

## 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 41, inclusive, answered orally.*

*Questions Nos. 42 to 48, inclusive, resubmitted.*

*Questions Nos. 49 to 62, inclusive, answered orally.*

### Departmental Expenditure

63. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence the amount of money paid to external consultants during each of the past six years; the names of these consultants; and the type of work they were contracted to do. [38660/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the amount paid by my Department to external consultants during each of the past six years, the names of the consultants and the type of work they were contracted to do is contained in the tabular statement. This information excludes the Defence Forces. The data relating to the Defence Forces is currently being compiled and will be provided to the Deputy as soon as possible. The objective of using external consultants is to ensure that my Department achieves value for money and maximises efficiency and effectiveness. My Department engages the services of external consultants only when there is a clear need for specialised expertise and following a rigorous examination of skills and resources available in-house. My Department is always mindful of the costs involved.

Year	Name of Consultancy	Purpose	Amount
2006	Millward Brown, IMS	The Office of Emergency Planning commissioned a Public Attitude Survey. The purpose of the survey was to carry out a market research programme into public attitudes and awareness of emergency planning in Ireland.	€30,912

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Year	Name of Consultancy	Purpose	Amount
2006	Grayling Communications Consultants	The Office of Emergency Planning commissioned Grayling Communications Consultants to devise a Communications Strategy on the approach to be taken by Government in its public information and awareness campaign on Emergency Planning. The campaign was subsequently launched in April 2008.	€14,520
2007	Petrus Consulting	An independent quality assessment of the Value for Money Review of Clothing Procurement in the Defence Forces, as part of the standard VFM process.	€2,904
2007-2011	Colonel E.V. Champion (Retd.)	Provides expert advice to the Army Equitation School's Horse Purchase Board in their deliberations following the inspection of horses that are being considered for purchase. The cost per annum is €5,000.	€25,000
2007	Murray Consultants	A Public Information and Awareness Campaign on Emergency Planning. The contract provided for the development of the Emergency Planning website, drafting, publication and distribution of a handbook on Emergency Planning and a media advertisement campaign associated with the launch of the handbook.	€2.1million
2008	PA Consultant Group	Commissioned to make recommendations on the best means of meeting the medical requirements of the Defence Forces. The consultancy focused on the sustainable provision of the relevant medical expertise and services to the Defence Forces. The consultants recommended a programme of major change, implementation of which is ongoing.	€115,129.57
2008	Independent Monitoring Group	i.r.o Doyle Reports concerning Harassment, Bullying & Discrimination	€37,109
2008	FGS Consulting	A Value for Money Review of Military Training Lands. This review is part of a programme agreed between the Department of Defence and the Department of Finance as part of the Government's Value for Money and Policy Review initiative. The review is at an advanced stage and it is anticipated that this report will be completed in the near future.	€89,540
2008	McCann Fitzgerald, Solicitors	To provide legal drafting, research and advice services in relation to the drafting of revised Rules of Procedure and new Court Martial Rules following the enactment of the Defence (Amendment) Act, 2007.	€53,845
2008	BMT Defence Services Ltd, UK	Engaged in relation to the Naval Vessel Replacement Programme.	€85,604
2008	Fujitsu (Ireland) Ltd	Provide consultancy and maintenance services for the organisation's Oracle e Business Suite and related applications.	€182,261
2008	Entograph Ltd	were commissioned to carry out a report for the control of bracken in the Glen of Imaal	€30,129
2008	Mott McDonald Ltd	Commissioned to carry out a review of the Safety Policy at Casement Aerodrome in Baldonnel.	€50,000

Year	Name of Consultancy	Purpose	Amount
2008-2009	Magnum Opus	Engaged to provide project support services for the National Emergency Coordination Centre	€116,207
2009	Deloitte	A review of the Finance Branch of the Department. The objective of the review was to examine the business processes, procedures and organisational structures in operation in Finance Branch and to provide a report making recommendations for improvements in order to maximise efficiency and effectiveness. The review is now being implemented and is delivering staff savings and improvements in efficiency and effectiveness.	€97,868
2009	McGuinness Killen Partnership Ltd	An independent review of documentation in relation to a legal action initiated by a staff member.	€2,430
2009	Version 1 Ltd	Commissioned in 2009 and 2011 to provide a report in respect of Oracle licence management in the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces. The results of this report will assist in the formulation of policy and practice in the area of licence management.	€3,661
2009	Raymond Burke Consulting	An independent quality assessment of the Value for Money Review of Naval Service Vessel Maintenance, as part of the standard VFM process.	€2,800
2010	DQ Networks	to provide technical assistance with the technical plan for the Decentralisation to Newbridge	€10,386
2010	Epsilon Consulting	An independent quality assessment of the Value for Money Review of Military Training Lands as part of the standard VFM process.	€2,178
2011	ISAS	Information Security Advice relating to mobile mail solution	€10,395
			€889,542.57

### Emergency Planning

64. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the availability of adequate and necessary resources to enable the Defence Forces respond to a major emergency requiring urgent deployment throughout the country on and off shore with particular reference to the ability to respond rapidly and effectively in an emergency situation in cooperation with the civil authorities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38672/11]

66. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Defence the way the role of the Defence Forces will be filled in the provision of services during severe weather conditions in view of the increased level of retirements this year. [38657/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 64 and 66 together.

My priority as Minister for Defence is to ensure that the operational capacity of the Defence Forces is maintained to the greatest extent possible. I am satisfied that the Defence Forces will continue to have the necessary resources to fulfil all roles assigned to them by Government

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including provision of assistance to the civil authorities in any emergency situations that might arise.

Whilst the Defence Forces are not a Principal Response Agency, as defined in the Framework for Major Emergency Management, they will continue to provide the fullest possible assistance to the appropriate Lead Department in the event of a severe weather emergency in an Aid to the Civil Authority (ATCA) role under the multi-agency Framework.

The various procedures that are in place, both nationally and locally, were seen to operate very effectively last Winter as the Defence Forces made all assets, resources and capabilities available to the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning and responded to all requests for assistance received from the civil authorities during the period of severe weather which ran from 27 November to 26 December 2010.

The strength of the Permanent Defence Force at the end of that period (2010) was 9,550 and at 30 November last, the latest date for which figures are available, the strength was 9,460 personnel. I am committed to maintaining the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at or around 9,500 personnel. Whilst it can be difficult to estimate precisely how many personnel will retire for reasons other than on age grounds, based on the latest available information (30 November) I can state that 53 officers and 437 enlisted personnel have submitted applications to retire or to be discharged from the Defence Forces on dates prior to 1 March 2012.

The extent of these retirements and discharges must however be counter-balanced by the fact that it has been possible to carry out some recruitment this year. To date, 32 Officers and 491 enlisted personnel have been recruited and it is anticipated that a further 39 enlisted personnel will be recruited before the end of this current year.

### **Defence Forces Reserve**

65. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Defence the number of persons that will be recruited to the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve over the next two years. [38663/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The number of personnel that can be recruited to the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve is dependent on the level of funding available for training. The level of resourcing available for Defence has reduced significantly over recent years. The funds available for paid training days for members of the Reserve have been cut from €4.96 million in 2009 to €2.48 million in 2011. This provided for approximately 30,000 paid training mandays in 2011.

These paid training days provided targeted development training for existing members of the Reserve including career courses and skills courses.

In addition, it was possible to provide for the training of 200 new recruits to the RDF. This level of recruitment was agreed in consultation with the Military Authorities, having regard to the requirement to maintain the existing capabilities of the Reserve to the greatest extent possible.

The number of personnel that may be recruited in the coming year or future years has not been determined as yet. Officials from the Department are due to meet with the Acting Director of Reserve Forces in the coming week to discuss the training priorities within the Reserve over the coming year and to determine the level of recruitment that can be accommodated within the available resource envelope.

*Question No. 66 answered with Question No. 64.*

### Naval Service Operations

67. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Defence the number of persons employed in the Naval Service dive recovery team; and the number he expects to recruit during the next two years. [38661/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The number of persons currently employed within the Naval Service Diving Section (NSDS) is eleven. The establishment for the Naval Service Diving Section is twenty three. As the Naval Service Diving Section can cater for a maximum of 12 students per course, and only one course is held annually, the maximum number of students that could be trained over the next two years is twenty four. Naval Service operational requirements will dictate the number of students who can be released at one time to attend this course, and therefore it is not possible at this juncture to say how many will be released to attend over the next 2 years.

### Departmental Schemes

68. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Defence his plans to procure a ship to replace the *Asgard II*. [38659/11]

69. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Defence his plans to re-establish a national sail training scheme. [38658/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 68 and 69 together.

The Minister for Defence has no plans to re-establish a national sail training scheme or to procure a ship to replace *Asgard II*. In the context of settling the Estimates for the Department of Defence for 2010, the previous Government decided that the national sail training scheme operated by Coiste an *Asgard* would be discontinued, as recommended in the Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure.

### Departmental Properties

70. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Defence the numbers of properties he has held over each of the past ten years used for married quarters for members of the Defence Forces; and the position regarding these properties once they are vacated. [38665/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In February 1997 the then Minister for Defence set out policy on married quarters on the basis that they were largely an anachronism and that they should be discontinued in a managed and orderly way. At that time there were 500 married quarters of which 380 were occupied. In the intervening period over 150 quarters located outside of barracks have been sold to occupants while many more have been demolished or converted to other uses.

As of now the stock of married quarters stands at 95 occupied premises. A number of other former quarters are vacant pending a decision on conversion to other military use or demolition. 48 of these quarters are occupied by serving members of the Defence Forces or members of the chaplaincy service. The remaining 47 continue to be occupied by “overholders”, a phrase used to describe people who did not vacate the property on their retirement or resignation from the Defence Forces as required under Defence Force Regulations. A number of these are in the process of buying the properties which are outside of barracks.

As part of the process of discontinuing the use of married quarters my Department will, in the near future, be addressing the remaining overholder issue. This will see a small number of

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people being granted continued occupancy of the properties for the remainder of their lives. In the other cases the Department will be beginning the process of seeking vacant possession of the properties. The first phase of this will involve those concerned being, yet again, made aware of their responsibility to vacate the quarters and advised of the need for them to make alternative arrangements. The Department will provide supporting material to those applying for Local Authority housing.

### **Defence Forces Strength**

71. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Defence his plans to increase the numbers of female members of the Defence Forces, including the Naval Service. [38667/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Government is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for men and women throughout the Defence Forces and to the full participation by women in all aspects of Defence Forces activities. Unlike many other national armed forces, the Defence Forces have no restrictions as regards the assignment of men or women to the full range of operational and administrative duties. All promotions and career courses are open to both genders on merit. A number of initiatives have been taken in recent years. In 2006 the minimum height requirement for joining the Defence Forces was reduced from 5' 4" to 5' 2". This increased the potential recruitment pool of females from 60% to 90% of female population.

In 2007, the Department of Defence received the report of a TNS/MRBI study it had commissioned, titled "Retention and Recruitment of Women in The Defence Forces". This research was commissioned with a view to identifying areas where action could be taken to maximise the number of women applicants to the Defence Forces, hence increasing the number joining. The question of retention was also studied.

The results of the research were, on balance, positive. Three-quarters of serving women agreed that the Defence Forces are a good place to work. In addition there was a very high level of satisfaction (70%-80%) expressed as regards the issues of job security, pay and benefits and the variety of work on offer.

The recommendations of the report on the issue of attracting and retaining women are being implemented and the challenges identified therein continue to be addressed. Those challenges include raising the profile of a career for women in the Defence Forces in their recruitment campaigns, promoting a dual gender image and providing education to career guidance teachers on the role of women in the Defence Forces.

The Defence Forces on the direction of the Chief of Staff is establishing a Working Group to examine levels of female participation in the organisation. The Working Group will, *inter alia*, inquire into why women apply or do not apply for positions within the Defence Forces and what can be done to increase awareness among the female population of a career in the Defence Forces. The data gathered from the review will be used to formulate new policies in this area, specifically aimed at increasing female participation in the Defence Forces.

The number of female personnel serving in the Permanent Defence Force on 30 November 2011, the last date for which figures are available, was 565, of which 468 were serving in the Army, 31 in the Air Corps and 66 in the Naval Service. In terms of ranks the breakdown of female personnel serving on 31 October 2011 was 146 Officers, 186 Non Commissioned Officers and 228 Privates and 5 Cadets. The percentage of female personnel serving on 31 October 2011 was 5.98% of the overall strength of the Force on that date. This compares favourably with

2000 when 4.08% of personnel were female. I also understand that of the 240 recruits currently being inducted to the Permanent Defence Force, 4 are female.

### Emergency Planning

72. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied with the level of support available to the Civil Defence to deal with severe weather emergencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38438/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am satisfied that the Civil Defence organisation continues to be in a position to train and equip volunteers to a very high standard. In accordance with the Framework for Major Emergency Management, which identifies a wide role for Civil Defence in emergency response, the strategies identified by the Civil Defence Board place a high priority on the organisation's ability to respond effectively to severe weather and other types of emergencies.

A recent programme of seven Regional Exercises, augmented by specific training courses delivered through the Civil Defence College in areas such as Water Awareness, Advanced Driving Instruction and the qualification of over 120 additional Emergency Technicians in the Casualty Service, has greatly enhanced the capability of Civil Defence to respond to severe weather emergencies. The purchase during 2011 of floating walkway systems, waterproof radio sets, additional four-wheel-drive vehicles and a second all-terrain vehicle have also enhanced the organisation's capability in this regard. As the Minister for Defence has previously outlined to this House, during the serious flooding conditions that were experienced in counties Dublin, Wicklow, Kildare and Monaghan in October of this year, over 200 Civil Defence volunteers responded, at very short notice, to a wide range of calls for assistance from front-line service providers.

The organisation's capability was also seen to operate very effectively during the severe weather events of the last two winters as volunteers responded to requests for assistance from the Gardaí, local authorities and the HSE.

The recently published Report on the Review of the Response to Exceptional Severe Weather Events of 2009-2010 highlighted in very positive terms the role that Civil Defence played in the response.

### Departmental Staff

73. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Defence the number of persons employed in his Department on salaries of €200,000 or above; the number of persons employed in his Department on salaries of between €150,000 and €200,000; and the number of persons employed in his Department on salaries of between €100,000 and €150,000. [38666/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Department of Defence includes civil servants, military personnel and civilian employees. None of these staff are employed on a salary of €200,000 or above. Two individuals, the Secretary General and Chief of Staff, receive annual salaries in the €150,000 to €200,000 band.

There are 14 members of staff in receipt of salaries in the €100,000 to €150,000 band: 4 civil servants, 10 members of the Defence Forces. The Ombudsman for the Defence Forces is also in this category.

### Proposed Legislation

74. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Defence the legislation he intends to introduce during the lifetime of the Government. [38664/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** 1. Civil Defence (Repeal) Bill.

2. Defence (Amendment) (Discipline) Bill.

3. Red Cross (Amendment) Bill.

4. Defence (Amendment) Bill.

1. Civil Defence (Repeal) Bill — This Bill will, when enacted, repeal the Civil Defence Act 2002, dissolve the Civil Defence Board and transfer its functions, property, rights, liabilities and other responsibilities back to the Department of Defence. The Heads of the Bill are currently with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for drafting. It is expected that this Bill will be published in 2012.

2. Defence (Amendment) (Discipline) Bill — The main provision of this Bill is to deal with liability to military law, statutory powers of arrest and detention in relation to offences against military law, a full review of the offences against military law, having regard to developments in the military law of other common law jurisdictions and a review of provisions relating to military prisons and detention barracks.

3. Red Cross (Amendment) Bill — Consultations are currently ongoing with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel on the extent of changes that can be made to the Irish Red Cross Order 1939. It is intended to carry out a comprehensive review of all Red Cross legislation, and in particular the primary legislation in accordance with a commitment made in the Programme for Government. It is likely that this review will result in a Red Cross (Amendment) Bill during the lifetime of the Government.

4. Defence (Amendment) Bill — it is also intended in due course to introduce a further amendment Bill.

### **Green Paper on Defence**

75. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence further to Parliamentary Question No. 10 of 21 September 2011, the further progress that has been made by him on the proposed Green Paper on Defence; when he expects to publish same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38674/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The first White Paper on Defence was intended to encompass the period to end 2010. Having considered the preliminary work undertaken on the preparation of a new White Paper, I decided in September 2011 to expand the planned consultative process by initiating the preparation of a Green Paper on Defence. The intention is that this will act as a catalyst to ensure an appropriate level of debate on Defence. The priority in my Department in recent months has been the completion of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure in Defence. Arising from the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure I have announced a re-organisation of the Defence Forces including the movement from three to two brigades. Obviously, these tasks have drawn from the resources in the Department targeted to work on the development of the Green Paper.

The outcome of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure and budget 2012 have provided a necessary degree of clarity in respect of the resources that will be available to Defence in the short to medium term.

This will frame the policy options available and inform the Green Paper consultative process, which I expect to be launched in the first quarter of 2012.

### Emergency Planning

76. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide an update on the work of the Government task force on emergency planning. [38654/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, which I chair, meets on a regular basis and the most recent meeting was held yesterday, 12 December 2011. The Task Force includes representatives from all Government Departments, and Agencies who have a lead or support role in emergency planning.

While the details of matters discussed at meetings of the Task Force are confidential, I can confirm that it examines current risks and supports coordination arrangements for emergency planning across Government.

At recent meetings, presentations were made by the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government, the Health & Safety Authority, the Office of Emergency Planning and Met Éireann.

An interim review report of the flooding that occurred on 24 October 2011 was presented at yesterday's meeting.

The Government Task Force meeting held on 9 November 2011 focussed on winter preparedness. After that meeting, together with my colleagues Phil Hogan, T.D, Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and Leo Varadkar T.D., Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, I launched a 'Winter-Ready' information campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to provide information to the public on how to prepare for winter. The advice is being delivered via Aertel pages, booklets and the website *www.winterready.ie*. Also, each meeting of the Task Force has, as a standing agenda item, an assessment of the current security threat, which is provided by An Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces. The next Government Task Force meeting will be held in February 2012.

### Ministerial Advisers

77. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the political activities of each special advisor, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39397/11]

78. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Taoiseach the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each advisor now; the salary of each advisor from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39414/11]

**The Taoiseach:** I propose to take Questions Nos. 77 and 78 together.

There are five Special Advisers employed by my Department, four of whom are my Special Advisers and one of whom is Special Adviser to the Government Chief Whip.

The details requested in relation to the names and salaries of the Special Advisers employed by my Department are set out in the table. None of the salaries have changed since the Special Advisers were appointed.

