan Griffin will support the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Mr Shane Ross, TD, in relation to:

- Oireachtas business;
- international commitments;
- attendance at public events; and
- other matters as may be required.

### **Road Projects Status**

175. **Deputy Tom Neville** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if safety proposals for Wards Cross in addition to a traffic survey have been presented to Transport Infrastructure Ireland. [40813/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** As Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I have responsibility for overall policy and funding in relation to the national roads programme. The planning, design and implementation of individual road projects is a matter for the Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) under the Roads Acts 1993-2015 in conjunction with the local authorities concerned.

Within its capital budget, the assessment and prioritisation of individual projects is a matter in the first instance for TII in accordance with Section 19 of the Roads Act.

Noting the above position, I have referred the Deputy's question to TII for direct reply. Please advise my private office if you don't receive a reply within 10 working days.

### **Insurance Industry Regulation**

176. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the reason there is no legislation forcing insurance companies to disclose claims statistics to show transparency and justify rising costs. [40820/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** This matter falls under the remit of the Minister for Finance as it relates to the collection of claims statistics arising from insurance claims and the legislation governing insurance generally, rather than the specific legislative requirements governing the obligation for motorists to have insurance arising from domestic and international law.

### **Budget 2017**

177. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has given consideration to the proposals of an organisation (details supplied) in respect of budget 2018 in view of the critical importance of this sector to the economy and in further view of the adverse impacts of Brexit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40889/17]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Shane Ross):** I am very aware of the important role of the haulage sector in our economy and I recognise the difficulties it faces in the current climate. My Department has worked with haulage industry representative organisations to assist the industry and we will continue to examine how it may be supported and how the effects of Brexit on the sector may be mitigated. I have met with industry representative organisations and I will be available in the coming months for further meetings. My officials and I are mindful of the budget proposals submitted by the Irish Road Haulage Association; however, it should be pointed out that any such budgetary provisions are ultimately a matter for the Minister for Finance.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

178. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of Ministers of State attached to her Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by her and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which

each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40793/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** There are no Ministers of State assigned to my Department.

### **Child and Family Agency Data**

179. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children residential centres here by county; and the amount each centre has cost in each of the years 2011 to 2016 in tabular form. [40823/17]

181. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children that were in residential care centres by age bracket (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016 in tabular form. [40825/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 179 and 181 together.

I have referred the Deputy's requests for information as detailed to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for direct response to the Deputy concerned.

### **Foster Care Data**

180. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of registered foster care homes here by county; and the amount each county has received in each of the years 2011 to 2016. [40824/17]

182. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of children that were in foster care by age bracket (details supplied) in each of the years 2011 to 2016, in tabular form. [40826/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 180 and 182 together.

I have referred the Deputy's request for specific information as detailed to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, for direct response to the Deputy concerned.

*Question No. 181 answered with Question No. 179.*

*Question No. 182 answered with Question No. 180.*

### **Child and Family Agency Investigations**

183. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will investigate with Tusla the steps taken regarding a report in 2016 of mental, physical and sexual abuse by other service users and staff circa 2010 to 2012 at a charity made by a person (details supplied); and if she will further investigate the complaints of the person that reports were not taken seriously or investigated adequately by the charity or Tusla. [40836/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** I have requested

information from Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. I will forward the reply to the Deputy once I have been furnished with this information.

### Cúram agus Oideachas na Luath-Óige

184. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** den an Aire Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige cathain a fhoilseofar an tuarascáil ón bhfoghrua den Fhóram um Luathbhlianta ar baill de CNNG, Gaeloideachas, Foras na Gaeilge, na Naíonraí Gaelacha, an Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna, an Roinn Cultúir, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta, an tÚdarás, agus an Roinn Leanaí agus Gnóthaí Óige. [40861/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** Chuir foghrúpa an Fhórait um Luathbhlianta maidir le tacaíocht don Ghaeilge a dtuarascáil achomair faoi bhráid an Fhórait i mí Iúil. Ba í príomhbhéim fhoghrúpa an Fhórait ná ceisteanna a phlé a bhaineann le ceisteanna faoin nGaeilge go ginearálta agus na torthaí a chur ar fáil don Fhóram níos leithne. Tá moltaí an ghrúpa i gcomhthéacs chóras na Luathbhlianta agus próiseas na meastachán cáinainéiseach á bplé anois. Cé go bhfuil an cheist mar gheall ar fhoilsiú na tuarascála achoimre á plé faoi láthair, níl cinneadh déanta ar an rud seo fós.