Name and Grade	Reports To	€
Mark Kennelly, Chief of Staff	Taoiseach	€168,000

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Name and Grade	Reports To	€
Andrew McDowell, Special Adviser	Taoiseach	€168,000
Paul O'Brien, Special Adviser	Taoiseach	€80,051
Angela Flanagan, Special Adviser	Taoiseach	€80,051
Mark O'Doherty, Special Adviser	Government Chief Whip	€80,051

For the Deputy's information, my Department provides office accommodation to three Special Advisers assigned to the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade and one Special Adviser assigned to the Minister of State for European Affairs.

Under the supervision of my Chief of Staff, the Special Advisers working in my Department provide briefings and advice on a wide range of policy matters, as well as performing such 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.

The restrictions under the terms of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour on civil servants engaging in political activity do not apply to Special Advisers and they can engage in political activity or join political parties if they wish. These are not matters for which my Special Advisers are accountable to me under their contracts of employment.

### National Poverty Indicators

79. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Taoiseach the proportion of the population in consistent poverty each year since 2000; the proportion of the population in relative poverty each year since 2000; the Gini co-efficient of inequality each year since 2000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39482/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy Paul Kehoe):** The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) in Ireland is a household survey covering a broad range of issues in relation to income and living conditions. It is the official source of data on household and individual income and also provides a number of key national poverty indicators, such as the at risk of poverty rate ( a relative poverty indicator), the consistent poverty rate and rates of enforced deprivation.

The data requested by the Deputy for 2004 to 2010 inclusive are presented below in Table A. The first full year of data available from SILC was 2004. SILC data for earlier years are not available.

### Departmental Expenditure

80. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Taoiseach further to Parliamentary Question No. 111 of 20 September 2011, the measures that will be taken to address the issues raised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39855/11]

**The Taoiseach:** As I announced on 4 December 2011, my Department will from 1 January 2012 no longer pay for the salary costs of secretarial assistants employed by former Taoisigh or for the purchase of computer equipment for this service. In addition, my Department will no longer pay for telephone costs incurred by former Taoisigh or for use by them of airport VIP facilities.

### Ministerial Appointments

81. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the

political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39391/11]

82. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39408/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 81 and 82 together.

Special Advisers are appointed under the terms of Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act, 1997 and are required to perform any duties that may be assigned to them from time-to-time by the relevant Minister as appropriate to the position held. Those duties include providing advice as well as monitoring, facilitating and assisting in the achievement of Departmental objectives. The Ethics in Public Office Act 1995, the Standards in Public Office Act 2001 and the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour apply to the post-holders. The restrictions under the terms of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour on civil servants engaging in political activity do not apply to Special Advisers and they can engage in political activity or join political parties if they wish. These are not matters for which my Special Advisers are accountable to me under their contracts of employment. The following are details of the Special Advisers currently employed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

Name	Position held	Date of appointment	Salary on appointment and current salary	Minister
Mark Garrett	Chief Adviser — Office of the Tánaiste	10 March 2011	€168,000	Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.
Colm O'Reardon	Economic Adviser — Office of the Tánaiste	10 March 2011	€155,000	Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.
Jean O'Mahony	Special Adviser — Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	10 March 2011	€80,051	Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Eamon Gilmore, T.D.
Stephen O'Shea	Special Adviser — Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of the Taoiseach	28 November 2011	€61,966	Minister of State for European Affairs, Lucinda Creighton, T.D.

### EU Enlargement

83. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will commit that Ireland's position in relation to Serbia's accession to the EU will be based on Serbia normalising relations with Kosovo and this being seen in action on the ground, also dependent on the implementation of the facilitation dialogue on technical issues;

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his views on the situation regarding the barricades in the north of Kosovo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39559/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** Ireland and its EU partners are committed to enhancing stability in the Western Balkans. The EU perspective for the countries in the region, as agreed at the June 2003 Thessaloniki European Council, is essential in helping to build and maintain this stability. The EU will remain engaged in assisting the countries in the region to undertake the reforms necessary to move forward in their path to the EU. At the European Council meeting of 9 December last, Heads of State and Government of the European Union noted the considerable progress Serbia has made towards fulfilling the political criteria set by the Copenhagen European Council and the Stabilisation and Association Process requirements and the fact that a fully satisfactory level in its co-operation with ICTY has been reached. The European Council welcomed that Serbia has re-engaged in the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue and that it is moving forward with implementation of agreements in good faith. It also welcomed the Agreement on Integrated Border Management.

With a view to granting Serbia the status of candidate country, the European Council tasked the Council of Ministers to examine and confirm that Serbia has continued to show credible commitment and has achieved further progress in moving forward with the implementation in good faith of agreements reached in the dialogue, including on Integrated Border Management; that it has reached an agreement on inclusive regional co-operation and that it has actively cooperated to enable EULEX (European Union Rule of Law Mission) and KFOR (Kosovo Force) to execute their mandates. In the light of its examination, the Council of Ministers will take a decision in February 2012 on granting Serbia candidate status, to be confirmed by the March European Council. With regard to difficulties on the border between Kosovo and Serbia, it is essential that the Government in Belgrade does everything possible to persuade the ethnic Serbs in northern Kosovo to desist from provocative acts.

### Human Rights Issues

84. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the action he has taken to address the advice on a charter of rights for the island of Ireland prepared by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Irish Human Rights Commission; if he plans to progress these recommendations; if he has liaised with the appropriate authorities in the Government of the United Kingdom on this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39650/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Joint Committee of the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission presented their advice for a Charter of Rights for the island of Ireland earlier this year. This was in accordance with the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement. The advice of the Joint Committee was delivered to the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Ceann Comhairle, who passed the advice to all the political parties in both jurisdictions for their consideration. According to the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, the Charter of Rights would be for signature by the political parties. At the time the advice was presented, I expressed my gratitude to the Joint Committee for their work on the Charter of Rights and welcomed their input. This advice should be given serious consideration by all the political parties on the island of Ireland. I urge my colleagues here and in the Northern Ireland Assembly to make every effort to progress this important document.

### Official Travel

85. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if any Ministers are planning to make an official visit to Israel in the forthcoming 12 months; and if so, if he will ensure that if such a trip occurs, the Minister will spend equal time in the occupied Palestinian territories, and make every effort to visit Gaza. [39835/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Deputy will be aware that I have been planning an official visit to the region. I hope this may be possible early in 2012. My primary purpose will be to meet the parties in relation to the Middle East Peace Process, to hear from them the prospects and obstacles as they see them and to encourage them to commit seriously to this effort. I will look at some of the issues on the ground and develop Ireland's bilateral relationships in the region. My visit will therefore involve elements in both Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. I would also intend if possible to visit Gaza. It is not an absolute requirement to combine all these elements in a single visit, but it makes practical sense to do so if possible. It is clearly essential that as Foreign Minister I speak to and hear from both sides. I am not at this point aware of other Ministerial visits to Israel which may be planned for 2012. I will, however, encourage colleagues who are planning such visits to meet, if they can, with relevant counterparts in the Palestinian Authority as well as with representatives of the Israeli government. I will also encourage visits to the occupied Palestinian Territories. The Government will use all the contacts we have with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to underline our support for a lasting resolution of the conflict and for a peaceful and prosperous future for both the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

### Ministerial Appointments

86. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39390/11]

87. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Finance the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39407/11]

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

I have appointed Mary Kenny and Eoin Dorgan as special advisers. The salary for both advisers has been €83,337 per annum since their appointment. The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour (September 2004) sets out the terms and conditions of service, including the engagement in political activity, of all civil servants including ministerial appointees. Section 5.4 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour excludes staff holding temporary unestablished positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister from the restrictions on engaging in political activity as set out in section 5 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

### Tax Yield

88. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of revenue gener-

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ated through stamp duty on a county basis to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39462/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that it is not possible to provide a precise breakdown of the net receipts of Stamp Duties on a county basis. However, on the basis of information derived from the processing of property transactions in 2010, an indication of the amount of stamp duties associated with properties located in the various counties can be provided as follows, together with the amount per county shown as a percentage of the total Stamp Duty yield from property transactions.

Estimated breakdown by county of stamp duties on property for 2010

County	Estimated property Stamp Duty yield per county	Percentage of overall property Stamp Duty
Carlow	€1.79 million	0.9%
Cavan	€1.59 million	0.8%
Clare	€3.18 million	1.6%
Cork	€20.86 million	10.5%
Donegal	€3.77 million	1.9%
Dublin	€86.20 million	43.4%
Galway	€9.34 million	4.7%
Kerry	€5.76 million	2.9%
Kildare	€9.14 million	4.6%
Kilkenny	€3.18 million	1.6%
Laois	€2.58 million	1.3%
Leitrim	€0.60 million	0.3%
Limerick	€5.96 million	3.0%
Longford	€0.60 million	0.3%
Louth	€4.77 million	2.4%
Mayo	€3.18 million	1.6%
Meath	€6.55 million	3.3%
Monaghan	€1.39 million	0.7%
Offaly	€1.79 million	0.9%
Roscommon	€1.39 million	0.7%
Sligo	€2.18 million	1.1%
Tipperary	€4.57 million	2.3%
Waterford	€3.38 million	1.7%
Westmeath	€2.18 million	1.1%
Wexford	€4.97 million	2.5%
Wicklow	€7.75 million	3.9%
Total Property Stamp Duty in 2010	€198.62 million	100%

The necessary statistical data to enable corresponding information to be provided for 2011 is not yet available.

### Banking Sector Regulation

89. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a State-owned bank, PTSB, is charging its standard variable rate customers 6.5% APR which may be reduced to 5.9% after the ECB rate is implemented who are being funded in large part by the European Central Bank which is currently charging them 1.25%; if he has asked the board to review the

interest rate charged; if he has asked the Central Bank of Ireland to assess the means by which PTSB sets SVRs; the reason rate charged by the State owned bank is higher than the rate charged by all the non-State owned banks including the Bank of Ireland, Ulster Bank and others; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39516/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have not asked the PTSB board to review its mortgage interest rates. Neither the Central Bank nor I, as Minister for Finance, have a statutory role in the setting of interest rates charged or paid by financial institutions regulated by the Central Bank. Ultimately, the pricing of financial products, including variable mortgage interest rates, is a commercial decision for the respective management teams and boards of the banks having given due regard to its customers and the impact on the profitability of the bank, particularly as their cost of funding, including deposit pricing, is under pressure. The Central Bank has informed me that, using its existing powers, it will engage with lenders that appear to have standard variable mortgage rates set disproportionate to their cost of funds. Credit institutions are not primarily or always funded from the ECB, but rather from a wide variety of sources. In relation to the current rates charged by PTSB, I understand it will charge 5.19% on all standard variable rates following the ECB rate cut on 8 December 2011.

### Government Bonds

90. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance the average maturity of Government bonds issued in 1984; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39546/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Data supplied to my Department by the Central Bank of Ireland shows that the average maturity of Government bonds issued in 1984 was approximately seven and a half years.

### Tax Code

91. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Finance the tax credits available for cohabiting couples who are not married; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39606/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that cohabitating couples are expressly recognised for the purpose of social welfare law but are not recognised for the purposes of Income Tax law. Although this may appear contradictory, the main aim of both the welfare code and the tax code is to uphold the constitutional right of married couples not to be treated less favourably than unmarried couples. The basis for the current tax treatment of married couples derives from the Supreme Court decision in *Murphy v. the Attorney General* (1980) which held that it was contrary to the Constitution for a married couple to pay more tax than two single people living together and having the same income. The treatment of cohabiting couples for the purposes of social welfare is primarily a matter for the Minister for Social Protection. However, it is also based on the principle that married couples should not be treated less favourably than cohabiting couples. This was given a constitutional underpinning following the Supreme Court decision in *Hyland v. Minister for Social Welfare* (1989) which ruled it was unconstitutional for the total income a married couple received in social welfare benefits to be less than the couple would have received if they were unmarried and cohabiting. In the particular circumstances outlined, where a couple is cohabiting rather than married, they are treated as separate and unconnected individuals for the purpose of Income Tax. Each partner is a separate entity for tax purposes and, accordingly, credits and bands cannot be transferred from one partner to the other. On that basis, the main tax credits available to a

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person in the circumstances set out in the details supplied are the single person's tax credit of €1,650 and the employee tax credit of €1,650.

### Tax Code

92. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding indirect taxes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39651/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The rate of VAT was increased in Budget 2012 by 2 percentage points from 21% to 23% as part of a general package of revenue raising measures to contribute to Exchequer funding. The position is that this Government has also fulfilled its commitment in the Programme for Government to maintain the current rates of income tax together with bands and credits and not to increase the top marginal rate of taxes on income.

93. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be issued with a P21 statement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39663/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they have written to the person concerned for details necessary to issue the Balancing Statement (P21) for 2010.

### Tax Yield

94. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Finance the total value of licensed and off-licensed alcohol sales from 2007 to date in 2011; the total amount of excise duty and VAT on each of these types of sale over the past four years and the amount of VAT claimed by retailers as an input credit against VAT due on the off-license sales of alcohol for the same period; if he will provide the data on the sale of wine and cider in licensed and off-licensed premises during this time; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39716/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that there is no information available regarding on or off premises sales, as alcohol products tax receipts are not distinguished between alcohol subsequently sold in licensed pubs and sold in off-licences. With regard to the total value of licensed and off-licensed alcohol sales from 2007 to date in 2011, and data on the sale of wine and cider during this time, Revenue does not keep statistics on quantities of alcohol sold.

The available information on revenue raised through the sale of alcohol is in respect of Alcohol Products Tax and VAT. Details are as follows:

Alcohol Products Tax	Beer	Spirits	Wine	Cider	Total
	€m	€m	€m	€m	€m
2007	464.8	367.6	230.2	68.3	1,130.9
2008	427.2	350.9	231.3	60.6	1,069.9
2009	404.3	264.1	242.5	57.1	968.0
2010	320.1	243.5	218.8	44.0	826.4

VAT Estimated	Beer	Spirits	Wine	Cider	Total
	€ m	€ m	€ m	€ m	€ m
2007	553.5	270.3	190.0	119.8	1,133.5
2008	535.7	258.7	183.5	110.8	1,088.7
2009	538.0	239.0	188.7	108.8	1,074.5
2010	488.7	220.2	201.2	100.3	1,010.5

Please note that the VAT receipts are estimated, as the VAT returns do not require the yield from a particular sector or sub-sector of trade to be identified.

Information for 2011 to date is not available.

### Tax Reliefs

95. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding mortgage interest relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39735/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As I stated in my Budget speech, the Government has now fulfilled its commitment contained in the Programme for Government to increase the rate of mortgage interest relief to 30 per cent for first-time buyers who took out their first mortgage in that period. I will be looking at the technical detail of the legislation in preparation for the Finance Bill and I will take the highlighted case into consideration in that regard.

### Pension Provisions

96. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Finance the regulations he imposes on self-administered pension funds with particular emphasis on the reason that funds are required to put aside a set amount of money which cannot be drawn down and which is not calculated as a percentage of the overall value of funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39878/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I understand that this question may relate to the flexible options on retirement first introduced in Finance Act 1999. Prior to that Act, any person taking a pension under a defined contribution (DC) scheme or a Retirement Annuity Contract was required to purchase an annuity with their remaining pension pot after drawing down the appropriate tax-free lump sum. Finance Act 1999 introduced significant changes which gave a considerable degree of control, flexibility and personal choice to certain categories of individuals in relation to the drawing down of benefits from their pension plans. These choices include the options to purchase an annuity, to receive the balance of the pension fund in cash (subject to tax, as appropriate), to invest in an approved retirement fund (ARF) or an Approved Minimum Retirement Fund (AMRF), subject to certain conditions.

Access to these flexible options was extended to all main benefits from retirement benefit schemes (other than Defined Benefit arrangements) in Finance Act 2011. The changes made in Finance Act 2011 have particular relevance for ordinary members of occupational DC pension schemes in respect of the main benefits from such schemes, as up to the passing of the Act, the only option available to them in respect of those benefits had been the purchase of a retirement annuity after taking the tax-free lump sum. These individuals now have the choices referred to above depending on their particular circumstances. It should be borne in mind,

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however, that the option to invest in an ARF or AMRF as opposed to purchasing an annuity may not be appropriate for everyone.

Under the regime the options to

- invest in an ARF, or
- receive the balance of the pension fund in cash (subject to tax, as appropriate) are subject to conditions. The conditions include the requirements that the individual be over 75 years of age or, if younger, that the individual has a guaranteed level of pension income (specified income) actually in payment for life at the time the option to effect the ARF or cash option is exercised. Finance Act 2011 increased the guaranteed level of pension income required from the previous fixed amount of €12,700 introduced in 1999, to a variable amount equal to 1.5 times the maximum annual rate of the State Pension (Contributory) bringing the “specified income” limit to €18,000 per annum at present.

The purpose of the specified income limit is to ensure, before an individual has unfettered access to their remaining retirement funds via an ARF for example, that they have the security of an adequate guaranteed income throughout their retirement. The change to the specified income limit introduced in Finance Act 2011 was strongly signalled in the National Pensions Framework published in March 2010.

Where the minimum specified income test is not met, and an individual does not wish to purchase an annuity, then an AMRF must be chosen into which a “set aside” amount must be invested from the pension fund equal to 10 times the maximum annual rate of State Pension (Contributory) —€119,800 at present — or the remainder of the pension fund, after taking the tax-free lump sum, if less. Prior to Finance Act 2011, the “set aside” amount was fixed at the first €63,500 of the pension fund or the remainder of the fund after the tax-free lump sum, if less than that amount. The purpose of an AMRF is to ensure a capital or income “safety net” throughout the period of their retirement for individuals with pension income below the specified income limit. The funds in an AMRF can be used by the owner at any time to purchase an annuity. On death of the AMRF owner, the AMRF automatically becomes an ARF and any remaining funds may be passed on in a tax efficient way to a surviving spouse and/or children.

Prior to Finance Act 2011, if the minimum specified income test was not met at the time the option to effect the ARF or cash option was exercised and the individual placed a “set aside” amount in an AMRF, that capital sum was effectively “locked in” and could not be accessed by the individual, other than to purchase an annuity, until he or she reached 75 years of age (at which point the AMRF automatically becomes an ARF) though any income generated by the fund could be drawn down subject to tax. This was the position even if the minimum specified income test was met after retirement. Finance Act 2011 changed this rule so that where the minimum specified income test is met at any time after retirement and before age 75, the AMRF automatically becomes an ARF with full access to the funds.