### Child Care Costs

185. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the full year cost of increasing the universal child care subsidy universal band from €1,040 per year to €1,800, €2,400, €3,000 and €3,600, respectively, with pro rata increases for the part-time, sessional and half sessional subsidies; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40886/17]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Katherine Zappone):** The cost of increasing the universal childcare subsidy from €1,040 per year to €1,800, €2,400, €3,000 and €3,600, with pro rata increases for the part time, sessional and half sessional subsidies is as follows:

Universal subsidy (max per year)	Max per week	Additional cost
€1,040	€20.00	€0m
€1,800	€34.62	€14m
€2,400	€46.15	€26m
€3,000	€57.69	€37m
€3,600	€69.23	€49m

The table sets out cost estimates for the different scenarios proposed, based on the following assumptions:

- There are no changes in the subsidy-rates for other Bands (A, AJ, B, D).
- The costs are full-year costs.
- There is no additional change in the level of parental demand for childcare as a result of the increased subsidies.

### Ministerial Responsibilities

186. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Rural and Community Development the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40805/17]

**Minister for Rural and Community Development (Deputy Michael Ring):** My Department has one Minister of State, Sean Kyne T.D., who was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment with responsibility for natural resources, community affairs and digital development.

An Order designating the functions within my Department which are to be assigned to Minister of State Kyne is currently being drafted and I intend to bring it to Government for approval shortly.

### **Household Benefits Scheme**

187. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will consider reinstating the telephone allowance as part of the household benefit package in budget 2018 (details supplied). [41002/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The savings arising from the initial reduction and subsequent discontinuance of the telephone allowance meant that my Department was able to retain the other valuable elements of the household benefits package such as the electricity and gas allowance and the television licence. My Department will spend approximately €232 million this year on these elements of the household benefits package for over 430,000 customers.

The cost of the telephone allowance scheme had risen significantly each year, as the number of eligible customers grew. At the end of September 2013 there were almost 396,000 receiving the telephone allowance compared to approximately 316,000 people in 2007. This was an increase of 25%, or an average increase of nearly 4% per annum.

The Government is keenly aware of the impact of Budget decisions on the Department's clients, and strives to ensure that the money available is targeted in the most effective way. In Budget 2016, the first increase in the basic rate of the State pension in seven years was given. This increased the personal rate of the non-contributory pension to €222, and that of the contributory pension to €233.30. There was also a €2.50 increase in the rate of the Fuel Allowance, from €20 to €22.50 per week.

In Budget 2017, there was a further increase in the rate of State pensions by €5, which has increased the maximum personal rate of the non-contributory pension to €227, and of the maximum rate of the contributory pension to €238.30.

Therefore, over the past two Budgets, the maximum weekly rate for State Pensions has increased by €8 per week, along with pro-rata increases for Increases for Qualified Adults. The value of these increases is well in excess of the value of the telephone allowance previously provided.

The Department of the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government has responsibility for the Seniors Alert Scheme which provides grant support for the supply of equipment



such as personal alarms, smoke detectors and security lighting to enable older people without sufficient means to continue to live securely in their homes. The grant assistance is made available through community and voluntary groups registered with that Department and the equipment supplied under the scheme remains the property of the community group.

Any decision to restore the telephone allowance would have to be considered in the context of overall budgetary negotiations. In the previous two Budgets, the Government has concentrated resources on increasing the rate of the pension, rather than on the Household Benefits package.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Ministerial Responsibilities**

188. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of Ministers of State attached to her Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by her and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40798/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The Government's authority to delegate powers and duties to Ministers of State is contained in section 2 of the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 1977.

On 14 June 2017 Minister Finian McGrath T.D. was reappointed Minister of State at the Department of Social Protection, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Health with special responsibility for disability issues. The delegation of Minister McGrath's statutory functions in relation to my Department was effected by way of the Social Protection (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) Order 2017 (S.I. 321 of 2017) which was signed by an Taoiseach on 18 July 2017.

On 20 June 2017 Minister Pat Breen T.D. was appointed Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise and Innovation, the Department of Employment and Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of the Taoiseach, and the Department of Justice and Equality with special responsibility for trade, employment, business, EU digital single market and data protection. The preparation of a delegation order for Minister Breen is currently being considered.

### **Community Employment Schemes Data**

189. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 695 of 20 September 2017, if there have been cases of persons participating in courses that are NFQ level 7 or higher as part of their individual learning plan agreed between the community employment supervisor with the person; the number of these persons; the NFQ level qualification attained; and the year it was attained during each of the past 15 years. [40809/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Training on Community Employment (CE) is based on the personal and occupational needs of each individual and is identified through the tailored Individual Learning Plan (ILP), agreed

between the CE Supervisor and the participant and approved by my Department. A participant training grant is allocated to each CE Scheme.

During their time on CE, participants are encouraged and supported to work towards a major award/industry recognised standard of achievement which supports progression to employment and further training and education. In general, participants on CE engage in training leading to an award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) at Level 3, 4, 5 or 6, or industry recognised equivalent. The award level must be appropriate to the individual's ability, prior education history and progression goals.