The Budget and Finance Act 2011 changes seek to ensure that those in pension arrangements to whom the flexible ARF options on retirement have been extended will have choices which best suit their particular circumstances. In making the changes, however, there was also a concern to ensure that the parameters and rules governing the extension are set in a way that avoids an increase in the risk of income poverty in old age.

### **Tax Reliefs**

97. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the projected loss to the

Exchequer due to the capital gains exemption introduced for the sale of any commercial property that takes place up to 2013 which is not resold for seven years; if the incentive relief will apply in perpetuity, for example, if a property bought in 2012 is not sold for 50 years, whether no capital gains will apply in 2062, and if not, if he will indicate the way the capital gains exempt from tax for the seven year period will be assessed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39883/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Capital Gains Tax (CGT) initiative I announced in the Budget is a relief from CGT on the disposal of certain property, where that property is bought during the “incentive period” from 7 December 2011 to 31 December 2013 and is held for seven years. The relief will apply to all property, whether residential or non-residential. The relief will not apply if a property is sold within seven years of its acquisition. If it is sold more than seven years after acquisition and a gain is made on the sale, relief will be given for the initial seven year holding period. For example, if the property was bought in January 2012 and sold in January 2022, the property would have been held for ten years, so seven tenths of any gain will be relieved from CGT and three tenths is taxable. If the property is held for 50 years, as per the Deputy’s question, seven fiftieths of the gain will be relieved from CGT and 43 fiftieths will be taxable.

There will be no cost to the Exchequer from the scheme in the next seven years, because the relief cannot be claimed until a property bought in the incentive period is owned for at least seven years. It is not possible to project how much CGT relief will be given after that date, because the number of cases in which relief can be claimed is dependent on the number of properties purchased within the incentive period, and the relief will vary in every case depending on the value of the property on its disposal and the date of the disposal.

Together with the reduction in the rate of Stamp Duty on non-residential property to 2%, which I also announced in the Budget, the measure is intended to stimulate the property market. While there may be a cost to the measure itself in the long term, the intended stimulus effect should lead to additional employment, activity and revenue to the State from other taxes in the short term.

Full details of the measure will be contained in the Finance Bill.

### **Financial Services Regulation**

98. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Finance the specific measures he intends to introduce in the Finance Bill 2012, as mentioned in his budget speech, to support the continued success of the international funds industry, the corporate treasury sector, the international insurance industry and the aircraft leasing industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39884/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I announced in my Budget speech that I intend to introduce a package of measures in the forthcoming Finance Bill to support the continued success of the International Financial Services (IFS) industry in Ireland. The sector employs more than 30,000 people and contributes over €1 billion in tax to the Exchequer. The Government’s commitment to the sector was reaffirmed in the 5-year strategy for the industry which was launched by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny T.D., in July this year. The list of items for inclusion in the Finance Bill is currently being finalised. I will then bring the list of IFS related items to Government for approval as part of the overall Finance Bill. The list of items will then be published in the Bill. I do not propose to list the items in advance of them being approved by Government.

### Tax Reliefs

99. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding top slicing relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39903/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a claim for “Top Slicing Relief” for the person concerned has been processed and a cheque for the appropriate amount has been issued. A further claim made in July 2011 for relief on a lump sum received in 2006 has been disallowed. As this claim relates to the year 2006, it is outside the 4-year time limit for the making of claims for repayment of tax, a rule which is expressly prescribed by Section 865 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997.

I am also advised by the Commissioners that there is no record of a request for a P21 in 2006.

100. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Finance if the relief for energy efficiency measures to the maximum value of €10,000 announced in budget 2011 will be honoured in 2012 to award credits to members of the public who undertook such work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39905/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Section 13 of Finance Act 2011 provided for income tax relief at the standard rate for expenditure incurred by individuals on a range of works carried out to improve the energy efficiency of residential premises situated in the State. The underpinning legislation for the scheme was subject to Commencement Order. However, that legislation, on review, was found to have flaws and would have required amendment before it could be implemented.

As part of the announcement in the Jobs Initiative, the Government undertook to provide further funding for the grants available under the Better Energy Homes scheme operated by the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI). Because of these circumstances, I decided to review the requirement for a co-existing tax incentive for similar works and, following this review, I decided not to proceed with the introduction of the tax relief scheme.

It is worth pointing out that it was never envisaged that individuals could qualify for both the grants and the proposed tax relief. Refocusing the funding such that it is provided via the grants scheme clarifies Government support measures for energy efficiency works.

### Property Management Fees

101. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Finance the schemes available for persons struggling to pay residential management fees; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39933/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Where individuals have difficulties in meeting household debts, they may be able to avail of certain services provided by the Department of Social Protection or by organisations which operate broadly under its aegis. I understand from that Department, however, that there is no specific scheme to assist in the payment of residential management fees. My Department is not responsible for schemes of the nature referred to by the Deputy.

### Credit Availability

102. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Finance if he will furnish this Deputy with the amount of new credit advanced by the financial institutions which benefiting from the State guarantee since February. [39964/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** As the Deputy is aware the Central Bank gathers and collates statistics on a wide range of Financial Services Sector activities on an on-going basis. As a general rule, my Department does not engage in a separate exercise to collect such statistics, but has access to and relies on statistics provided and published by the Central Bank. For the Deputy's information, the relevant statistics for the provision of credit are accessible at <http://www.centralbank.ie/polstats/stats/cmab/Pages/releases.aspx>

### FÁS Training Programmes

103. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons who have had their professional apprenticeships halted after being let go during the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39465/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I understand from FÁS that the total number of Redundant Apprentices recorded on the FÁS Apprenticeship Management System with a category of redundant in the 12 month period to 6th December 2011 is 1,107. FÁS has also advised that the current status of the redundant apprentices recorded in this period is as set out in the table.

FÁS Table of Redundant Apprentices — 12 month period to 6th December 2011

Currently employed	Completed their apprenticeship	Reached the apprenticeship standard but have a time deficit	Currently Redundant	Unemployed (left trade/sick leave etc)	Total
294	143	40	621	9	1,107

### Departmental Agencies

104. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to some information (details supplied) not being shared on the new informational website, [www.decisionmap.ie](http://www.decisionmap.ie), as maintained by Ordnance Survey Ireland and the Central Statistics Office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39521/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy may be aware the website referred to was created by Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) and Twelve Horses (a digital agency specialising in online services) and therefore is not under the remit of my Department. My Department has been in contact with both the CSO and OSI in relation to the specific education provision information that it will be making available to the operators of the website.

### School Transport

105. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of money spent by him on school transport annually since 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39861/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** The 2011 allocation for school transport services is nearly €180 million. Expenditure on school transport provision since 2007 is as follows:

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Year	Outturn (millions)
2007	€172.106
2008	€185.725
2009	€177.567
2010	€181.409

### FÁS Training Programmes

106. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will organise a meeting for a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow with FÁS to explain the training and upskilling entitlements to which they are entitled. [39875/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I understand from FÁS that arrangements have been made for the person in question to attend for interview with a FÁS Employment Services Officer.

### Ministerial Appointments

107. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39388/11]

108. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each advisor now; the salary of each advisor from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39405/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to answer Questions Nos. 107 and 108 together.

Since I took office I have appointed 2 Special Advisers, a Personal Assistant and a Personal Secretary in accordance with the revised conditions for Ministerial Appointments as published by the Department of Finance on the 24th, March 2011. The Minister of State at my Department has similarly appointed a Personal Secretary and Personal Assistant. The tabular statement gives details of the Ministerial appointments made at my Department earlier this year together with details of their current salaries. They were placed on the appropriate point of the salary scale proximate to the earnings they were in receipt of in their former employment.

In relation to their political activities or affiliations, I am not in a position to give details as it is not open to me to request the appointees to provide this information. However, the Deputy should note that the restrictions which have traditionally been imposed on civil servants engaging in political activity under Paragraph 5.4 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour do not apply to Ministerial Staff holding temporary unestablished positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister.

In accordance with the terms of the Ethics in Public Office Acts copies of the appointees' contracts of employment together with details of the Special Advisers qualifications were laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas on the 28th, October 2011.

## Mr. Ruairí Quinn, T.D. Minister for Education &amp; Skills

Appointee	Position	Salary
John Walshe	Special Adviser	€92,672
Deirdre Grant	Special Adviser	€86,604
Ian O'Mara	Personal Assistant	€47,304
Neil Ward	Personal Secretary	€45,160

## Mr. Ciaran Cannon, T.D., Minister of State

Appointee	Position	Salary
Martina Forde	Personal Assistant	€49,790
Niamh Lawless	Personal Secretary	€38,945

**Higher Education Grants**

109. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students who were denied a student grant upon application in 2010 on a county basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39468/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The table details the number of student grant applications, both new and renewals, that were deemed ineligible for a grant by the 66 grant awarding authorities for the 2010/2011 academic year. The information has been supplied to my Department by the grant awarding authorities — local authorities and VECs — as at 21st January 2011.

## Refusals by Awarding Authority for 2010/11 Academic Year\*

Local Authority	Refusals	VEC	Refusals
Carlow Co Co	33	Carlow VEC	32
Cavan Co Co	32	Cavan VEC	238
Clare Co Co	57	Clare VEC	167
Cork City Co	75	Cork City VEC	217
Cork Co Co	304	Cork Co VEC	254
Donegal Co Co	187	Donegal VEC	246
Dublin City Co	416	Dublin Co VEC	422
Dun Laoghaire Co Co	173	Dublin City VEC	562
South Dublin Co Co	183	Dun Laoghaire VEC	72
Fingal Co Co	369	Galway City VEC	84
Galway Co Co	168	Galway VEC	167
Kerry Co Co	80	Kerry VEC	423
Kildare Co Co	79	Kildare VEC	350
Kilkenny Co Co	21	Kilkenny VEC	140
Laois Co Co	117	Laois VEC	112
Leitrim Co Co	17	Leitrim VEC	54
Limerick Co Co	129	Limerick Co VEC	167
Limerick City Co	25	Limerick City VEC	98
Longford Co Co	36	Longford VEC	86

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Local Authority	Refusals	VEC	Refusals
Louth Co Co	76	Louth VEC	173
Mayo Co Co	90	Mayo VEC	120
Meath Co. Co.	86	Meath VEC	230
Monaghan Co Co	59	Monaghan VEC	136
Offaly Co. Co	41	Offaly VEC	135
Roscommon Co Co	67	Roscommon VEC	98
Sligo Co Co	26	Sligo VEC	89
Tipp NR Co Co	27	Tipp NR VEC	147
Tipp SR Co Co	83	Tipp SR VEC	78
Waterford Co Co	12	Waterford VEC	70
Waterford City Co	50	Waterford City VEC	76
Westmeath Co. Co.	45	Westmeath VEC	140
Wexford Co Co	88	Wexford VEC	334
Wicklow Co Co	104	Wicklow VEC	233

\*This information is as at 21 January 2011 for the 2010/11 academic year and has been provided by the awarding authorities to the Department.

### Pupil-Teacher Ratio

110. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding career guidance councillors (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39493/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** While difficult choices had to be made to identify savings across my Department's budget, the Government has tried to protect front line services in 2012.

The Government has protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

Until now, a specific resource was provided to all second-level schools for guidance in addition to the standard teacher allocation. In future, schools must meet their guidance requirements from within the overall resource provided by the normal staffing schedule. Individually schools can continue to make provision for guidance and counselling. Decisions on how this will be done will be taken at school level in the best interests of students and to ensure the best use of resources available. I am confident school management and teachers will continue to work together to meet the needs of the students in their care.

In this way, the main teacher allocation can be maintained at 19:1 for schools generally, while schools will have discretion to balance what they allocate for guidance against the competing demands of providing subject choice. The change that has been announced gives schools greater autonomy in how they allocate staff resources to best meet the needs of their students. I have also provided for the filling of 300 Assistant Principal posts in second-level schools over the level originally planned. This will ensure that schools have sufficient management positions to ensure appropriate supports are available for all students. This is an important change which will reduce the impact of the moratorium on the filling of posts of responsibility in second level schools.

A key priority for me is to continue to prioritise and target available funding at schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage. All 195 second-level school in DEIS

will be given targeted support by a more favourable staffing schedule of 18.25:1. This is a 0.75 point reduction compared to the existing PTR of 19:1 that applies in non fee-paying second-level schools.

Psychologists from my Department's national educational psychological service NEPS, are present in schools across the country and provide a range of supports. These include the promotion of positive mental health among the general student body and assistance in supporting pupils with particular social, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The NEPS also encourages the development of structures among teachers and schools care teams.

The change to guidance allocations must be seen in the context of the major challenges we have as a Government in trying to shelter public services to the greatest extent that we can in these exceptional times. My Department will be notifying schools of the impact of the budget changes in January, 2012.

### Higher Education Grants

111. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if there is any grant or funding for a third level student (details supplied) who is attending a college in the USA. [39500/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The student grant scheme does not extend to third level courses pursued outside the EU. The student to which the Deputy refers may, however, be eligible for tax relief for his tuition fees. Details in relation to this are available from the applicant's local tax office or on *www.revenue.ie*.

112. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 179 of 25 October 2011, regarding the refusal of a third level grant to a person (details supplied) in County Galway, when the review will be complete in order that a decision may issue; the reason for the delay in arriving at this decision in view of the promises made on public service reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39513/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** This case was reviewed by my Department and it issued its decision on 8 December 2011. The delay was due to the complexity of the case.

### Departmental Surveys

113. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide further details on the specific analysis on tuition fee income available to schools and its utilisation in the Protestant fee-charging schools; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that many Protestant fee-charging schools have significant additional expenses because they must be run as boarding schools to cater for the geographically dispersed Protestant population; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that almost half of the Protestant students in fee-charging schools come from households whose disposable income is so low that they qualify for a grant and that fee-charging boarding schools is often the only feasible way to provide a Protestant ethos secondary education; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39530/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I have asked my officials to conduct an analysis of the potential extent and nature of the Exchequer investment, including funding for teacher posts, in the fee-charging schools.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

The specific analysis to be conducted by my Department will involve looking at the level of the tuition fee income based on fee rates and pupil numbers. It will take account of Exchequer investment foregone (in teacher allocations and recurrent grants) because the school is charging fees. In this way the additional or discretionary income available to fee charging schools relative to other schools can be assessed. It will then involve some dialogue with schools to confirm the information and each fee charging school will have the opportunity to identify if there are certain individual factors which may limit their freedom to use this discretionary income — e.g., mortgages entered into for capital developments or other verifiable liabilities. This process will apply to all fee charging schools.

In relation to the other points made by the Deputy in relation to provision for Protestant students I want to assure the Deputy that the Government is fully conscious that maintaining a network of schools is important if students from minority denominations are to be enabled attend a school that reflects their denominational ethos, while at the same time ensuring that funding arrangements for those schools are in accordance with the Constitution.

I should clarify for the Deputy that schools may charge for boarding facilities and still be classified as in the “free scheme” where they get the additional funding and teacher resources payable to all second level schools that do not charge tuition fees.

There are at present two second level schools serving the needs of Protestant children where boarding facilities are provided and where tuition fees are not charged. One of those schools ceased to charge fees in the past year and now has access to the grants and teaching resource allocations available to second level schools generally. My Department worked with the school concerned to facilitate its transition from the fee charging sector.

### **Disadvantaged Status**

114. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline in detail where the 428 posts which were allocated to schools under legacy programmes prior to the roll-out of the DEIS initiative in 2005 which are due to be phased out are based. [39532/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Given the scale of our economic crisis, adjustments have had to be made across all areas of the public sector. Despite this challenge, the Government has sought to do this in as fair a way as possible.

We have protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

While DEIS schools are not immune to budgetary measures, a key priority for me is to continue to prioritise and target funding at schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage.

The new staffing schedule for DEIS Band 1 primary schools, which now gives greater autonomy to schools, will operate on a general average of 1 teacher for every 22 pupils. This simplifies the existing system whereby schools are given a “top-up” allocation to support lower class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes. DEIS post-primary schools will be targeted for additional support through an improved staffing schedule of 18.25:1, which is a 0.75 point improvement compared to the existing standard 19:1 that applies in post-primary schools that do not charge fees (or compared to the 21:1 ratio that will apply in fee-charging schools).

In order to ensure fairness in the distribution of resources available under the DEIS plan, it is no longer possible to allow some schools to retain legacy posts on a concessionary basis that predate the introduction of DEIS. A range of measures has been announced to withdraw supports (428 posts) from earlier disadvantage programmes/schemes in 270 primary schools and 163 post primary schools, both DEIS and Non-DEIS that exceed what equivalent schools are entitled to under DEIS or to which non-DEIS schools are not entitled. These measures will take effect from the 2012/13 school year. The breakdown of these legacy posts are: — 38 concessionary teaching posts will be withdrawn from 15 non-DEIS primary schools previously in Giving Children an Even Break Programme and who retained a reduced PTR of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.- 102 concessionary posts will be withdrawn from 52 Urban Band 2 DEIS schools previously in the Giving Children an Even Break Programme and who had a reduced PTR of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.- 43 Support Teacher Posts will be withdrawn from 48 primary schools (45 DEIS and 3 Non DEIS)- 45 concessionary posts will be withdrawn from 32 DEIS Schools previously in the Breaking the Cycle Programme and who had a reduced PTR of 15:1 at the junior classes- 64 concessionary posts in 59 primary schools and 136 posts in 163 post-primary schools will be withdrawn from DEIS schools previously in the Disadvantaged Area Scheme.

Some alleviation measures will be available for those schools considered to be most acutely affected by these changes. Schools will be notified in January 2012 of their staffing entitlements under the new arrangement for 2012/13, including any alleviation measures that may apply. The Government's protection of schools serving disadvantaged areas is further underlined by the maintenance of €13 million in enhanced funding for DEIS schools, €2 million in school book funding for DEIS schools, as well as a €26 million investment in the Home School Community Liaison scheme. All of these areas have been protected from reductions in expenditure for 2012.

### Site Acquisitions

115. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his plans for education through the medium of Irish at a location and school (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39534/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that officials from my Department have been in discussions with Co. Wicklow VEC regarding a permanent site for the school to which he refers. However, given the sensitivities associated with land acquisitions generally, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. The acquisition of a site and the delivery of the school building project will be considered in the context of the capital budget available to my Department for school buildings generally.

### School Staffing

116. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the phased adjustment proposed to staffing schedules for one, two, three and four teacher schools with fewer than 86 pupils in the 2012 budget; and the way this will impact on the pupil teacher ratios of such schools. [39536/11]

139. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on each primary school in County Mayo of the phased adjustments to staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools; if he will outline same on a school by school basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39747/11]

142. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on each primary school in County Sligo of the phased adjustments to staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools; if he will outline same on a school by school basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39750/11]

168. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will outline by county the name and address of each primary school whose staffing schedule may be adjusted due to his decision to introduce phased adjustments from 2012-2013 to staffing schedules for one, two, three and four teacher schools. [40008/11]

169. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of schools that will be affected in 2012 by the decision to introduce phased adjustments from 2012-2013 to staffing schedules for one, two, three and four teacher schools. [40009/11]

170. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will elaborate on his statement that the adjustment to the staffing levels for one, two, three and four teacher schools is a measure that is being phased in to encourage small schools to assess their options for amalgamation.; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40010/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 116, 139, 142, 168 to 170, inclusive together.

As part of the Budget decisions announced last week, the number of pupils required to gain and retain a teaching post in small primary schools will be gradually increased between September 2012 and September 2014. The schools concerned are those with four or less classroom teachers. The pupil thresholds for DEIS Band 1 schools (disadvantage schools) are not as high as they reflect the newly introduced 22:1 staffing schedule. Reduced pupil thresholds will continue to apply in respect of schools that are the only primary school on an island. It is important to emphasise that no small schools will be closed due to the changes that have been announced.

The phased adjustment is estimated to yield a saving of 250 teaching posts over the next three years, with 100 of these posts being removed in 2012/13 school year. The resulting surplus teachers will be redeployed to vacancies in other neighbouring schools in accordance with the redeployment arrangements.

The phasing of these measures provides the schools concerned with time to consider the potential for amalgamation with other schools where this is feasible. We have a very significant number of small schools across the country. Due to the way the staffing schedule works at present, small primary schools benefit from significantly lower pupil teacher ratios than larger primary schools. While the staffing schedule operates on the basis of a general average of 1 classroom teacher for every 28 pupils the ratios for small schools are significantly better. This is particularly evident for schools that are at or just above the minimum pupil thresholds for the appointment of classroom teachers. For example, the minimum pupil threshold for the appointment of the second teacher in a 2-teacher school is currently 12 pupils. This means that this school has an average of 6 pupils in each of its 2 classes. The changes that we are introducing will mean that in September 2012 a minimum of 14 pupils will be required for the appointment of the second teacher in the 2 teacher school. The subsequent increases in September 2013 and September 2014 will increase this minimum pupil threshold to 20 pupils. Even when all of these phased increases are implemented the threshold will still be significantly lower than the minimum of 28 pupils that were required for the appointment of the second teacher in schools prior to the mid 1990's.

The existing staffing schedule also acts as a disincentive for small schools to consider amalgamation. We have to ensure that the very valuable but limited resources we have available in the system are used in the best and fairest way across the whole system. It is important to emphasise that no small schools will be closed due to the changes that have been announced. It is not necessarily the case that capital investment would be required if schools decided to amalgamate — particularly with the relatively small number of pupils in these schools. All areas of public spending have had to experience some adjustment given the scale of our economic crisis. Despite this challenge, the Government has sought to do this in as fair a way as possible.

### School Enrolments

117. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the definition of catchment area for primary education schools; if this definition has a basis in law in view of the fact that schools use catchment areas as a prerequisite for enrolment purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39555/11]

118. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the legal definition of catchment area for secondary education schools; if this definition has a basis in law in view of the fact that schools use catchment areas as a prerequisite for enrolment purposes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39556/11]

119. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the definition of a feeder school; if this definition has a basis in law; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39557/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 117 to 119, inclusive, together.

While there is no basis in law, catchment boundaries have their origins in the establishment of free post-primary education in the late 1960's and were determined following consultation with local educational interests. For planning purposes the country was divided into geographic districts each with several primary schools feeding into a post-primary centre with one or more post-primary schools. The intention was and continues to be that these defined districts facilitate the orderly planning of school provision and accommodation needs.

Enrolment in individual post-primary schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

The Deputy will be aware that earlier this year, I launched a discussion paper on school enrolment. The document, "Discussion Paper on a Regulatory Framework for School Enrolment" contains suggestions on how to make the process of enrolling in schools more open, equitable and consistent.

I wish to make clear that the paper was not meant to be prescriptive, nor have any decisions been made as to what elements will be contained in any final regulations or legislation. The purpose of the paper was to lead and provoke debate on enrolment policies and practices.

I invited education partners and interested parties to submit their views to my Department by 28 of October last and my officials are now co-ordinating the submissions received. The feedback from this consultation will help inform the nature and scope of a new regulatory framework for school enrolment.

### FÁS Training Programmes

120. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the number of young persons aged 16 years on Youthreach, community training centre and FÁS courses in receipt of a training allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39566/11]

121. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the number of young persons aged 17 years on Youthreach, community training centre and FÁS courses in receipt of a training allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39567/11]

122. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide details of the estimated savings made as a result of the cuts to the allowance for young persons aged 16 and 17 on Youthreach, community training centre and FÁS courses in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39568/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 120 to 122, inclusive, together.

The allowance for 16 year-olds on Youthreach, Community Training Centre and FÁS courses is €76.65. The allowance for 17 year-olds on Youthreach, Community Training Centre and FÁS courses is €95.75. Both of these rates will be reduced, for new entrants only, to €40, with effect from 1 January 2012. The related savings are estimated to amount to €2.8m in 2012. A total of 691 16-year olds and 940 17-year olds on a Youthreach course were in receipt of an allowance as at 31/12/2010. A total of 595 16-year olds and 844 17-year olds on a Community Training Centre or FÁS course were in receipt of an allowance as at end November 2011.

### School Enrolments

123. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a school place in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7. [39601/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The question of enrolment in individual schools is the responsibility of the managerial authority of those schools. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking places. This may result, however, in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice.

It is the responsibility of the managerial authorities of schools to implement an enrolment policy in accordance with the Education Act, 1998. In this regard a board of management may find it necessary to restrict enrolment to children from a particular area or a particular age group or, occasionally, on the basis of some other criterion. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

Section 29 of the Education Act 1998, provides parents with an appeal process where a board of management of a school or a person acting on behalf of the Board refuses enrolment to a student. Where a school refuses to enrol a pupil, the school is obliged to inform parents of their right under Section 29 of the Education Act 1998 to appeal that decision to either the relevant Vocational Educational Committee or to the Secretary General of my Department.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The Board

can be contacted at National Educational Welfare Board, National Headquarters, 16-22 Green Street, Dublin 7 or by telephone at 01-8738700.

### **National Qualifications Authority of Ireland**

124. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the membership of the regulatory board of directors of a body (details supplied) includes persons who have a financial interest in the industry which he or she regulates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39634/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The functions of the body referred to by the Deputy have been subsumed into the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) since January 2010 and the board is in the process of winding up.

In line with normal practice, the board included providers of English language education and training, in the form of representatives of Marketing English in Ireland, along with a range of interests from the state sector.

Decisions relating to the recognition of English Language Teaching Organisations are taken by the NQAI Recognition Committee, which is made up of representatives of NQAI, the Department of Education and Skills, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, the Further Education and Training Awards Council and Fáilte Ireland. No persons with a financial interest in the industry are included on this Committee.

### **Pupil-Teacher Ratio**

125. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the average class size in each primary school in County Kerry for the years 2010 and 2011; the envisaged class size for each school in 2012; and his plans to reduce these class sizes in 2012. [39640/11]

149. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Education and Skills following the budget announcements if a school (details supplied) in Dublin 1 will lose teachers in the coming year; if so, the number of same and the phasing in arrangements that have been planned by him. [39873/11]

164. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of pupil teacher ratio changes in budget 2012 on schools in Cork city and county. [39991/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 125, 149 and 164 together.

The Statistics section of my Department's website contains class size data at individual primary school level in county order for the 2010/2011 school year. The source of this data is the National School Annual Census. Statistical information in respect of the current school year is currently being compiled in my Department and is due for publication in September 2012.

As you will be aware from the budget announcements, there is no increase in the general average of 28:1 for the allocation of classroom teachers at primary level. The relevant appointment and retention figures for mainstream staffing has been published on the Department's website. However, the staffing arrangements in schools for the 2012/2013 school year can also be affected by changes in their enrolment, the impact of other budget measures and the reforms to the teacher allocation process. The reform of the allocation process is designed to bring a more equitable distribution of existing posts between schools so there will inevitably be some schools that will lose posts and some schools that will gain posts.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

My Department will be notifying schools in January of the new staffing arrangements for 2012/13 school year.

### Schools Building Programme

126. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary schools in County Kerry that have applied for extension buildings; and the current status of each application. [39641/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Applications have been received from 31 primary schools in Co Kerry for school extensions. In addition, applications have been received from a further 7 primary schools for new replacement school buildings. Details of the schools concerned are attached for the Deputy's information. The current status of all projects on the school building programme, including those in County Kerry, may be viewed on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this will be updated on an ongoing basis. As the Deputy may be aware, the Government's Medium Term Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework, which was published on 10 November 2011, sets out the demographic challenge facing the education system in the coming years. The priority now is to focus on major school projects and smaller projects devolved to schools to meet the demographic demands. The primary aim will be to ensure that every child will have access to a school place. I recently announced that a school building construction programme for 2012 will be published this month and that a 5 year construction programme will be announced in the New Year.

County	Roll No.	Name & Address
Kerry	01396J	Tulloha National School Kenmare (Kerry)
Kerry	02418V	Knockaderry N S Farranfore (Kerry)
Kerry	03132I	S N Sliabh A Mhadra Ballyduff (Kerry)
Kerry	04062S	Listowel Presentation Primary Listowel (Kerry)
Kerry	08530W	Lauragh National School Killarney (Kerry)
Kerry	09837H	Black Valley National School Beaufort (Kerry)
Kerry	10755M	Scoil An Fhirtearaigh Tra Li (Kerry)
Kerry	11363A	Scoil Atha Na Mblath Killarney (Kerry)
Kerry	11746Q	Castlegregory Mxd N S Castlegregory (Kerry)
Kerry	12832O	Scoil Mhuire B Killorglin (Kerry)
Kerry	13615L	Scoil Eoin, Balloonagh, Tralee, Co Kerry
Kerry	14366V	Loughfouder N S Knocknagoshel (Kerry)
Kerry	15592M	Sn Ceann Tra Meascaithe Ceantra (Kerry)
Kerry	15945T	Firies Mxd N S Killarney (Kerry)
Kerry	15978L	Curraheen Mxd N S Glenbeigh (Kerry)
Kerry	16014A	St Finians An Corain (Kerry)
Kerry	17012B	S N An Fhossa Killarney (Kerry)
Kerry	17710C	S N An Chuilleanaig Killarney (Kerry)
Kerry	18247K	S N Mhuire Na Mbraithre Tralee (Kerry)
Kerry	18702I	Spa National School, Tralee
Kerry	18832V	Castlemaine N S Castlemaine (Kerry)
Kerry	19384C	Ardfert Central N S Ard Fhearta (Kerry)
Kerry	19448C	S N Realt Na Mara Tuath O Siosta (Kerry)
Kerry	19461R	Eilin Naofa (Kerry)
Kerry	19536W	Holy Family (Kerry)

County	Roll No.	Name & Address
Kerry	19631Q	Gaelscoil Mhic Easmainn Rath Ronain (Kerry)
Kerry	19917L	Gaelscoil Naomh Aogain Bothar Luimnigh (Kerry)
Kerry	19941I	Gaelscoil Faithleann Cill Airne (Kerry)
Kerry	19957A	Dromclough N S Listowel (Kerry)
Kerry	19986H	S N Eoin Baiste Garrai Na Dtor (Kerry)
Kerry	20229U	Nagle Rice Primary School, Milltown, Killarney

County	Primary	Roll No.	Name and address
Kerry	Primary	09260B	SN Lios Teilic Traili
Kerry	Primary	16217O	An Bhreac Chluain B Annascaul
Kerry	Primary	16898S	SN Breandan Naofa, Cathair Ui Mhodhrain Traili
Kerry	Primary	20013U	Gaelscoil Lios Tuathail Lios Tuathail
Kerry	Primary	20112W	Caherciveen NS Caherciveen
Kerry	Primary	20158A	Tralee Educate Together NS Collins Sandes House Tralee
Kerry	Primary	20229U	Nagle Rice Primary School Milltown Killarney

127. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary schools in County Kerry that have applied for replacement of prefabricated structures; the current status of each application [39642/11]

128. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the post-primary schools in County Kerry that have applied for replacement of prefabricated structures; and the current status of each application. [39643/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos 127 and 128 together.

Major applications have been received from 38 primary schools and 11 post primary schools in Co Kerry for extension projects or replacement of accommodation. In some cases school applications may involve, without specific reference, the replacement of some or all of the school's existing prefabricated accommodation, both rented and owned. Accordingly, information about the level of such accommodation is not readily available. The current status of all projects on the school building programme, including those in County Kerry, may be viewed on my Department's website at [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and this will be updated on an ongoing basis.

In addition, 2 primary schools in County Kerry applied this year to replace prefabricated accommodation with permanent accommodation. No such applications have been received from post primary schools. Details of the two primary schools concerned are attached for the Deputy's information. The application by one of the schools was unsuccessful as the accommodation at the school was deemed adequate to meet the needs of its pupils. Funding had previously been approved for this school to provide for a permanent extension of two mainstream classrooms to replace some temporary accommodation. In the case of the other application, this school was approved significant funding to provide a permanent extension to replace two mainstream classrooms.

[Deputy Ruairí Quinn.]

County	Roll No.	Name & Address
Kerry	18702I	Spa National School, Tralee, Co. Kerry.
Kerry	20197K	Kenmare NS, Kenmare, Co. Kerry

129. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary schools in County Kerry that have applied for renovation and repairs; the current status of each application. [39644/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to Primary schools in County Kerry that applied for an Emergency Works Grant in 2011 is outlined in the following table:

Roll	School	Status
10501E	Asdee NS, Listowel	approved
12832O	Scoil Mhuire, Killorglin	approved
16917T	Scoil Naomh Padraig Measc, Caherleahan	approved
19487M	Holy Cross Mercy NS	approved
18705O	Scoil Naisiunta Tairbeart	approved
15878H	Derryquay NS, Tralee	approved
19512I	St. Oliver's NS, Ballycasheen	approved
09938N	Scoil Ide, Curranes	approved
18049G	Scoil Na Mainistreach, Cill Áirne	approved
18856M	St. Joseph's NS	approved
07990F	Scoil Naomh Cárthach	approved
20229U	Nagle Rice NS, Milltown	approved
19376D	St. Itas & St. Joseph's NS	approved under Jobs Initiative Scheme
09878V	Aghatubrid NS	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
13530D	Mercy Primary School, Moyderwell	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
17365L	Cahooreigh NS	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
18049G	Muire Na Mainistreach	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
19536W	Holy Family School, Balloonagh	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
20147S	Scoil Mhuire Agus Naomh Treasa	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
20111U	Holy Family NS	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
18084I	Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
11067T	SN Naomh Brid	Works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme

130. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the post primary schools in County Kerry that have applied for renovation and repair; the current status of each application. [39645/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to Post Primary schools in County Kerry that applied for an Emergency Works Grant in 2011 is outlined in the following table:

Roll	School	Status
61320M	St. Brendan's College, Killarney	approved
61370E	St Michael's College, Listowel	approved
81006S	Tarbert Comprehensive School	approved
76068N	Colaiste na Sceilge, Cahirciveen	approved
91504R	Scoil Phobail Sliabh Luachra	approved
61260U	St Joseph's Presentation SS	under consideration
61260U	St. Joseph's Presentation Convent SS	works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme
61360B	Intermediate School, Killorglin	works not eligible under Emergency Works Scheme

131. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the primary schools in County Kerry that applied for, qualified, and were approved for work under the summer work scheme for school building refurbishment in 2011; and the schools that applied for, qualified, and are awaiting approval in County Kerry. [39646/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** A total of 70 primary schools from County Kerry made an application under the 2011 Summer Works Scheme. I am pleased to inform the Deputy that 21 primary schools were successful under this year's Scheme. Primary school applications under the SWS were further assessed for purposes of the Jobs Initiative announced on the 10th May 2011. Under this assessment, a further 3 primary schools in County Kerry were approved for funding. Details of all schools that had applications approved for funding under the Summer Works scheme and Jobs Initiative are published on the Department's website, [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). I have also attached, for the Deputy's information, details of successful school applications approved for funding in County Kerry.

List of Schools who received funding under the SWS 2011

KERRY	19917L	GAELSCOIL NAOMH AOGAIN BOTHAR LUIMNIGH	Mechanical
KERRY	19805A	BALLYDUFF CENTRAL BALLYDUFF	Electrical
KERRY	19547E	ST FRANCIS SPECIAL SCH BEAUFORT	Mechanical
KERRY	19487M	HOLY CROSS MERCY PRIMARY SCHOOL NEW ROAD	Electrical
KERRY	18325E	NAOMH CHARTHAIGH BOYS NATIONAL SCHOOL	Electrical
KERRY	18283O	SCOIL MHUIRE SC MHUIRE BROSNAIGH	Mechanical
KERRY	18049G	MUIRE NA MAINISTREACH MUIRE NA MAINISTREACH	Electrical
KERRY	16871V	S N AN CHROI NAOFA TRAIGHLI	Mechanical
KERRY	16014A	ST FINIANS AN CORAIN	Mechanical
KERRY	13615L	SCOIL EOIN BALLOONAGH	Electrical
KERRY	12875J	DOUGLAS NATIONAL SCHOOL KILLORGLIN	Electrical
KERRY	12587E	COOLARD MXD N S LISTOWEL	Mechanical
KERRY	11363A	SCOIL ATHA NA MBLATH KILLARNEY	Mechanical
KERRY	10755M	SCOIL AN FHIRTEARAIGH TRA LI	Mechanical

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## List of Schools who received funding under the SWS 2011

KERRY	10501E	SCOIL EASA DHUIBHE LIOS TUATHAIL	Mechanical
KERRY	09209B	CASTLEDROM N S CASTLEMAINE	Mechanical
KERRY	08530W	LAURAGH NATIONAL SCHOOL KILLARNEY	Electrical
KERRY	07841L	KILGOBNET N S BEAUFORT	Electrical
KERRY	04062S	LISTOWEL PRESENTATION PRIMARY LISTOWEL	Mechanical
KERRY	16217O	Scoil Bhreac Chluan	Electrical
KERRY	03132I	SN Sliabh a Mhadra	Mechanical

## List of Schools who received funding under the Jobs Initiative 2011

Kerry	09209B	Castledrum National School	Access for all
Kerry	18702I	Spa National School	Access for all
Kerry	19376D	St Itas & St Josephs National School	Access for all

**Services for People with Disabilities**

132. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is a lack of adequate disabled access facilities at a college (details supplied), that there is no lift or escalator for ease of access from the third to fourth floor, that there is no wheelchair friendly toilet facility at the campus; if his attention has been further drawn to the fact that students with disability needs are dissuaded from attending the college; and the plans he has to rectify the situation. [39679/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** My Department has no record of having received an application for the works referenced by the Deputy. However I wish to advise the Deputy that the College, referred to by him, has received substantial funding from my Department in recent years. In 2006, €205,910 was provided to the College in question under the Summer Works Scheme 2006 for improvement works to facilitate disabled access. In addition, the College has also benefited from significant funding under my Department's Emergency Works Scheme — in 2009, a grant of €364,612 was provided to upgrade the Electrical System as well as €542,640 in 2010 for Roof Works.