In a number of individual cases, having regard to the participant's circumstances and the need to support an individual's progression opportunities, a contribution towards the cost of a higher level award (NFQ Level 7 or higher) may be considered by my Department, in line with the overall training budget allocation.

The following table shows the number of participants who were assisted to achieve awards at NFQ Level 7 or higher during their time on CE from the year 2012 to 2016: (Note: data available from 2012 only when responsibility for CE transferred to my Department).

Award Level Totals	No. of Participants	Major Award	Minor Award	Special Purpose Award	Supplemental Award	Other *	Grand Total
Level 7 (HETAC)	318	231	62	36	1	30	360
Level 8 (HETAC)	132	84	59	10		5	158
Level 9 (HETAC)	37	27	15	2			44
Totals	487	342	136	48	1	35	562

\* *Industry related or other equivalent certification*

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Gender Recognition

190. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the composition and terms of reference for the review group of the Gender Recognition Act 2015; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40812/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Section 7 of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 provides for a review of the Act to commence within 2 years of enactment of the legislation.

My Department is working on this and I hope to be in a position to establish the review group shortly and its terms of reference will then be finalised. The matters covered by the review will include issues relating to gender recognition for children younger than 16 years of age; arrangements for 16 and 17 year olds; and the position of non-binary and intersex persons.

The findings and conclusions of the review must be presented to the Oireachtas by September 2018.

### Rural Social Scheme Eligibility

191. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the new qualifying criteria for the rural social scheme; if she will honour the commitment made to participants that where on the rural social scheme before these changes were implemented that they would remain under the guidelines of the old qualifying criteria for the scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40818/17]

192. **Deputy John Brassil** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason participants of the rural social scheme in County Kerry are being called for review; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40819/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 191 and 192 together.

The rural social scheme (RSS) provides opportunities for farmers and fishermen/women who are currently in receipt of specified social welfare payments to work to provide certain services of benefit to rural communities. Communities benefit from the skills and talents of local farmers and fishermen and participants have the opportunity to improve existing skills, or develop new skills, while performing this valuable work in their local communities.

Since 1 February 2017, all participants commencing on the RSS have to be over 25 years of age and a 6 year overall participation limit on the work scheme also applies. The new measure ensures that places become available to provide opportunities for other farmers and fishermen to take part in the scheme. RSS participants who commenced on the scheme prior to 1 February 2017 will remain on the scheme, as long as they continue to remain eligible for the scheme.

To be eligible to participate on the RSS, an individual must satisfy the qualifying criteria for the scheme. This includes having an entitlement to one of the qualifying social welfare payments and maintaining an underlying entitlement to Farm/Fish Assist.

This Department has a strong governance ethos in relation to all funding provided for the administration of its schemes and programmes. It endeavours at all times to ensure that only eligible customers benefit from these schemes. This also applies to people who are already participating on a scheme.

Participants on the RSS are given an annual contract if they continue to satisfy the conditions of the scheme. In the event that any of the conditions pertaining to the scheme are not satisfied, the RSS contract cannot be renewed. In addition, payments can be reviewed at any stage to ensure that participants continue to satisfy the underlying conditions and to ensure that they receive their correct entitlement. This practice has been in place since the commencement of the scheme.

The control of RSS is aligned with the aims to reduce fraud and minimise risks to public funds on an ongoing basis. Any change in a participants/household circumstances should be notified to the Department as this may impact on their continued entitlement and their rate of payment. These rules apply to all participants on the RSS regardless of their location.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Data**

193. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of active participants on community employment schemes. [40829/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Community Employment (CE) schemes provide part-time temporary work in local communities, including opportunities for training and development as a stepping-stone back to employment, for people in receipt of a qualifying of social welfare payments. These schemes help to break the cycle of unemployment and improve a person's chances of returning to the labour market.

The total number of participants active on CE schemes at end June 2017 was 22,053. My Department is conscious of the valuable contribution the schemes and participants are making in the provision of services to individuals and communities across Ireland.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Community Employment Schemes Data**

194. **Deputy John Brady** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of community employment schemes that are engaged in crèche and after school services. [40830/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** My Department introduced a new Community Employment (CE) childcare strand in 2013 under which there is a dedicated childcare training programme leading to a major award at QQI Level 5 for CE participants who work directly with children. The QQI Major Level 5 Award is the entry level requirement to work as a basic practitioner in childcare. This has led to rationalised entry requirements, defined standards of achievement, a career progression path, and a structure for CE workers in Early Years Services.

These changes are designed to provide a more tailored and valuable support to the provision of community childcare and achieve greater coherence between participation on CE and the job market. This will improve the career path for participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare.

As at the end of March 2017, there were just over 150 CE schemes with approximately 1,600 participants directly engaged in the provision of crèche and after school services.