It is open to the facility to consider if it qualifies for grant under my Department's Emergency Works Scheme. The purpose of the Scheme 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. Details of the Scheme are available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

**Higher Education Grants**

133. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their higher education grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39692/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for the relevant grant awarding authority. I understand from the grant

awarding authority in this case, that the grant application in question has been processed and confirmation in relation to certain details is awaited from the student.

134. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Education and Skills when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their higher education grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39693/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for the relevant grant awarding authority. I understand from the grant awarding authority in this case that the application in question is currently being assessed and a decision will issue as soon as possible.

135. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the percentage of third level students in County Donegal qualified for third level grants in the past 12 months; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39694/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I regret that the information is not collated by the student grant awarding authorities in the format requested by the Deputy. However, information supplied to my Department by the grant awarding authorities in Donegal indicates that 3,750 students were in receipt of a student grant for the 2010/11 academic year.

136. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason for denying grant assistance to post graduate students; and the way that his policy fits into the stated objective of economic growth [39717/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** Grant assistance remains available to postgraduate students on a more limited basis. The primary motivation for the Government in taking very difficult budgetary decisions is to retrieve our economic sovereignty and put the economy on a road to recovery. In closing the gap between revenue and spending, unpalatable savings measures are necessary and savings for student supports were inevitable as part of that. Given the growth in demand for participation in third level, the Government has endeavoured, to the greatest extent possible, to protect disadvantaged students.

In this regard, I have adopted a fees only contribution at postgraduate level but this will continue to provide support for a relatively wide number of post-graduate students. While there would be no maintenance payments, all 'special rate' students will have their fees paid while another 4,000 students will receive a fee contribution of €2,000. In access terms, the requirement to pay a fee would be likely to be a greater obstacle to entry than lack of maintenance support. This approach has enabled me to ensure that substantial allocations continue to be made to students from lower income backgrounds to achieve an under-graduate qualification to improve their job opportunities.

### School Staffing

137. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on teaching staff numbers in each post primary school in County Mayo as a result of the change in the guidance provision allocation announced on Monday, 5 December on a school by school basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39745/11]

140. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on teaching staff numbers in each post primary school in County Sligo as a result of the change in the guidance provision allocation announced on Monday, 5 December on a school by school basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39748/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 137 and 140 together.

While difficult choices had to be made to identify savings across my Department's budget, the Government has tried to protect front line services in 2012. The Government has protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

Until now, a specific resource was provided for guidance in addition to the standard teacher allocation to post primary schools. In future, schools must meet their guidance requirements from within the overall resource provided by that normal staffing schedule. Individually schools can continue to make provision for guidance and counselling. Decisions on how this will be done will be taken at school level in the best interests of students and to ensure the best use of resources available. I am confident school management and teachers will continue to work together to meet the needs of the students in their care.

In this way, the main teacher allocation can be maintained at 19:1 for schools generally, while schools will have discretion to balance what they allocate for guidance against the competing demands of providing subject choice. The change that has been announced gives schools greater autonomy in how they allocate staff resources to best meet the needs of their students. The change to guidance allocations must be seen in the context of the major challenges we have as a Government in trying to shelter public services to the greatest extent that we can in these exceptional times. My Department will be notifying schools of the impact of the budget changes in January, 2012.

138. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on schools in County Mayo on a school by school basis of the decision to withdraw supports from earlier disadvantage programmes and schemes that pre date DEIS in tabular form. [39746/11]

141. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the impact on schools in County Sligo on a school by school basis of the decision to withdraw supports from earlier disadvantaged programmes and schemes that pre date DEIS in tabular form [39749/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 138 and 141 together.

Given the scale of our economic crisis, adjustments have had to be made across all areas of the public sector. Despite this challenge, the Government has sought to do this in as fair a way as possible. While DEIS schools are not immune to budgetary measures, a key priority for me is to continue to prioritise and target funding at schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage.

In order to ensure fairness in the distribution of resources available under the DEIS plan, it is no longer possible to allow some schools to retain legacy posts on a concessionary basis that pre-date the introduction of DEIS. A range of measures has been announced to withdraw supports (428 posts) from earlier disadvantage programmes/schemes in 270 primary schools (4 DEIS and 1 non DEIS in Mayo, 2 DEIS in Sligo) and 163 post primary schools (5 DEIS in Mayo and 3 DEIS in Sligo), both DEIS and Non-DEIS that exceed what equivalent schools are entitled to under DEIS or to which non-DEIS schools are not entitled. These measures will take effect from the 2012/13 school year.

While the exact staffing entitlements for schools for 2012/13 is not yet available, including the net effect of the withdrawal of legacy posts, the breakdown of these legacy posts are: — 38

concessionary teaching posts will be withdrawn from 15 non-DEIS primary schools previously in Giving Children an Even Break Programme and who retained a reduced PTR of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.- 102 concessionary posts will be withdrawn from 52 Urban Band 2 DEIS schools previously in the Giving Children an Even Break Programme and who had a reduced PTR of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.- 43 Support Teacher Posts will be withdrawn from 48 primary schools (45 DEIS and 3 Non DEIS)- 45 concessionary posts will be withdrawn from 32 DEIS Schools previously in the Breaking the Cycle Programme and who had a reduced PTR of 15:1 at the junior classes- 64 concessionary posts in 59 primary schools and 136 posts in 163 post-primary schools will be withdrawn from DEIS schools previously in the Disadvantaged Area Scheme.

Some alleviation measures will be available for those schools considered to be most acutely affected by these changes. Schools will be notified in January 2012 of their staffing entitlements under the new arrangement for 2012/13, including any alleviation measures that may apply. The new staffing schedule for DEIS Band 1 primary schools, which now gives greater autonomy to schools, will operate on a general average of 1 teacher for every 22 pupils. This simplifies the existing system whereby schools are given a “top-up” allocation to support lower class sizes of 20:1 in junior classes and 24:1 in senior classes. DEIS post-primary schools will be targeted for additional support through an improved staffing schedule of 18.25:1, which is a 0.75 point improvement compared to the existing standard 19:1 that applies in post-primary schools that do not charge fees (or compared to the 21:1 ratio that will apply in fee-charging schools).

The Government’s protection of schools serving disadvantaged areas is further underlined by the maintenance of €13 million in enhanced funding for DEIS schools, €2 million in school book funding for DEIS schools, as well as a €26 million investment in the Home School Community Liaison scheme. All of these areas have been protected from reductions in expenditure for 2012.

We have protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

*Question No. 139 answered with Question No. 116.*

*Question No. 140 answered with Question No. 137*

*Question No. 141 answered with Question No. 138.*

*Question No. 142 answered with Question No. 116.*

### **Special Educational Needs**

143. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 98 of 6 December 2011 if he will respond to the following (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39837/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I am pleased to update the Deputy that the Board of Management of the school in question has advised that the recommendations of the HSE report have been implemented in full. As the Deputy is aware a further report was prepared subsequent to a separate review of the school by a member of the Department’s Inspectorate and an Educational Psychologist. The Board of Management has confirmed that the recommendations of this report have also been implemented in full. My Department remains in regular contact with the school and is satisfied that significant progress has been made. My Department will continue to monitor the position in the coming months.

### School Patronage

144. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason or reasons for postponing the submission date in relation to the patronage of schools to 24 February; the weighting that will be applied to families who have more than one child in the eligible consultation category; if it will be numbers alone that will determine the patronage or will other criteria apply; if so, the criteria that will be applied; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39841/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As part of the recent process of briefing patrons in relation to applications for patronage of the new schools, a number of queries were raised with the Department about possible applications for patronage which involve partnerships between two or more patrons. These issues chiefly concerned the particular patronage model that would apply where two or more patrons intended to have a joint or co-patronage role or arrangement in any of the new schools. The Department undertook to examine the issues further and then issue clarification on the matter. The deadline for receipt of applications for patronage of new second level schools to be established in 2013 and 2014 was Friday 13th January 2012. Given that prospective patrons will need some time to consider possible applications and the options for co-operation with each other, it is proposed to allow an extra six weeks for this and therefore the deadline for receipt of applications has been moved to Friday 24th February 2012. Details of the new arrangements for patronage of new schools and the criteria for deciding on patronage of these new schools is available on my Department's website, *www.education.ie*.

### School Enrolments

145. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that a person (details supplied) in Dublin 7 gets a second level school place [39843/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The selection and enrolment of pupils in schools is the responsibility of the authorities of the individual school. My Department's main responsibility is to ensure that schools in an area can, between them, cater for all pupils seeking school places in an area. However, this may result in some pupils not obtaining a place in the school of their first choice. As schools may not have a place for every applicant, a selection process may be necessary. This selection process and the enrolment policy on which it is based must be non-discriminatory and must be applied fairly in respect of all applicants.

Under section 15(2)(d) of the Education Act, 1998, each school is legally obliged to disclose its enrolment policy and to ensure that as regards that policy that principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents choice are respected. Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 provides for an appeal by a parent or guardian to the Secretary General of my Department, or in the case of a Vocational Educational Committee (VEC) school to the VEC in the first instance, where a Board of Management of a school, or a person acting on behalf of the Board, refuses to enrol a student in a school, expels a student or suspends a student for 20 or more days in any school year. My Department has no authority to compel a school to admit a pupil, except in the case of an appeal under section 29 of the Education Act, 1998 being upheld.

I understand the parent of the pupil in question lodged a section 29 appeal against the decision of a school to refuse enrolment. I further understand that the Section 29 Administration Unit has sought a copy of the letter of refusal to enrol from the Board of Management of the school. Once this is received, the section 29 appeal can be admitted in accordance with the procedures.

The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) is the statutory agency which can assist parents who are experiencing difficulty in securing a school place for their child. The NEWB may be able to offer assistance and advice on securing a school placement within the pupil's area. The contact details for the NEWB in your area is National Educational Welfare Board, Block 3 Floor 1, Grove Court, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, phone number 01-8103260.

### Literacy Levels

146. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, with reference to the programme of international student assessment 2009 assessment, consideration was given when evaluating the different countries scores and ranking, to the increase, since 2000, in the number of pupils taking the reading literacy assessment whose first language was not English; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39845/11]

147. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, with reference to the programme of international student assessment 2009 assessment, consideration was given when evaluating the different countries scores and ranking, to the increase, since 2000, in the number of pupils taking the reading literacy assessment who have special educational needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39846/11]

148. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if, with reference to the programme of international student assessment 2009 assessment, consideration was given when evaluating the different countries scores and ranking, to the increase, since 2000, in the number of pupils taking the reading literacy assessment from disadvantaged schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39847/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 146 to 148, inclusive, together.

In 2009 students in 65 countries/economics, including Ireland, participated in the assessment, making PISA 2009 the largest international survey of education to date. The overall mean score of students in Ireland in the 2009 study was 495.6 compared with 526.7 in 2000. The survey was constructed in a manner to ensure a nationally representative sample taking account of school type, size, gender, and socioeconomic composition. Therefore disadvantage was taken account of in the construction of the sample, but special needs and migrant students for whom English is not the mother tongue were not part of the sample construct.

The study included questions on immigrant status (first or second generation migrants) and language spoken at home, so that the scores of such pupils are identified separately. In Ireland, the key difference is not between native and migrant students, but rather between native students and those for whom English or Irish is not the mother tongue. In Ireland the percentage of students with immigrant status rose from 2.3% in 2000 to 8.3% in 2009, and the proportion who spoke a language other than English or Irish at home rose from 0.9% to 3.6%. The mean score of students who spoke another language was 532.8 in 2000 and 443.9 in 2009. The socioeconomic status of such students was similar to the national profile in 2009, but was significantly higher than the national profile in 2000.

The study also gives separate data on the mean scores of students with high, average and low socioeconomic status. In 2000 just over one quarter of students attended schools designated as disadvantaged under the Department's Disadvantaged Areas Schools Scheme. DEIS was introduced in 2005, and in the 2009 study, 23.7% of participants attended schools in the Schools Support Programme of DEIS. The mean scores in 2009 for those with high, average and low socioeconomic status were 535.5, 497.9 and 459.5 respectively. The mean scores of such students

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in 2000 were 558.6, 529.0 and 492.5 respectively. While a third of pupils fell within each socio-economic category in 2009, the proportions in 2000 indicated 38.1% of students had high socio-economic status, 28% had average status and 30.7% had low socioeconomic status.

The PISA study did not identify separately the proportion and scores of students included in the study who had a disability. However, a team of international experts identified the decline in PISA results since 2000 in Ireland as partially due to the growth in the number of migrant students for whom English is not the mother tongue, the inclusion of greater numbers of students with special needs in mainstream education, a decline in early school leaving, the random inclusion of 8 schools in the survey with very low levels of achievement, and survey fatigue.

*Question No. 149 answered with Question No. 125.*

### **Higher Education Grants**

150. **Deputy Michael Lowry** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) who applied for the higher education grant in County Tipperary was refused; if he will provide the FETAC level rating for the courses; if he will review this case; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39877/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The decision on eligibility for a student grant is a matter for the relevant grant awarding authority. The Deputy will appreciate that in the absence of all of the relevant details that would be contained in an individual's application form it would not be possible for me to say whether or not a student is eligible for a grant for a particular course or whether or not a student is in progression.

I understand from the awarding authority in this case that the applicant appealed the decision of the grant awarding authority to its appeals officer and has received a decision on the appeal. Where the appeals officer decides to reject the appeal, the applicant may appeal this decision to my Department or the independent appeals board, as appropriate. No appeal has been received in my Department to date.

### **Schools Building Projects**

151. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will ensure that a school (details supplied) in Dublin 18 is amongst those going to tender and construction in 2012 in view of the fact that the school site configuration will make it impossible to remain on-site and build at the same time if there is a further year's delay in commencing construction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39890/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The building project for the school referred to by the Deputy was included in the School Building Work Programme announced on 24th January 2011. It was one of a number of schools authorised to secure planning permission with a view to preparing tender documents. The Design Team are currently working on the completion of Stage 2(b) of Architectural Planning which includes Planning Permission, Fire Certificate and Disability Access Certificate (DAC) and the preparation of tender documents. Planning Permission was lodged on 7th November and a decision is awaited.

I recently announced that I will be publishing a detailed plan on an annual basis in relation to planned expenditure on individual school major projects. The first of these in relation to 2012 expenditure will be published in later this month. All school building projects currently in architectural planning will be considered in the context of these programmes, taking into

account the funding available, the building costs involved and the progression of other major projects required to meet demographic needs.

### EU Funding

152. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the European globalisation adjustment fund (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39926/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** On 14 November, the European Council approved the applications submitted by my Department in respect of almost 9,000 workers made redundant in the NACE 41 Construction of Buildings, NACE 43 Specialised Construction Activities and NACE 71 Architectural Services construction sub-sectors between 1 July 2009 and 31 March 2010. Redundant workers were identified based on evidence of statutory redundancy payments and on data from the apprenticeship database held by FÁS.

The three applications have been approved by the EU budgetary authorities subject to certain final procedural elements. The final EU financing decision releasing the EGF contribution of a total of €35.7m is expected shortly.

A number of EGF programme Interventions have been provided to date and are funded from existing budgetary provision, include career guidance, full, part-time and evening further education and training courses, apprenticeship on-and off-the-job training, full and part-time third level education programmes and related training and education allowances where appropriate. It is intended that letters notifying all persons who are eligible for EGF co-financed assistance of a number of new supports which will be made available to them will issue very shortly.

### School Curriculum

153. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the way he will ensure that all second level students have access to career guidance and counselling services following the announcement in budget 2012 of the withdrawal of ex-quota career guidance counsellors to schools, and given that section 9 of the Education Act requires that second level students receive appropriate guidance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39935/11]

155. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the level of guidance counselling in schools will now be entirely a matter for school management; if schools will be required to have a certain level of guidance counselling following decisions taken in budget 2012 on guidance provision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39937/11]

156. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views that guidance will now be just an add-on to a teacher's subject teaching and that separate guidance posts will no longer be advertised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39938/11]

158. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to withdraw ex-quota career guidance counsellors to schools on the pupil-teacher ratio as post primary level. [39940/11]

159. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has taken into account the impact on subject choice at post-primary level following his decision to withdraw ex-quota career guidance counsellors from post-primary schools in budget 2012. [39941/11]

160. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will confirm that no other member of school management or teaching staff apart from those that are fully qualified guidance counsellors will be allowed to provide guidance to students following decisions taken in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39942/11]

161. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills his views that only qualified guidance counsellors should provide counselling services to students and that this should remain the case following the decision taken in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39943/11]

162. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he has any concerns that the profession of career guidance counsellors will no longer exist following decisions taken in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39944/11]

167. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of second-level schools that have career guidance counsellors ex-quota at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40004/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 153, 155, 156, 158 to 162, inclusive, and 167 together.

While difficult choices had to be made to identify savings across my Department's budget, the Government has tried to protect front line services in 2012. The Government has protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

Until now, a specific resource was provided to all second-level schools for guidance in addition to the standard teacher allocation. This broadly equates to an additional allocation of about 1 teacher for every 500 pupils. In future, schools must meet their guidance requirements from within the overall resource provided by the normal staffing schedule. Individually schools can continue to make provision for guidance and counselling. Decisions on how this will be done will be taken at school level in the best interests of students and to ensure the best use of resources available. I am confident school management and teachers will continue to work together to meet the needs of the students in their care.

In this way, the main teacher allocation can be maintained at 19:1 for schools generally, while schools will have discretion to balance what they allocate for guidance against the competing demands of providing subject choice. The change that has been announced gives schools greater autonomy in how they allocate staff resources to best meet the needs of their students.

I have also provided for the filling of 300 Assistant Principal posts in second-level schools over the level originally planned. This will ensure that schools have sufficient management positions to ensure appropriate supports are available for all students. This is an important change which will reduce the impact of the moratorium on the filling of posts of responsibility in second level schools.

A key priority for me is to continue to prioritise and target available funding at schools with the most concentrated levels of educational disadvantage. All 195 second-level school in DEIS will be given targeted support by a more favourable staffing schedule of 18.25:1. This is a 0.75 point reduction compared to the existing PTR of 19:1 that applies in non fee-paying second-level schools.

The change to guidance allocations must be seen in the context of the major challenges we have as a Government in trying to shelter public services to the greatest extent that we can in

these exceptional times. My Department will be notifying schools of the impact of the budget changes in January, 2012.

### School Staffing

154. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his guidelines document on the implications of 9C entitlement to appropriate guidance is still in force or if he intends to issue a new circular to schools on the matter. [39936/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The budget measures, including those relating to guidance, come into effect from September 2012. Schools will be notified in the normal manner in relation to these changes. My Department will be issuing a Circular in January that will outline the staffing arrangements in schools for the 2012/13 school year.

*Questions Nos. 155 and 156 answered with Question No. 153.*

### Third Level Courses

157. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect there will be on specific postgraduate qualifications in guidance following his decision to withdraw ex-quota career guidance counsellors from post primary schools in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39939/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy is aware, until now a specific resource was provided for guidance in addition to the standard teacher allocation to post primary schools. In future, schools will meet their guidance requirements from within the overall resource provided by that normal staffing schedule. Individually schools can continue to make provision for guidance and counselling, however, decisions on how this will be done will be taken at school level in the best interests of students and to ensure the best use of resources available. The change that has been announced gives schools greater autonomy in how they allocate staff resources to best meet the needs of their students. I am confident school management and teachers will continue to work together to meet the needs of the students in their care.

My Department recognises a number of postgraduate qualifications as acceptable for school guidance work. Teachers participate in these programmes of their own volition and at their own expense. As schools will continue to provide guidance and counselling services there will still be a need for teachers with specific postgraduate qualifications in this area. As with all postgraduate courses future provision will depend on the level of demand and availability of resources.

*Questions Nos. 158 to 162, inclusive, answered with Question No. 153.*

### Special Educational Needs

163. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason an examination reader has been refused to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; if the case will be reviewed in view of the difficulties that the person experiences in examination situations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39961/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The State Examinations Commission has statutory responsibility for operational matters relating to the certificate examinations including organising the holding of examinations and determining procedures in places where examinations are conducted including the supervision of examinations. In view of the

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above I have forwarded your query to the State Examinations Commission for direct reply to you.

I wish to inform the Deputy that in all cases where a school/parent or student is dissatisfied with any aspect of the SEC's decision in relation to an application for reasonable accommodations, they have access to an Independent Appeals Committee. All members of the Appeals Committee are drawn from outside the SEC. The remit of the Appeals Committee covers appeals against all elements of a decision taken by the SEC. All appeals are considered in light of the published principles.

*Question No. 164 answered with Question No. 125.*

### **School Staffing**

165. **Deputy Micheál Martin** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of his decision to allow schools to manage guidance provision from within their existing pupil teacher ratio; and the effect of this on schools in Cork city and county. [39992/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** While difficult choices had to be made to identify savings across my Department's budget, the Government has tried to protect front line services in 2012.

The Government has protected the pupil-teacher ratio at primary level, prioritised targeted support for the most disadvantaged schools and maintained the overall number of resource teachers and SNAs to support children with special needs.

Until now, a specific resource was provided for guidance in addition to the standard teacher allocation to post primary schools. In future, schools must meet their guidance requirements from within the overall resource provided by that normal staffing schedule. Individually schools can continue to make provision for guidance and counselling. Decisions on how this will be done will be taken at school level in the best interests of students and to ensure the best use of resources available. I am confident school management and teachers will continue to work together to meet the needs of the students in their care.

In this way, the main teacher allocation can be maintained at 19:1 for schools generally, while schools will have discretion to balance what they allocate for guidance against the competing demands of providing subject choice. The change that has been announced gives schools greater autonomy in how they allocate staff resources to best meet the needs of their students.

The change to guidance allocations must be seen in the context of the major challenges we have as a Government in trying to shelter public services to the greatest extent that we can in these exceptional times.

My Department will be notifying schools of the impact of the budget changes in January, 2012.

### **Higher Education Grants**

166. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide further details on his announcement that a capital assets test will be introduced in 2013 allowing certain capital assets as well as income to be assessed as part of all higher education grant scheme applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39997/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware that the current means testing arrangements for student grants take no account of the capital value of savings or assets in determining eligibility for financial assistance. This approach is at variance

with other major financial support schemes operated by the Department of Social Protection and other public bodies such as the HSE.

A considerable body of reports produced by the Department over a number of years have strongly recommended the introduction of a capital test for student grants to create a more equitable basis for means testing, based on a more complete analysis of a family's capacity to support their children in pursuing further or higher education.

The Deputy will appreciate that the objective of the student grant scheme is to target available funding at socio-economically disadvantaged groups to support greater participation of students from these backgrounds in further and higher education.

In the circumstances and in the context of the current financial climate, the importance of accurately targeting increasingly scarce resources to those most in need has become a high priority. In this regard, a dedicated Capital Asset Test implementation group for student grants has been established. The group has been charged with bringing forward detailed implementation proposals on new means testing arrangements for student grants, to include the value of assets, for new applicants from the 2013/14 academic year. Any proposals will require further Government agreement and necessitate legislative amendment.

*Question No. 167 answered with Question No. 153.*

*Questions Nos. 166 to 170, inclusive, answered with Question No. 116.*

### **Special Educational Needs**

171. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason behind his decision to reduce the allocation for the fund for students with disabilities by 20%; and his views that this will have a negative impact on the number of students with disabilities who go on to or stay in higher education. [40011/11]

172. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the level of funding available for students with disabilities in 2011; and the level of funding that will be available in 2012. [40012/11]

173. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of students with disabilities who attended higher education in 2010 and in 2011; and the number of students who availed of the fund for students with disabilities in 2010 and 2011. [40013/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos 171 to 173, inclusive, together.

It is anticipated that the funding available in 2012 for the Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) will be sufficient to meet demand. I understand that this is possible for a number of reasons including a greater integration of delivery of supports to students with disabilities into the core activities of institutions which has led to lesser dependence on supplementary funding through the FSD. In addition, in practice, there is a frequent incidence of lower take-up by students of accommodations agreed as per a student's Needs Assessment at the beginning of the academic year. Furthermore, students accessing the fund in year one don't necessarily need to access the fund at the same level in subsequent years.

A total of €13.7m was available to the Fund for the 2010/11 academic year. The allocation for the 2011/12 academic year is currently being assessed as part of the applications process which remains on-going.

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In 2010/11, it was estimated that 6.4% of new entrants (2,544) to higher education had one or more disabilities. This compares to 6% (2,386) in 2009/10. The number of students with disabilities supported through the Fund for Students with Disabilities (i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate years) in 2010/11 was 6,090.

### Higher Education Grants

174. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of postgraduate students in higher education in 2011; and the number of postgraduate students in receipt of a maintenance grant in 2011. [40014/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will appreciate that statistics are not yet available in respect of the 2011/12 academic year. However, HEA statistics indicate that there were some 21,880 full-time postgraduate students pursuing courses in approved institutions in the 2010/11 academic year.

Based on recent returns from the grant awarding authorities, it is estimated that some 9,435 postgraduate students were in receipt of a student grant in the 2010/11 academic year.

175. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the qualifying income criteria for new postgraduate students entering higher education in 2012/2013 in order to have their fees paid by the State. [40015/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As a matter of routine, my Department reviews the student grant scheme each year to prepare policy proposals and to include changes announced under the relevant Budget. A decision on the reckonable income limits for postgraduate fee support for the 2012/13 academic year will be taken in the context of this review and the Scheme will be published in due course in the New Year with this detail.

176. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide further details on the introduction of a capital asset test in 2013; the reason behind this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40016/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware that the current means testing arrangements for student grants take no account of the capital value of savings or assets in determining eligibility for financial assistance. This approach is at variance with other major financial support schemes operated by the Department of Social Protection and other public bodies such as the HSE.

A considerable body of reports produced by the Department over a number of years have strongly recommended the introduction of a capital test for student grants to create a more equitable basis for means testing, based on a more complete analysis of a family's capacity to support their children in pursuing further or higher education.

The Deputy will appreciate that the objective of the student grant scheme is to target available funding at socio-economically disadvantaged groups to support greater participation of students from these backgrounds in further and higher education.

In the circumstances and in the context of the current financial climate, the importance of accurately targeting increasingly scarce resources to those most in need has become a high priority. In this regard, a dedicated Capital Asset Test implementation group for student grants has been established. The group has been charged with bringing forward detailed implementation proposals on new means testing arrangements for student grants, to include the value of

assets, for new applicants from the 2013/14 academic year. Any proposals will require further Government agreement and necessitate legislative amendment.

### **State Properties**

177. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the circumstances in which an estate known as Ballyhoura Lodge, Buttevant, County Cork, consisting of a house, outhouses and more than 17 acres of land, which became State property on the 1 September 1972 on the dissolution of its registered owner Ballyhoura Estates Limited, was sold to a person (details supplied) on 6 October 1986 for the sum of £160 and was then sold on 22 December of the same year to another person for £20,000; if he is satisfied the State received adequate consideration for the sale of its property; if this transaction was ever examined as to its propriety; the steps taken by him to safeguard the property interests of the State in such transactions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39506/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** Under Section 28 (2) of the State Property Act 1954, the Minister for Finance assumes responsibility for all personal property and land vested in or held in trust for a body corporate (other than personal property or land held by such body in trust for another person) immediately prior to its dissolution. Upon the dissolution of the body corporate, such property becomes State property. The effect of Section 28 is that the Minister does not hold the assets of dissolved companies as beneficial owner. He holds them in trust. The title which the Minister acquires under this Section has been described as a defeasible title since, if the dissolved company is restored to the Register of Companies within twenty years of the date of its dissolution, its property is automatically restored to it. The State Property Act also includes, in Section 31, a power for the Minister to waive the interest acquired under Section 28 of the Act. The relevant functions under the State Property Act have transferred in the current year to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

It is understood that the property which is the subject of the current question was held within a company which was struck off the Register of Companies in September 1972 for failure to file annual returns with the Companies Office. The beneficial owner of the property applied to the Department of Finance for a waiver of the interest acquired by the Minister for Finance under the provisions of the State Property Act and that waiver, in respect of which the consideration was £160, was completed in October, 1986. The effect of the waiver, which was not a sale by the State, would have been to allow the beneficial owner to complete the process of assembling a satisfactory title. The waiver itself would have formed only a limited element in the establishment of that title and the transaction was a normal exercise of Departmental functions. The price which the beneficial owner may have secured in a subsequent sale was not a matter for consideration in the context of the waiver and, accordingly, would not merit enquiry by me at this juncture.

I am advised that all applications for waiver of property falling within the scope of Section 28 of the State Property Act are referred to the Office of the Chief State Solicitor for legal advice and that any policy issues that may arise in particular cases are given full consideration on their merits.

### **Local Loans Fund**

178. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 106 of 17 November 2011, the average interest rate paid on general Exchequer borrowings in 1984; the average interest rate paid on general Exchequer borrowings in 1994 and 2004 assuming that the borrowings were rolled over in these years; the

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rate of interest at which this money was passed onto South Dublin County Council in 1984; the total profit that the local loans fund has made on a mortgage of €17,776 that was taken out on 16 February 1984 with a 30-year term at a fixed interest rate of 12.5%; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39544/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I refer to Parliamentary Question No.106 of 17 November 2011.

During 1984 the rate of interest charged by the Local Loans Fund to local authorities for house purchase and improvement loans was 12%. Local authorities were permitted to add an administration charge of 0.5%. The rate of interest charged on non-housing loans from the Fund during 1984 was 13.5%.

Since 1989 individuals who have mortgages from local authorities have been permitted to redeem their loans early without penalty. In turn, local authorities were permitted to redeem without penalty Local Loans Fund loans of matching amounts and at matching interest rates to the individual loans redeemed.

The Office of Public Works administers the Local Loans Fund on behalf of the Department of Finance. I understand from that Office that South Dublin County Council no longer has any loans with the Local Loans Fund. If South Dublin County Council contacts the OPW with a loan number, it will be able to provide information on the loan issue amount and the interest paid over the lifetime of that loan. The Local Loans Fund does not hold records of loans issued to mortgagees so that information would have to be sourced from South Dublin County Council. There is no profit made by the Exchequer on loans to local authorities for the purpose of mortgages.

The Exchequer lending rate in 1984 was linked to the average yield of short-dated Government stocks and stood at 13.5%. The average interest rate paid by the Exchequer on the National Debt was 7.26% in 1994 and 4.44% in 2004.

179. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the interest rate that the local loans fund charged Dublin County Council on mortgages that it passed on to borrowers at 12.5% in 1984; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39545/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** During 1984 the rate of interest charged by the Local Loans Fund to local authorities for house purchase and improvement loans was 12%. Local authorities were permitted to add an administration charge of 0.5%. The rate of interest charged on non-housing loans from the Fund during 1984 was 13.5%.

### **Pension Provisions**

180. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding expenditure of public money; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39736/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The Deputy will be aware that under the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) and Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices Act 2009 ministerial pensions, including the pensions of former Taoisigh, are no longer payable to sitting Members of the Oireachtas following the recent elections, or to Members of the European Parliament following the next elections to the Parliament. In addition, the Act

also provided for a 25% reduction in the pension payable at the time to the former Taoiseach while a Member of the Oireachtas.

The Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2010, which is also part of the EU-IMF Programme, imposed a Public Service Pension Reduction on public service pensions in payment, including the pensions of former Taoisigh and Presidents. The reduction rates were:

Annualised amount of Public Service pension	Reduction
Up to €12,000	Exempt
Any amount over €12,000 but not over €24,000	6 per cent
Any amount over €24,000 but not over €60,000	9 per cent
Any amount over €60,000	12 per cent

I recently announced the Government's intention to increase the top rate of the Public Service Pension Reduction from 12% to 20% in respect of pension amounts over €100,000. This is to be given effect by way of an amendment to the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (Amendment) Bill 2011, which is currently before the Oireachtas.

### Ministerial Staff

181. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding special advisers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39744/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The process for appointing a Special Adviser to a Minister or a Minister of State is set out in *The Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices*. These Guidelines were revised following decisions by the Government on a number of cost saving measures relating to the personal appointees of Ministers and Ministers of State.

Under the Guidelines it is normally intended that only Ministers of the Government and any Minister of State who regularly attends Cabinet will have Special Advisers appointed to them. However, in exceptional circumstances where a specific need is identified, a Special Adviser may be appointed to a Minister of State subject to the approval of the Government.

There has been a reduction in both the overall number and cost of Special Advisers compared to the previous Government.

Under the old *Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices* Special Advisers were paid their existing salary plus an 'attraction allowance' of 10%, subject to the overriding maximum remuneration of the Principal (higher) scale — (currently €99,236).

Under the revised Guidelines Special Advisers are placed on the Principal Officer (standard) scale: €80,051 — €83,337 — €86,604 — €89,898 — €92,672. The Guidelines provide that appointments are to be on the first point of the scale except where the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform approves a higher starting salary. In addition there is no longer an attraction allowance of 10%.

The cost of Special Advisers under the previous administration was approximately €4.35m in October 2010. The figure under the current Government, as at December 2011, is approximately €3.4m. This means a saving in the cost of Special Advisers of approximately €900,000 as at December 2011. This estimate of savings also reflects the fact that 2 Special Advisers have recently vacated their posts.

### Caiteachas Rannach

182. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe an mbeidh cead ag Airí soláthar caipitil nach bhfuil caite i mbliana a thabhairt ar aghaidh go dtí an bhliain seo chugainn; agus má bhíonn, cén soláthar atá ceadaithe do gach Roinn a thabhairt ar aghaidh go dtí an bhliain 2012, na cúiseanna nár caitheadh an soláthar i mbliana i ngach cás; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [39922/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** Sna meastacháin a d'fhoilsigh mo Roinn Dé Luain an cúigiú lá den mhí, tá sonraí de na leithdháiltí caipitil ar aontaigh mé go bhféadfaí iad a thabhairt ar aghaidh go dtí an bhliain seo chugainn — féach an Tábla thíos. Cumadh an córas ilbhliantúil agus an áis um airgead a thabhairt ar aghaidh d'fhonn éifeachtúlacht agus éifeacht Ranna agus gníomhaireachtaí a fheabhsú maidir le cláir agus tionscadail chaipitiúla a bhainistiú. Laistigh den chóras sin, tá Ranna aonair freagrach as na tionscadail agus na cláir ina réimsí féin. Is féidir breis sonraí i dtaobh an chaiteachais ar thionscadail agus chláir a fháil go díreach ó na Ranna ábhartha.

Roinn/Oifig	Méid	Cuspóir
Talmhaíocht	€26.9m	Talmh-bhia, geilleagar tuaithe
Cumarsáid	€15.8m	Aisoiriúnú
Cosaint	€0.5m	Foirgnimh
Comhshaol	€34m	Clár LEADER.
Poist/Fiontar/Nuálaíocht	€18.1m	Deontais EI, STI, micrea- airgeadas
Dlí & Ceart agus Comhionannas	€0.46m	Saotharlann na hEolaíochta Fóiréinsí
Gnóthaí Eachtracha	€0.37m	
Sláinte	€1.5m	Foirgnimh & Trealamh
Oifig na nOibreacha Poiblí	€8m	Bainistíocht Eastát
Coimirce Shóisialach	€0.8m	ICT & r-rialtas-
Iompar	€8.7m	Taisteal Cliste, deontais spóirt
<b>IOMLÁN</b>	<b>€115.16m</b>	

### Ministerial Appointments

183. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39395/11]

184. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time he was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39412/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 183 and 184 together.

Since my appointment as Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform on 9 March 2011 the following staff members have been appointed as Special Advisers:

Name	Title	Salary (per annum)	Duties
Anne Byrne	Special Adviser	€83,337	Any duties which may be assigned to her from time to time as appropriate to the position of Special Adviser as set out in Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.
Ronan O'Brien	Special Adviser	€114,000	Any duties which may be assigned to him from time to time as appropriate to the position of Special Adviser as set out in Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour (September 2004) sets out the terms and conditions of service, including the engagement in political activity, of all civil servants including Ministerial appointees.