I trust this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Fuel Allowance Eligibility**

195. **Deputy Jackie Cahill** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if she will review the case of a person (details supplied) in view of the fact that they qualify. [40838/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** Fuel allowance is a means tested payment to assist householders on long-term social welfare payments who are unable to provide for their own heating needs. It is not intended to meet those costs in full. Only one allowance is paid per household.

Eligibility for fuel allowance is subject to a household means test and other qualifying conditions, such as household composition. With regard to means, a person may have a combined household income of up to €100.00 per week over and above the maximum rate of state pension (contributory). For every means limit set, applicants who exceed the permissible income limit,

marginally or otherwise, fail to qualify.

In addition to their state pension (contributory), the person concerned is in receipt of a private pension which brings them over the permissible weekly income limit. On that basis, their application for fuel allowance was disallowed. There is no scope for discretion to be applied where a claimant does not satisfy the conditions for the scheme.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Fuel Allowance Applications**

196. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the status of a fuel allowance application by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40853/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The fuel allowance is payable to persons who receive certain qualifying social welfare payments. Carer's allowance is not a qualifying payment.

However, carers may qualify for fuel allowance if they are getting half-rate carer's allowance and another qualifying social welfare payment. Alternatively, if the carer resides with their care recipient, that care recipient may be in receipt of a qualifying payment and entitled to apply for the fuel allowance in their own right.

In this case, neither the person concerned nor the care recipient is in receipt of a qualifying payment.

Under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) scheme, a weekly or monthly supplement may be paid to assist people whose means are insufficient to meet their needs in certain circumstances.

A special heating supplement may be paid to assist people who have special heating needs. A person may qualify for a heating supplement, if they can show that they have extra heating needs because of their age, medical condition or disability, are living alone or only with a dependent adult or dependent children and satisfy a means test.

In addition, exceptional needs payments (ENP) may be made to help meet an essential, once-off cost which an applicant is unable to meet out of his or her own resources. There is no automatic entitlement to this payment. Each application is decided on the particular circumstances of the case. The person concerned could apply for these payments from her local community welfare service.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **JobPath Programme**

197. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection if her attention has been drawn to the fact that a company (details supplied) contracted by her Department to provide Jobpath services is demanding that users register with a London-based company. [40865/17]

198. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection

if she has satisfied herself that no data protection concerns arise from the demand by a company (details supplied) contracted by her department to provide jobpath services that users register with a London based company. [40866/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 197 and 198 together.

Ireland's Public Employment Service (PES) is managed by my Department and delivered directly by its own Intreo service as well as by contracted private providers i.e. companies delivering the Local Employment Service (LES), Job Clubs and JobPath services. These providers act on behalf of the Department for the purpose of delivering these services and are subject to strict obligations imposed by the Department in terms of data protection.

The purpose of sharing information is to assist in the development of tailored plans for individual jobseekers in order to support them back into paid employment.

JobPath providers may use jobseekers' data only for the purposes of delivering employment services for the Department. Both companies undertake regular independent audits of their data processes and procedures as part of their contractual obligations.

Employees of Seetec, and their subcontractors, are subject to the same data protection laws as departmental staff.

JobPath providers are contractually required to register with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. Data protection legislation requires that personal data shall be kept only for one or more specified and lawful purposes and that personal data shall be used and disclosed only in ways compatible with these purposes. The legislation also requires that the data should be adequate, relevant and not excessive. Any suspected breach of the data protection legislation will be investigated by the Department and may also be a matter for the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner.

Abintegro is a job-seeking aid that has various tools and features, such as a library of video tutorials, a CV builder, a cover letter building tool, advice on completing job applications and has been designed to support jobseekers in obtaining employment. The use of this aid is optional for jobseekers engaged with the JobPath service.

### **Defined Benefit Pension Schemes**

199. **Deputy Mary Butler** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the reason persons (details supplied) were not included in the settlement which was reached under a European Court of Appeal ruling approximately two years ago; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40868/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The mediated agreement for former Waterford Crystal workers, covers members of the Waterford Crystal Limited Contributory Pension Plan for Staff and the Waterford Crystal Limited Contributory Pension Scheme for Factory Employees, and provides for the payment of -

(a) a tax-free once-off lump sum of €1,200 for every year of pension scheme service (not company service), not exceeding 40 years, plus

(b) payment of monies in respect of pension scheme service which is payable from the normal retirement date of the scheme members (on a fortnightly basis).

The terms of the mediated settlement are specifically in respect of a particular group of scheme members whose pension benefits were significantly and detrimentally affected by the wind-up of the scheme.

Former workers who left the service of Waterford Crystal in the early 1990s received their full pension entitlements in relation to pre-1991 service under the schemes at that point. In line with the rules of the company's pension schemes at the time and the Pensions Act, 1990, such persons had the option to choose whether to take a deferred pension in respect of full service with the company or a refund of pre 1 January 1991 contributions and a deferred pension in respect of post 1 January 1991 service. The Department does not have information on the settlements reached in relation to pre-1991 service as these were matters between the pension scheme and its members at the time.

I understand that the persons referred to by the Deputy left the service of Waterford Crystal in 1986 and in the early 1990s and received a full refund of their pension contributions under the schemes at that time. The payments made were in full and final settlement of their entitlements under the schemes and were paid in accordance with Pension Regulations then in force. There are no settlements or payments due under the mediated settlement in relation to the persons referred to above.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### **Social Welfare Benefits Expenditure**

200. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the cost of increasing all welfare and pension payments for every 1% increase. [40878/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The cost of increasing all weekly rates of payment by 1% is estimated to be just over €145 million in 2018 and a full year. The cost includes proportionate increases for qualified adults.

It should be noted that this cost is subject to change over the coming weeks in the context of emerging trends and associated revision of the estimated numbers of recipients for 2018.

### **Labour Activation Programmes**

201. **Deputy Clare Daly** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied); her views on whether this is a sensible approach to helping persons back into the workforce; and the options available to this person if they wish to complete their Springboard course before taking up a Jobpath place. [40901/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The person concerned is in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance and approved for participation on a part time Springboard course. One of the conditions for jobseekers pursuing part-time educational courses including Springboard is that they must satisfy the condition of being available for and genuinely seeking employment and must engage with any activation service to which they are referred. Persons approved for full-time Springboard courses are not referred for activation services.

I am advised that the person concerned has engaged with JobPath and agreed his Personal Progression Plan on 20 September 2017. He will have access to a personal adviser who will

assist and support him in his search for employment including advice regarding opportunities in his chosen field of study. His engagement with the JobPath service will be tailored to take account of his course commitments and if he is experiencing difficulties with meeting his obligations with the JobPath service or his educational course he should discuss them with his personal advisor.

I hope this clarifies the matter for the Deputy.

### Rent Supplement Scheme Data

202. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection the number of persons at the end of each month that were in receipt of rent supplement in each of the years 2014 to 2016 and to date in 2017; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40903/17]

**Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection (Deputy Regina Doherty):** The rent supplement scheme plays a vital role in housing families and individuals, with the scheme currently supporting approximately 38,600 tenants for which the Government has provided €253 million for in 2017.

Details of rent supplement recipients under the scheme in respect of the period from January 2014 to August 2017 are provided in the table.

Rent supplement customer numbers have declined significantly during the period from January, 2014 (c.78,690) to August, 2017 (c. 38,600). Rent supplement is demand led and the strategic initiative of returning the scheme to its original purpose that of a short-term income support, facilitated by the introduction of HAP has been the main driver in rent supplement's base decline. There are currently over 27,240 tenants in receipt of HAP support. Other contributory factors include the continuing improvement in the economy leading to fewer people seeking support due to retaining and securing long-term employment allied with people exiting rent supplement through activation and securing job opportunities. The strategic goal as set out in Rebuilding Ireland is to transfer all long-term tenancies from rent supplement to HAP by 2020.

I trust this clarifies matter for the Deputy.

#### Rent Supplement: Recipient Numbers from January 2014 to August, 2017

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2014	78,690	78,135	77,731	77,017	76,237	75,710	74,876	73,800	73,486	72,444	71,831	71,533
2015	70,761	70,183	69,793	68,673	67,887	67,016	65,997	65,042	63,826	62,876	62,009	61,247
2016	60,073	59,006	57,605	56,811	55,531	54,181	53,164	51,795	50,700	49,735	48,599	48,041
2017	47,113	46,118	44,790	43,691	42,271	41,240	40,134	38,668				

### Ministerial Responsibilities

203. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of Ministers of State attached to his Department; the responsibilities of each; if designated powers have been signed by him and assigned to the relevant Ministers of State; the date on which each designation was signed; the reason in circumstances in which no such designation has been made, this has not occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40802/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):**



There are two Ministers of State assigned to my Department, Minister of State Damien English and Minister of State John Paul Phelan.

A range of responsibilities in the areas of Planning, Housing, Marine and Foreshore, and Fire Services have been assigned to Minister of State English. These functions include oversight of the implementation of local authority Development Plans and Local Area Plans; aspects of student accommodation relevant to my Department; responsibility for the Approved Housing Bodies (Regulation) Bill and establishment of a statutory Regulator as well as coordination of the Government response to Unfinished Housing Developments and housing for older people, people with a disability and policy surrounding Traveller accommodation; functions under the Foreshore Act 1933, including assessment of foreshore leases and licences; and responsibility for the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management. The detailed legislative powers delegated to Minister English are outlined in the Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (Delegation of Ministerial Functions) (No. 2) Order 2017, which was signed on 26 July 2017.

Responsibility for substantial elements of policy and legislation in the areas of Local Government and Electoral Reform have been assigned to Minister of State Phelan. The preparation of an Order to delegate the extensive associated legislative powers is well under way and the final Order is expected to be submitted to Government in the coming weeks.

### **Traveller Accommodation**

204. **Deputy Eoin Ó Broin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount allocated to and drawn down by all local authorities for the caravan loan scheme in each of the years 2012 to 2016, and to date in 2017, in tabular form. [40821/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** In accordance with the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998, housing authorities have statutory responsibility for the assessment of the accommodation needs of Travellers and the preparation, adoption and implementation of multi-annual Traveller Accommodation Programmes (TAPs) in their areas. My Department's role is to ensure that there are adequate structures and supports in place to assist the authorities in providing such accommodation, including a national framework of policy, legislation and funding.

One such support is the provision of funding for a caravan loan and grant scheme operated by local authorities. The scheme of repayable loans, together with a grant element, where relevant, for caravan replacement is a further option to assist Travellers to provide for their own accommodation needs and also to help address the needs of Traveller families who live in sub-standard caravans or in overcrowded conditions.

The following table lists the amount of funding drawn down by all local authorities for the caravan loan scheme in each of the years 2012 to 2016 and to date in 2017:

#### **Funding drawdown in respect of the Caravan loan scheme 2012 to 2017**

-	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Year to date)	Overall
Kilkenny County Council	€640	€640	€1,280	€1,280	€2,560	€640	€7,040
Tipperary County Council	€630	€2,405	€630	0	0	0	€3,665

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-	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 (Year to date)	Overall
Offaly County Council	0	€630	0	0	0	0	€630
Clare County Council	0	0	€640	0	0	0	€640
Total Amount per year	€1,270	€3,675	€2,550	€1,280	€2,560	€640	€11,975
Total Number of loans	2	6	4	2	4	1	19

### **Fire Stations Provision**

205. **Deputy Eamon Scanlon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government when construction is due to commence on the new fire station in Ballinamore, County Leitrim; if a detailed cost plan and description of the proposed works has been received from Leitrim County Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40843/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The provision of fire services in local authority areas, including the establishment and maintenance of fire brigades, the assessment of fire cover needs and the provision of premises, is a statutory function of the individual fire authorities under the provisions of the Fire Services Act, 1981. My Department supports the fire authorities through setting general policy, providing a central training programme, issuing guidance on operational and other related matters and providing capital funding for priority infrastructural projects.

In February 2016, my Department announced a five-year Fire Services Capital Programme with an allocation of €40 million, based on an annual €8 million allocation, to be used for the purchase of fire appliances and specialist equipment, building or upgrading of prioritised Fire Stations, an upgrade of the Communications and Mobilisation system and improvements to Training Centres.

With regard to Ballinamore fire station, correspondence was initially received in August 2007 outlining works required. Further to this, a Capital Appraisal was requested in January 2008 and received by my Department in March 2010. A further report was submitted by Leitrim County Council in August 2015 detailing a remedial works/refurbishment project costing €120,000. This fire station project has been included under the five-year Fire Services Capital Programme and is listed as one of the stations to undergo remedial/upgrade works.

In July 2017 the Council requested approval for additional works to the initial proposal at a total cost of €400,000. My Department requested a detailed cost plan and description of these proposed works. Following the receipt and evaluation of this information, it has been decided to approve Leitrim County Council to proceed to tender stage. Upon receipt of a tender proposal my Department will continue working with Leitrim County Council to progress this project. The projects in the capital programme are reassessed on an annual basis and priority may be adjusted to bring forward projects offering best value-for-money and to take account of the state of readiness of the projects.

### **Vacant Properties Data**

206. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of vacant housing units his Department has under its control; his plans to bring

these units back into use; the timeframe for them to be made available for housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40859/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** Statistics in relation to social housing stock are gathered by the National Oversight and Audit Commission (NOAC) in their annual reports on Performance Indicators in Local Authorities. These statistics are set out by local authority and include the percentage of such dwellings that were vacant at the end of the year, with the last year for which the statistics are available being 2015. This report is available at the following link: <http://noac.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/2015-PI-Report.pdf>.

Section 58 of the Housing Act 1966 provides that the management and maintenance of local authority housing stock, including the implementation of planned maintenance programmes and carrying out of responsive repairs and pre-letting repairs is a matter for each individual local authority. However, my Department has provided support to local authorities to return vacant social housing units to productive use and make them available for re-letting in an energy efficient condition at a reasonable cost. The Department's funding is to support the authorities in tackling those houses that may require a greater level of remediation than the normal level of pre-letting repairs that is the responsibility of local authorities as part of their on-going repair and maintenance of local authority housing.

These targeted measures focus exclusively on vacant and boarded-up properties with the objective of returning these to productive use as quickly as possible over the period of the programme. Retrofitting is undertaken on properties selected by local authorities on the basis of unit cost, the extent of local housing need and the age/condition of the property. Since the commencement of the programme in 2014, over 7,300 properties have been remediated and a further 1,400 units are expected to be returned to productive use this year.

### **Social and Affordable Housing Expenditure**

207. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the cost of building an additional 1,000 social housing units per year on local authority or State-owned land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40887/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** There are a number of variables in terms of estimating the cost of providing social housing units e.g. form of delivery, size of unit, land, funding etc.

The Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is based on a blended approach to delivery, under which there are a range of delivery mechanisms such as building, leasing and acquisitions. 47,000 social housing units will be provided over the life of the Plan, and an additional 88,000 households will have their housing need met through Housing Assistance Payment and the *Rental Accommodation Scheme*. €5.35 billion, made up of €4.5 billion capital and €0.85 billion current expenditure, is provided for to support the delivery of Rebuilding Ireland's social housing ambition.

In terms of construction and "all-in" costs, the averages for a range of differently sized social housing units are set out in the table. These are based on the analysis of returned data from tendered social housing schemes over an extended period. Construction cost is reflective of building costs (including VAT) and also includes normal site works and site development. All-in cost includes cost of construction, land cost, professional fees, utility connections, site investigations/surveys, archaeology where appropriate, VAT and contribution to public art. Ab-

normal costs are excluded from these figures.

-	1 bed	2 bed (1 storey)	2 bed (2 storey)	3 bed	4 bed
Construction	€137,709	€143,371	€151,376	€160,521	€169,682
All-in	€175,271	€181,771	€190,456	€200,726	€211,062

### Local Authority Housing Data

208. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the local authorities that have undertaken adaptations and extensions to their social housing network in the first six months of 2017; the number of adaptations and extensions that were undertaken; and the value of the works for each local authority applicable, in tabular form. [40890/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Disabled Persons Grant Scheme provides funding for adaptations to existing social housing stock such as grab rails, disabled access ramps, wet rooms, etc. The Scheme also provides for extensions in cases of overcrowding.

In order to ensure that there were no delays for priority and urgent cases under the scheme, all local authorities were advised on 24 March 2017 that they could undertake works of up to 65% of their 2016 allocation in advance of the 2017 allocations issuing. This allowed local authorities to plan and progress works under the scheme throughout the year. My Department advised all local authorities of their full 2017 DPG allocations on 12 September 2017.

Local authorities are required to submit claims under the scheme by the end of November each year. Accordingly, my Department does not compile statistics on the take-up on the scheme until year-end. In 2016, some 1,500 adaptations were completed under the scheme and, as the funding for 2017 has been maintained at 2016 levels, a similar level of take-up would be expected this year.

### Land Availability

209. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of green field land that each county council owns in tabular form. [40891/17]

210. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the amount of zoned green field land that each county council owns in tabular form. [40892/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 and 210 together.

Each local authority is required to maintain a register of all lands its owns or leases. Details of the entire portfolio of land held by all local authorities, for all purposes, is not available in my Department. However, my Department, working with local authorities and the Housing Agency, has collated details of local authority lands acquired for housing purposes.

A key objective of the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness is to increase the supply of high quality social housing and homes at more affordable price points, on local authority lands as quickly as possible, particularly in areas where demand is greatest.

To this end, on 27 April 2017, details of some 1,700 hectares of land in local authority and Housing Agency ownership were published on the Rebuilding Ireland Housing Land Map, with the potential to deliver some 42,500 homes nationally. These sites can be viewed at the following link: <http://rebuildingireland.ie/news/rebuilding-ireland-land-map/>.

In order to ensure a consistent and comprehensive approach to the development of these lands, all local authorities have been requested to prepare Strategic Development and Management Plans for housing lands in their ownership, with particular emphasis on prioritising those sites with the most potential to deliver housing at scale, in the short to medium term. As part of this process, local authorities have also been asked to confirm that the data held on the data base is fully up to date.

### **Vacant Properties Data**

211. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of unoccupied houses awaiting acceptance of offer that each county council has on its stock book in tabular form. [40893/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** My Department does not hold information on the number of unoccupied houses waiting acceptance of offer in each county council area.

The allocation of social housing support to qualified households is a matter for the local authority concerned, in accordance with its allocation scheme made in accordance with section 22 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2009 and associated Regulations.

### **Housing Assistance Payment Data**

212. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the number of persons at the end of each month that were in receipt of the housing assistance payment in each of the years 2014 to 2016, and to date in 2017; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40904/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) is a flexible and immediate housing support that is now available to all eligible households throughout the State. There are currently more than 27,000 households in receipt of HAP and more than 20,000 separate landlords and agents providing accommodation to households supported by the HAP scheme.

In relation to the number of persons at the end of each month that were in receipt of HAP in each of the years since the scheme commenced, my Department does not collate this data.

It should be borne in mind that the HAP scheme was implemented on a statutory phased pilot basis with an initial 7 local authorities operating the scheme for four months in 2014, an additional 11 in 2015, a further 10 in 2016 and HAP became a national scheme with its extension to the 3 remaining local authorities in the Dublin Region on 1 March 2017. At the end of 2014, 485 eligible households were supported by the scheme and an additional 5,680 eligible households were supported in 2015. Further details can be found at the following weblink: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordble/overall-social-housing-provision> .

Since 2016, my Department publishes a breakdown of the additional households supported

by HAP by each local authority every quarter. This breakdown, which also includes the number of Rent Supplement transfers and new applicants, is available on my Department's website at the following weblink: <http://www.housing.gov.ie/housing/social-housing/social-and-affordable/overall-social-housing-provision>.

My Department continues to keep the operation of the HAP scheme under review. In general, I am satisfied with the operation of HAP and I consider it to be a key vehicle for meeting housing need and fulfilling the ambitious programmes outlined under the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness.

### **Housing Adaptation Grant Eligibility**

213. **Deputy Anne Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government the reason incomes are taken into account for persons (details supplied) who have applied for the housing adaptation grant for persons with a disability. [40936/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** For the purposes of the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, household income is calculated as the annual gross income of the registered property owner together with all household members over 18 (or over 23 if in full-time education) in the previous tax year.

Certain income is not taken into account, or is disregarded, in calculating household income, including €5,000 for each member of the household up to 18 years, Family Income Supplement, Domiciliary Care Allowance and Carer's Benefit or Carer's Allowance if paid in respect of the person to whom the grant application relates.

The application of a household means test is intended as a way of spreading the benefits of these grant schemes as widely as possible and to ensure fairness and value for money in their operation. The schemes are therefore more sharply focused towards those with greatest needs.

### **Tenant Purchase Scheme Eligibility**

214. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government if one bedroom units are specifically excluded under the terms of the 2016 tenant purchase scheme; if exceptions can be made in cases; if this area has been reviewed as part of the review of the terms of the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40997/17]

**Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government (Deputy Eoghan Murphy):** The Tenant (Incremental) Purchase Scheme came into operation on 1 January 2016. The Scheme is open to eligible tenants, including joint tenants, of local authority houses that are available for sale under the Scheme. To be eligible, tenants must meet certain criteria, including having a minimum reckonable income of €15,000 per annum and having been in receipt of social housing support for at least 1 year.

The Housing (Sale of Local Authority Houses) Regulations 2015 governing the Scheme provide for a number of specified classes of houses to be excluded from sale, including houses provided to local authorities under Part V of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, houses specifically designed for older persons, group Traveller housing and houses provided to facilitate people with disabilities transferring from institutional care to community-based living.

Housing authorities may, within the provisions of the Regulations, exclude certain houses

which, in the opinion of the authority, should not be sold for reasons such as proper stock or estate management. It is a matter for each individual housing authority to administer the Scheme in its operational area in line with the over-arching provisions of the governing legislation for the scheme, and in a manner appropriate to its housing requirements.

In line with the commitment given in the Rebuilding Ireland Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness, a review of the first 12 months of the Tenant Purchase scheme's operation has been undertaken. The review has incorporated analysis of comprehensive data received from local authorities regarding the operation of the scheme during 2016 and a wide-ranging public consultation process which saw submissions received from individuals, elected representatives and organisations.

The review is now complete and a full report setting out findings and recommendations has been prepared. Following consultation with relevant Departments on implementation arrangements, I expect that definitive proposals will be submitted to me very shortly.

### **Vacant Properties Data**

215. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of vacant housing units his Department has under its control; his plans to bring these units back into use; the timeframe for them to be made available for housing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40857/17]

216. **Deputy Lisa Chambers** asked the Taoiseach and Minister for Defence the number of housing units the Defence Forces has that are classified as marital quarters; the number of those units that are vacant; the state of repair those units are in; the timeframe for the units to become available; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40858/17]

**Minister of State at the Department of Defence (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 215 and 216 together.

The Department commenced a process of phased withdrawal from Married Quarters for serving Defence Forces personnel almost twenty years ago. As a result, the number of family type accommodation units currently being used by serving Defence Forces personnel, as advised by the military authorities, now stands at twenty two (22).

The military authorities have also advised that there are some sixty-two (62) vacant former Married Quarter properties.

Fourteen (14) of these properties are located outside barracks and are presently scheduled for disposal.

Accommodation located within barracks is not disposed of. The majority (45) of the vacant properties that fall within this category are located within the Curragh Camp. In some instances, depending on its condition, the accommodation has been adapted to meet the needs of the Defence Forces for use as single living in accommodation. In other instances, properties, which are no longer considered to be economically viable, are demolished as resources permit, in order to address health and safety concerns or to make way for other required facilities.

In general, these vacated houses would require a level of investment to bring the units up to the standards now in place for such properties, which would not be cost effective in the long term.