Section 5.4 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour excludes staff holding temporary unestablished positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister from the restrictions on engaging in political activity as set out in section 5 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

### Proposed Legislation

185. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the date on which the amended Construction Contracts Bill will be brought before Dáil Éireann. [39721/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** You will be aware that the Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce new legislation to protect small building subcontractors that have been denied payments from bigger companies. In this regard, my colleague Minister of State Mr Brian Hayes has been working with Senator Feargal Quinn to develop the Construction Contracts Bill, which is now before the Dáil, into a robust piece of legislation.

In order to address a number of issues that were raised during the consultation on the Bill a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was carried out. The RIA was completed and published on 27 September. The Report is available on my Department's website: [www.per.gov.ie/reports](http://www.per.gov.ie/reports).

The RIA examined issues relating to payment practices in the construction sector and assessed the need for legislative intervention. It found that legislation is desirable to improve payment practices and to allow swift resolution of payment disputes by way of adjudication, allowing projects to be completed without wasting time and money in litigation. In addition, the RIA examined the main proposals to amend the Bill that were raised during the Seanad debate and subsequent consultation. It found that there were merits to considering amending the Bill in a number of respects e.g. to bring lower value contracts within its scope and to make the adjudicators award binding in payment dispute cases. It concluded that any such amendments should be formulated in such a manner that would protect the taxpayer.

Minister Hayes is now reflecting on the findings of the RIA and is preparing legislative proposals which will be brought to Government shortly for approval. It is essential that the solution to this issue be balanced so as to avoid imposing regulatory or cost burdens on parties in dispute, the State or others.

### Pension Provisions

186. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform further to Parliamentary Question No. 112 of 6 December 2011, the basis on which he is refusing to supply the names of the four former chairmen of the Revenue Commissioners each in receipt of a pension of €114,839.40 after the public service pension reduction. [39734/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** The information relating to superannuation benefits of retired Chairpersons was provided in the reply to the Parliamentary Question. The names of retired staff are not normally included in answers to Parliamentary Questions unless the names are already in the public domain, for example as a result of FOI enquiries. It is not considered appropriate to include names of Civil Servants in such replies.

### Ministerial Appointments

187. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39393/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** Section 5.4 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour excludes staff holding temporary unestablished positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister from the restrictions on engaging in political activity as set out in section 5 of the Code.

188. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39410/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The following table identifies the number, names and salary details of all Special Advisors appointed to my Department since the new Government came to office on 9th March 2011. Both Special Advisors report to me as Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation.

Name	Date Appointed	Salary
Mr. Conor Quinn	30th March 2011	€80,051
Mr. Ciaran Conlon	29th March 2011	€127,000

### Enterprise Support Services

189. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if he will outline in detail the financial and administrative supports available to start-up companies here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39446/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department does not provide direct funding or grants to businesses but provides funding to a number of State Agencies, including the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) and Enterprise Ireland, through whom assistance is delivered directly to businesses. The role of the CEBs is

to develop indigenous potential and stimulate economic activity at a local level primarily through the provision of financial and technical support for the development of small and micro-enterprises. The Boards form a nationwide support network for small business and are considered to be a first point of contact for persons wishing to set up in business.

The CEBs give priority to enterprises in the manufacturing or internationally traded services sector and must always give consideration to any potential for deadweight and displacement arising from a proposed enterprise. Subject to certain eligibility criteria new and developing micro-enterprises may qualify for financial support from the CEBs in the form of priming, expansion/development and feasibility/innovation grants. The CEBs also deliver non-financial supports such as one-to-one mentoring and a range of business advice and training programmes to improve management capability development within micro-enterprises designed to help new and existing enterprises to operate effectively and efficiently so as to last and grow, which may be available as appropriate to the needs of the promoter's business. Any persons considering setting up in business should in the first instance contact their most appropriate CEB to discuss what options may be available to them and their proposed business venture. Contact details for each of the CEBs can be obtained through their national website address at *www.enterprise-boards.ie*.

Enterprise Ireland's High Potential Start-Up (HPSU) team provides hands-on support and advice to entrepreneurs and early stage companies that are considered by Enterprise Ireland to have an innovative product, service or technology, and have the potential to achieve exports sales and create employment. Anybody thinking of starting a new business with export potential or currently raising investment for a start-up venture may qualify for support and investment.

Enterprise Ireland's HPSU Team is located at The Plaza, Eastpoint Business Park, Dublin 3. Early Stage Start-Up enquiries should be directed to Phone No. 01 7272885, Fax No: 01 7272020 or e-mail: *client.service@enterprise-ireland.com*; Website: *www.enterprise-ireland.com*.

### **Foreign Direct Investment**

190. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding the Horizon 2020 report; the action that has been taken since it was launched; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39463/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** In early 2010, IDA Ireland published 'Horizon 2020', its strategic blueprint for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ireland in the coming decade. FDI has been, and will continue to be, a key element in the export led recovery of the economy. Horizon 2020 sets out a road-map of what is needed to fuel Ireland's future success with leading global corporations, setting the following targets for achievement over the period 2010 to 2014:

- 640 investments;
- 50% of investments outside of Dublin and Cork;
- 62,000 direct new jobs in Ireland;
- 20% of Greenfield investment from emerging markets by 2014; and,
- €1.7bn client spend on Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) by 2014.

IDA Ireland's results for 2010 show that very good progress has been made towards achieving these targets. While final results for 2011 will not be available until next month, the indications

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are that these, too, will be very encouraging, particularly with regard to the job creation target in Horizon 2020.

Successful implementation to date by IDA Ireland of its Horizon 2020 Strategy has resulted in the achievement of the following significant outcomes:

- *Investments*

126 foreign direct investments were won in 2010, with 47 companies investing in Ireland for the first time, representing a 20% increase on the 2009 figure. 62% of investments came from existing client companies.

I am informed by IDA Ireland that the trends for 2011 are very encouraging with mid year results for 2011 showing projects approved up from 63 in 2010 to 75 in 2011.

- *Regional Spread*

In 2010, IDA Ireland achieved a total of 37% of projects outside of Dublin and Cork. These projects were employment intensive, resulting in the strong outturn of 45% of jobs locating outside of Dublin and Cork.

IDA is continuing its efforts to win investments for Ireland and to encourage, where appropriate, investments to locate in regional locations in line with the National Spatial Strategy. To date in 2011 there have been a number of significant regional investments announced including: JRI-America in Tralee (100 jobs); Valeo in Tuam (100 jobs); Pivot in Galway (100 jobs); AMS in Athlone (50 jobs); and, Kelcourt in Offaly (55 jobs).

- *Employment*

IDA supported companies created almost 11,000 new jobs in 2010, significantly greater than the previous year. At the same time, 9,545 jobs were lost by IDA supported companies, leaving an overall increase in IDA's employment portfolio of 1,352. A number of the job losses arose from the implementation of job reductions announced in the first half of 2009. IDA's strategy includes winning as many new jobs as possible each year and giving equal priority to maintaining existing jobs. The Agency recognises that job losses occur every year for a variety of reasons including changing competitiveness, competition from sister sites, product and technology lifecycles or global location rationalisation as a result of mergers and acquisitions.

I am informed by the Agency that it expects that the 2011 performance in relation to jobs will be stronger than in 2010.

- *Growth markets*

In order to achieve its objective of achieving 20% of Greenfield investments from high growth markets (India, China, Russia and Brazil) by the year 2014, IDA Ireland recently expanded its global office network to include Shenzhen in China, Bangalore in India and Singapore. Also, in 2011, the Indian company HCL announced the opening of a software delivery centre in Dublin which will create 80 jobs.

- *RD&I*

In 2010 IDA approved 37 Research, Development and Innovation (RD&I) investments with an associated spend of approximately €500 million. These investments play

a strategic role in embedding existing employment and laying the foundations for increased future employment. This strong performance has continued in 2011 with a number of significant RD&I projects announced, for example, EMC (Cork), Boston Scientific (Tipperary), Biotrin (Dublin), Caci (Dublin), Misys (Dublin), ON Semiconductor (Limerick).

### **Pension Provisions**

191. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation if a company (details supplied) still legally exists when all of its staff have been made redundant; if the company still exists, is it paying into a pension scheme; the implications for existing pension scheme members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39696/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The legal existence of a company is not governed or affected by the redundancy of its employees. Current information in relation to the status of companies is publicly available on the companies register at [www.cro.ie](http://www.cro.ie).

I have no function in relation to the pension arrangements of the company concerned. The legislation in relation to the regulation of pension schemes is a matter for my colleague the Minister of Social Protection.

### **Enterprise Support Services**

192. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding funding for a start-up business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39862/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department does not provide direct funding or grants to businesses but provides funding to a number of State Agencies, including the County and City Enterprise Boards (CEBs) and Enterprise Ireland, through whom assistance is delivered directly to businesses. The role of Dublin City Enterprise Board as part of the network of CEBs is to develop indigenous potential and stimulate economic activity at a local level primarily through the provision of financial and technical support for the development of small and micro-enterprises. The Boards form a nationwide support network for small business and are considered to be a first point of contact for persons wishing to set up in business.

The CEBs give priority to enterprises in the manufacturing or internationally traded services sector and must always give consideration to any potential for deadweight and displacement arising from a proposed enterprise. Subject to certain eligibility criteria new and developing micro-enterprises may qualify for financial support from the CEBs in the form of priming, expansion/development and feasibility/innovation grants. The CEBs also deliver non-financial supports such as one-to-one mentoring and a range of business advice and training programmes to improve management capability development within micro-enterprises designed to help new and existing enterprises to operate effectively and efficiently so as to last and grow, which may be available as appropriate to the needs of the promoter's business.

The promoter may therefore wish to contact Dublin City Enterprise Board to discuss what options may be available to them and their proposed business venture. Dublin City Enterprise Board is located on the 5th Floor, O'Connell Bridge House, D'Olier Street, Dublin 2; Phone No: 01 635 1144, Fax No: 01 635 1811; Email: [info@dceb.ie](mailto:info@dceb.ie) Website: [www.dceb.ie](http://www.dceb.ie).

### Departmental Funding

193. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the funding from the State agencies paid to a company (details supplied) in the forms of grants, loans or any other mechanisms for each year since 2000; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39868/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The company in question is a large processor of poultry that currently employs 650 people and works directly with 150 contracted farmers who rear chickens on their behalf. The company has a turnover of €168m of which €137m is spent in the Republic of Ireland (ROI) and it pays out €20m in wages and salaries per annum. The company supplies chicken products to the main supermarkets in the ROI and exports to the UK and France. Details of funding received by the company from Enterprise Ireland for the years 2000 to 2010 inclusive are set out in the table accompanying this reply. As the information in relation to the funding for 2011 is commercially sensitive, I am not in a position to release it at this point. The information will be available after the publication of Enterprise Ireland's Annual Report in 2012.

Funding to Company from Enterprise Ireland

Year	Amount of Funding Paid €
2000	504,212.99
2001	139,935.93
2002	147,520.18
2003	169,947.33
2004	21,378.80
2005	59,411.57
2006	0
2007	115,435.95
2008	211,660.75
2009	153,724.20
2010	508,406.50

### Credit Guarantee Scheme

194. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the Government loan guarantee scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39945/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The Deputy is referring to the Temporary, Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme which should be in operation by the end of March 2012. An Invitation to Tender was published on Monday 5th December to select on Operator for the Scheme. In parallel with this selection process, I will be introducing appropriate legislation in the Oireachtas to underpin the introduction of the Scheme.

The Scheme is intended to address two specific market failures which act as barriers to lending to viable enterprises which otherwise would have received bank credit. These market failures are inadequacy of collateral and inadequacy of understanding of the novelty of a business model, market, sector or technology. Eligible companies will be commercially viable, well performing companies that have a solid business plan and a defined market for their products or services, thereby demonstrating their ability to repay the loan. Refinancing of existing debts

will be excluded as the purpose of this Scheme is to facilitate additional lending into the economy.

Decision making on facilitating individual loans including assessment of eligibility and the viability of the borrower will be fully devolved to the participating lenders. The baseline for determining commercial viability within the Scheme should be no different from the standard viability test applied by each Lender within their normal commercial SME lending procedures.

It is not clear from the details supplied whether the person concerned would meet the eligibility criteria for the Scheme when introduced. The individual may wish to discuss with banks the extent to which his credit requirements may be facilitated under current lending arrangements.

*Question No. 195 withdrawn.*

### **Redundancy Payments**

196. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a claim form, RP50, has been received by him in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; if it is being processed; when this person may expect to receive payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39619/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy lump sum claim in respect of the person concerned was awarded on 7 December 2011. A cheque payment will issue in the near future.

197. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a redundancy payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39675/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy lump sum claim in respect of the person concerned was received on 8 July 2011. Redundancy lump sums claims received at the start of May 2011 are currently being processed.

198. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if his attention has been drawn to the fact that an agreement between a company (details supplied) and former employees of that company relating to redundancy payments necessitated by the closure of the company's hatchery in Carrickmacross has not been honoured by the company; the steps he will take in this matter; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39869/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The purpose of the Redundancy Payments Scheme is to compensate workers, under the Redundancy Payments Acts, 1967 to 2007, for the loss of their jobs by reason of redundancy. Compensation is based on the worker's length of reckonable service and reckonable weekly remuneration, subject to a ceiling of €600 per week.

It is the responsibility of the employer to pay statutory redundancy to all their eligible employees.

It is not possible on the basis of the information supplied by the Deputy to establish the position in relation to this case. If the Deputy wishes to supply additional information I will have the matter examined further.

### Social Welfare Benefits

199. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding rent payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3 [39999/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** No application has been made by this applicant for change of payment. If application is made to the Local Community Welfare Officer this request can be considered.

### Ministerial Appointments

200. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in her Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39396/11]

201. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in her Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom she reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39413/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 200 and 201 together.

Since my appointment on 9 March 2011, I have appointed a Special Adviser, Mr Edward Brophy, and a Press Adviser, Ms Kathleen Barrington.

A single point salary of €127,796 was sanctioned by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform for Mr. Brophy, effective from his appointment on 29 July 2011. In taking up the role with me he left a very senior role in the private sector and took a pay cut of over one third of his previous salary.

Ms. Barrington was appointed from 18 July 2011, and was initially on a salary of €80,051 i.e. the first point of the Principal Officer pay scale. However, on the basis of her experience and qualifications, sanction was received from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform on 19 October 2011 to place her on the 3rd point of the scale, i.e. €86,604 per annum, effective from 18 July 2011.

The restrictions under the terms of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour on civil servants engaging in political activity do not apply to Special Advisers and they can engage in political activity or join political parties if they wish. These are not matters for which my Special Advisers are accountable to me under their contracts of employment.

### Social Welfare Benefits

202. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39438/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I confirm that the department has received an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned. Unfortunately, the application did not include certain information necessary to make a decision on it. She has been requested to forward the relevant additional information.

### Social Welfare Fraud

203. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on correspondence (details supplied) regarding the black economy; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39449/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The prevention of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is an integral part of the day-to-day work of the Department which processes in excess of 2 million claims each year and makes payments to over one million people every week. While the vast majority of people are receiving the entitlement due to them, as Minister, I am very conscious of the need to protect public money and I am determined to ensure that abuse of the system is prevented and is dealt with effectively when detected.

To this end, I launched a new Fraud Initiative (2011-2013) in September last which aims to put in place a range of actions to combat fraud and abuse of the social welfare system and to ensure there is public confidence and trust in it.

Under the Initiative, there will be a greater focus on inter-agency co-operation at the local level and an emphasis on undertaking joint projects and pooling of local knowledge, many of which focus on the black (or hidden) economy. There are a number of themes and approaches under-pinning the Initiative, including greater inter-agency co-operation among public bodies at national and local level to combat fraud and abuse and a greater presence of social welfare inspectors on the ground. In addition, there will be greater liaison at national and, in particular, at local level with employers, their representative organisations and businesses generally to ensure good information exchange on emerging fraudulent trends in the labour market and to maintain a fair and level playing pitch for all enterprises.

As part of its control activities, the Department has formed alliances with a range of enforcement and compliance agencies, in particular, the Revenue Commissioners. Both organisations are working together with a view to aligning expertise and information across their operations.

On an on-going basis, my Department and Revenue request specific information and data matches from each other for the purposes of combating fraud and abuse. The risk inherent in black or hidden economy has been identified by both organisations as being a key corporate priority to be tackled. A sectoral approach is being taken in this regard with projects and control operations focussing on the following:

- Construction sector;
- Trade suppliers;
- Streetscape Projects — this consists of a visit to all cash businesses in a street, small town or village to check the quality of records and the consistency between declared income and stock levels. How cash is managed is also reviewed;
- Taxi sector — including the use of inter agency checkpoints and data matching;
- White collar sectors which have the potential to engage in cash transactions; and
- Other sectors including markets, casual trading, couriers, clothes recycling, car valeting, security sector, and haulage.

With regard to incidents of suspected fraud, my Department accepts reports of possible fraud and abuse of the social welfare system offered by members of the public in relation to the operation of its schemes. To this end, it has both a dedicated phone number and a facility on

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the Department's website for this purpose. Members of the public are asked to provide as much detail as possible about the case they are reporting and they can do so anonymously.

Reports can be made as follows:

- By email: *www.welfare.ie*
- By phone: (01) 704 3000, ask for Central Control Section or (071) 9672648 or Locall: 1890 927999.
- By Post: Central Control Division, DSP, Shannon Lodge, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim.

I would like to thank the Deputy for the information he supplied and I would invite him to supply more specific details of the alleged abuses to enable staff of my Department to investigate the particular cases referred to.

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

204. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will confirm that the waiting list for appeal hearings in disability allowance applications is 14 months; the plans in place to reduce the waiting time; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39456/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, based on 2010 figures, the average time taken for a case which requires an oral hearing is 51.1 weeks. These processing times are calculated from the registration date of the appeal to the date of its finalisation and include all activities during this period including time spent in the Department for comments by the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal put forward by the processing time for Disability Allowance dealt with by way of summary decision is 30.8 weeks appellant and any further investigation, examination or assessment by the Department's Inspectors and Medical Assessors that is deemed necessary. A considerable period of time is added to the process when an oral hearing is required because of the logistics involved in this process.

I am assured by the Chief Appeals Officer that she is keeping the methods of operation by which the Social Welfare Appeals Office conducts its business under constant review, and that the processes are continuously being enhanced to reduce the backlogs in the Office and, overall, to reduce the processing times for dealing with appeals. In that regard, as a result of various initiatives, including the assignment of 9 additional Appeals Officers from April, taken over the past 12 months, 22,406 decisions were made by appeals officers in the first eleven months of 2011, in comparison to 16,232 for the same period in 2010.

205. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision on an appeal of a jobseeker's rate has been made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39458/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 01 December 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

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

206. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be made on an invalidity pension appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39464/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 23 August 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 02 December 2011 and the appeal will, in due course, be assigned to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

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

**Social Welfare Benefits**

207. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer’s allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39466/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I confirm that the department is in receipt of an application for carer’s allowance from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of her case a decision will be made and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

**Money Advice and Budgeting Service**

208. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons who availed of the services of the Money Advice and Budgetary Service in County Kerry in 2009 and 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39469/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The number of new clients who have availed of the services of the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) in Kerry in 2009 and 2010 is outlined in the table below.

Year	New Clients in County Kerry MABS January to December
2009	836
2010	891

The Citizens Information Board, who has responsibility for the provision of the MABS, recently approved in principle a proposal to establish a joint Citizens Information Service (CIS) National Advocacy Service and MABS office in Killarney.

I am satisfied that Kerry MABS will continue to provide a high quality personal service to assist people in overcoming their indebtedness and managing their finances

### Community Employment Schemes

209. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if, in view of the fact the Brown Flesk River in County Kerry needs to be cleared out (details supplied) where it meets the River Maine upriver from the fish counter, she will ensure that a FÁS scheme or a rural social scheme will be instigated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39479/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Deputy will be aware that a very wide range of community services and works can be delivered with the support of the community employment programme and the rural social scheme. The types of works that are undertaken are determined locally. It is a requirement of these programme that the works undertaken are consistent with the terms and conditions of the relevant programme or scheme and meet other criteria, particularly in respect of not displacing works that are the responsibility of statutory bodies or local authorities or that are undertaken by other contractors. Regard must also be had for the skills required to undertake such works, safety of, and risks to participants, and the costs associated with the provision of materials, tools and equipment. The FÁS Community Services Office based at Unit 1, Kenmare Place, Killarney (Telephone 064 32466) will be able to advise on the opportunities to undertake this work under the community employment programme. North and East Kerry LEADER Partnership based at Clash, Tralee, Co. Kerry (Telephone 066 7180190) will be able to advise on the rural social scheme.

### Social Welfare Code

210. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding social protection entitlements (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39495/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Under Irish legislation, citizens from other countries who have been granted refugee status have a legal right to reside in Ireland and are entitled to seek employment in the state. They are, therefore, entitled to apply for benefits and pensions in the same way as all other workers in the state.

There is no discrimination on grounds of nationality in social welfare legislation and to introduce such a provision would be contrary to the equality principles that Ireland has adopted in its equality legislation, the Treaties of the European Community and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and other international conventions.

### Social Welfare Appeals

211. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reasons a review entitlement for the back to school clothing and footwear allowance was unsuccessful in respect of persons (details supplied) in Dublin 9. [39505/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned was refused payment of back to school clothing and footwear allowance on the grounds that the household income exceeded the limit allowable for their family composition and size. This decision was upheld on review.

### Social Welfare Code

212. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Social Protection if there is any payment available to assist persons meeting maintaining and caring for domestic pets; if there is such a payment, if she will outline the weekly amount paid; the number of persons in receipt of it; the

amount paid out by her each year to recipients of such a payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39508/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** There are no payments made by the Department of Social Protection towards the cost of caring for a pet.

213. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a business getting a 30% rebate should a redundancy situation arise (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39520/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The purpose of the Redundancy Payments Scheme is to compensate workers, under the Redundancy Payments Acts, 1967 to 2007, for the loss of their jobs by reason of redundancy. Compensation is based on the worker's length of reckonable service and reckonable weekly remuneration, subject to a ceiling of €600 per week. It is the responsibility of the employer to pay statutory redundancy to all their eligible employees. Rebates to employers and lump sums paid directly to employees are paid from the Social Insurance Fund (SIF). The total amount paid out in redundancy rebates to employers was €152.2 million in 2006; €167.4 million in 2007; €161.8 million in 2008; €247.9 million in 2009; €373.2 million in 2010 and €186.2 million so far in 2011. Given the current economic climate, this level of rebate expenditure is not sustainable and, in Budget 2012, it was announced that the rebate will be reduced to 15%.

To give effect to this change, legislation was introduced and passed all stages in this House last week and is due to be debated in the Seanad this week. While I acknowledge that this change may cause difficulties for employers it should be noted that redundancy rebate payments to employers are not common in many EU and other jurisdictions.

### Community Employment Schemes

214. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to increase the number of placements on community employment schemes in view of the spare capacity in some of the current schemes and the considerable demand for places. [39538/11]

256. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Social Protection the total number of persons employed on community employment schemes in 2011, on a county basis in tabular form, and for the Dublin figure if she will provide a breakdown by postal code in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39902/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 214 and 256 together.

Community employment helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. Some 1,100 organisations in the community, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors provide work and training placements for participants nationwide. The number of placements available during 2011, including supervisor positions, was of the order of 23,300. The number of persons engaged at the 5th December 2011, including supervisors, was 23,846. The distribution of the placements is set out in the table below. Places are allocated regionally to reflect the underlying level of unemployment. I hope to be able to maintain the same level of placements in 2012. In delivering these placements, the Department of Social Protection/FÁS will continue to operate with sponsor organisations in a flexible manner in order to maximise progression to the labour market and ensure placements are fully utilised, while at the same time facilitating support for the delivery of community services.

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Table — Distribution of Community Employment Placements

Area	Persons engaged (including supervisors)
<i>Dublin postal districts</i>	
Dublin 1	493
Dublin 2	413
Dublin 3	198
Dublin 4	110
Dublin 5	263
Dublin 6	54
Dublin 7	186
Dublin 8	778
Dublin 9	134
Dublin 10	246
Dublin 11	554
Dublin 12	364
Dublin 13	108
Dublin 14	31
Dublin 15	359
Dublin 16	59
Dublin 17	483
Dublin 18	181
Dublin 20	69
Dublin 22	316
Dublin 24	500
Dublin West	19
<i>Other Counties</i>	
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	165
Dublin North County/Fingal	287
Carlow	330
Cavan	223
Clare	591
Cork City	1,223
Cork County	936
Donegal	1,145
Galway City	352
Galway County	1,147
Kerry	971
Kildare	656
Kilkenny	438
Laois	307
Leitrim	170
Limerick City	727
Limerick County	560
Longford	300
Louth	820
Mayo	776

Area	Persons engaged (including supervisors)
Meath	473
Monaghan	349
Offaly	370
Roscommon	343
Sligo	432
Tipperary (North Riding)	417
Tipperary (South Riding)	601
Waterford City	442
Waterford County	266
Westmeath	547
Wexford	846
Wicklow	718
Total	23,846

### Social Welfare Code

215. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she would provide details of the changes that will affect a person (details supplied) in County Kerry as a result of the budget. [39541/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The One-Parent Family Payment (OFP) is made up of a personal rate for the parent and of extra amounts for dependent children. The current payment rate is €188.00 per week — with a further €29.80 payable for each additional qualified child. The amount of the payment depends on the weekly means of the parent. Currently, earnings of less than €146.50 per week are excluded from the assessment of means — with claimants entitled to the full rate of payment. Earnings above this limit are assessed at 50% up to a maximum of €425.00 per week — with a reduced rate of OFP payable.

The reform of the OFP payment commenced when legislative changes were introduced to the scheme in the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2010. These changes, which came into effect on 27 April, 2011, lowered the age limit of the youngest child for receipt of the payment from 18 (or 22 if in full-time education) to 14 for new recipients and introduced a six-year phase-out of the payment for existing recipients, with entitlement to the OFP being maintained at the age of 18 for 2011 and 2012, and then being reduced on a yearly basis from the age of 17 in 2013 to 16 in 2014, to 15 in 2015 and to 14 in 2016.

The provisions contained in Budget 2012 will continue this reform — with the age limit of the youngest child being further reduced to 12 in 2012, to 10 in 2013 and to 7 in 2014. The earnings disregard on the OFP payment will also be reduced on a phased basis, moving from €146.50 per week to €130 per week in January 2012, for new and existing claimants. Both the weekly personal rate for the parent and the qualified child rate will not change.

As an existing OFP customer, the recipient referred to will continue to receive their payment in April 2012. Phasing arrangements after this point, for such customers are currently being considered. This client's weekly earnings, which total €60.55 from 7 hours of employment (based on earnings at the national minimum wage rate of €8.65 per hour), will not affect her entitlement as they fall under the earnings disregard of €146.50 for 2011 and of €130.00 for 2012. She would currently be receiving a payment of €188 per week for herself and €29.80 per week for each of her three children under 18 years. This assumes that she was an OFP recipient prior to April 2011 and that the older two children over 18 years are not in full-time education.

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This gives her a total social welfare payment of €277.40 per week. If she became an OFP recipient after April 2011, when the age 14 limit was introduced, she would be receiving payment of €29.80 for one child, giving her a total payment of €217.80 per week. In both instances her payment would remain unchanged in April 2012.

216. **Deputy Seamus Healy** asked the Minister for Social Protection in view of the findings of research on fuel poverty and older people by the Dublin Institute of Technology and the Institute of Public Health, if she will accede to the petition sponsored by an organisation (details supplied) which states that hundreds of older people die each winter in Ireland because they cannot afford to keep themselves warm and lives could be saved if the Government reversed its decision to cut their electricity and gas units; if she will reverse the cuts to the free gas and electricity units available under the household benefits package, in view of the increased hardship it will cause for older persons on low incomes. [39558/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The research referred to has not been published to date. However, my Department will spend over €530 million in 2011 on the fuel scheme and the telephone, gas and electricity elements of the household benefits package which will benefit some 390,000 people on household benefits and 375,000 on the fuel allowance. In 2005 there were 325,000 people on household benefits and 265,000 on the fuel allowance at a cost of €280 million. The costs have almost doubled in six years while the number of customers has risen by more than 20%. My Department is covering the cost of the price increases in electricity which came into effect from 1st October. The electricity allowance, which was €35.80 per month, has increased to €39.40. The price increases will cost the Department over €4 million in 2011 and €17.3 million in a full year.

Difficult decisions had to be made in light of the existing economic situation and commitments made by the previous government. A number of measures for savings in 2011 and future years were specified as part of Budget 2011 but were not announced by the Government at the time. These included a saving of €30 million in the energy and telephone elements of the household benefits package in 2011 and subsequent years. They also included the abolition of the smokeless fuel allowance with a saving of €7.7 million in 2011 and €17.5 million in subsequent years. The number of free units provided under the electricity and gas allowance were reduced from 2,400 to 1,800 with a view to generating savings of €17 million in 2011 and €65 million annually.

Excess winter deaths are generally defined as the difference between the number of deaths during the four winter months (December to March) and the average number of deaths during the preceding autumn (August to November) and the following summer (April to July).

Ireland, in common with other European countries, experiences higher levels of mortality in the winter than in the summer. Studies have found that mortality increases as mean daily temperatures fall (below 18 degrees). However, it is the countries with (relatively) the mildest winters in Europe which report the greatest excess deaths. This has been termed the, 'paradox of excess winter mortality'. There is no simple clear cut explanation for excess winter mortality.

The factors include:

- the increased prevalence of influenza and cold viruses during the winter months;
- older age — especially for people aged 75 years and over or those who are frail;
- poverty/fuel poverty;

- poor housing stock;
- living alone.

The most cost-effective means of protecting households from energy poverty is to reduce consumption of energy through improving the home's thermal efficiency. Sustainable Energy Ireland has administered the Warmer Homes programme for privately owned low-income households since 2001, benefitting 65,000 households, with a further 15,000 to receive upgrades this year. A similar programme is in place for local authority houses.

We should also bear in mind that data show that households comprising predominantly older people have lower consistent poverty rates than other age categories. In 2009 single adults aged over 65 with no children had a consistent poverty rate of 0.6% while people in households with 2 adults at least one of whom was aged 65 or over with no children had a consistent poverty rate of 1.0%. In the general population, 5.5% of people were in consistent poverty. The Survey on Income and Living Conditions (2009) also showed that the elderly were less likely than other groups to have gone without heating in the previous year.

### Social Welfare Appeals

217. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal for a disability allowance will be granted in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39560/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer having fully considered all the available evidence disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officers decision.

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

218. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons between the ages of 18 and 21 years currently in receipt of disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39561/11]

219. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of young persons between the ages of 22 and 24 currently in receipt of disability allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39562/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 218 and 219 together.

The number of persons aged between 18 and 21 years who are currently in receipt of disability allowance is 5,674. The corresponding figure for persons aged between 22 and 24 years is 4,519.

### Social Welfare Code

220. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the poverty impact assessment carried out by her prior to her decision to cut payments to young persons with disabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39563/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Budget 2012 proposals relating to the conditions and rates of payment for Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance are not being introduced as planned pending a review which will be undertaken by Ms. Ita Mangan, Chair of the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare.

221. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the estimated savings made as a result of the cuts to disability allowance for young persons with disabilities; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39564/11]

250. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of 16 to 25 year olds in receipt of disability allowance, broken down by age, in 2011; and the total amount spent per annum on this age group in 2011. [39838/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 221 and 250 together.

The estimated savings arising from the measures relating to disability allowance announced in Budget 2012 is €7 million in 2012. Those measures would have affected people aged up to and including 24 years of age — they would not have affected recipients aged 25 years or older.

I have provided a table which sets out the number of 16 to 25 year olds in receipt of disability allowance, broken down by age and gender as of the end of November 2011. There were 13,802 recipients aged up to and including 25 years of age and a further 88,872 aged 26 years or more, bringing the overall total to 102,674. The estimated total spend on this scheme in 2011 is €1,066m.

The annual cost to the exchequer of a specific age group within a scheme is not collated by my Department.

Number of 16 to 25 year olds in receipt of Disability Allowance

Age	Male	Female	Total
16	395	247	642
17	700	382	1,082
18	798	482	1,280
19	857	527	1,384
20	915	586	1,501
21	942	567	1,509
22	871	596	1,467
23	862	659	1,521
24	903	628	1,531
25	1020	865	1,885
Total	8,263	5,539	13,802

### Social Welfare Benefits

222. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will provide details of the number of persons in receipt of the cost of education allowance in 2011; the estimated savings made as a result of the cuts to the allowance for 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39565/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The projected number of persons in receipt of the cost of education allowance in 2011 is 23,440. The 2012 estimated savings from the reduction in the cost of education allowance from €500 to €300, announced in the Budget 2012, is €5.4 million.

### Social Welfare Appeals

223. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for a domiciliary care allowance will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39573/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case.

There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made.

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

224. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive a decision on their appeal in respect of their application for disability benefit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39578/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence has allowed the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the decision.

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

225. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a decision on an appeal for jobseeker's allowance will be reconsidered in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39586/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the available evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of a summary decision.

Under Social Welfare legislation, the decision of the Appeals Officer is final and conclusive and may only be reviewed by the Appeals Officer in the light of new evidence or new facts.

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

### Social Welfare Benefits

226. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Cork who was refused disability allowance will be put back on domiciliary allowance in view the new conditions announced in budget 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39596/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** As a result of the decision to withdraw section 8, 9 and 10 of the Social Welfare Bill 2011, the age limit for receipt of domiciliary care allowance (DCA) remains at 16 years. As the child referred to is over 16 years of age, DCA is no longer payable.

227. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Cork is entitled to receive domiciliary care allowance in view the new conditions set out in budget 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39599/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** As a result of the decision to withdraw section 8, 9 and 10 of the Social Welfare Bill 2011, the age limit for receipt of domiciliary care allowance (DCA) remains at 16 years. As the child referred to is over 16 years of age, DCA is no longer payable.

228. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding rent supplement in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [39600/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned has not made an application to pay their rent supplement directly to their landlord. If an application is made to the Department's local representative administering the supplementary welfare allowance scheme this request will be considered.

229. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when persons who are over 16 years will be put back on domiciliary care allowance in view of the new condition set out in budget 2012; if persons who were refused disability allowance having turned 16 years will be put back on domiciliary care allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39603/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Budget 2012 proposals relating to the conditions and rates of payment for Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance are not being introduced as planned pending a review which will be undertaken by Ms. Ita Mangan, Chair of the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare.

### Redundancy Payments

230. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for a rebate of redundancy payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39605/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy rebate claim in respect of the person concerned was received on 14 October 2010. My officials have made contact with the person concerned and await receipt of documentation. As soon as this is received the matter will receive further attention.

### Social Welfare Benefits

231. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person

(details supplied) in County Kerry was refused payment of carer's allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39615/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The carer's allowance claim of the person in question was reviewed when the care recipient reached 16 years of age and no longer qualified for domiciliary care allowance. It was decided that the care recipient no longer satisfied the medical criteria for receipt of carer's allowance.

Additional medical evidence was subsequently received and assessed but, based upon the opinion of the department's medical assessor, the deciding officer decided that there was no grounds to revise the original decision. She was notified of this decision and the reason for it.

The person concerned again furnished further medical evidence which was also referred to the medical assessor on for consideration. However, again it was decided that no grounds existed to revise the original decision.

Accordingly, on 5 December 2011, payment of carer's allowance was stopped. She has been notified of this decision and the reason for it.

232. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a back to school clothing and footwear payment to a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [39626/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BSCFA) scheme operates from the beginning of June until the end of September each year. The scheme closed on 30 September 2011 and late applications were accepted until the end October 2011.

No application for BSCFA has been received from the person concerned.

233. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford. [39628/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on two separate grounds, firstly that the care recipient is not so invalided or disabled as to require full-time care and attention as laid down in legislation and secondly that he has not established that he is providing full time care and attention as laid down in the carer's allowance guidelines. On 14 July 2011 he was notified of this decision the reasons for it.

The person in question appealed the decision and submitted additional medical evidence in support of his claim. The medical aspect of his application was approved. However an appeals officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal as it had not been established that he was providing full-time care. He was notified of the decision on his appeal on 2 September 2011.

The decision of an appeals officer is final and may only be reviewed in the light of new evidence or new facts not already presented at the time of appeal.

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

234. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal will be decided upon in view of the fact that the oral hearing was held four weeks ago in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare. [39639/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, including that adduced at oral hearing, has partially allowed the appeal of the person concerned. The person concerned has been notified of the decision.

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

*Question No. 235 withdrawn.*

### **Social Welfare Benefits**

236. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; when he can expect to receive a decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39654/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I confirm that the department is in receipt of an application for carer's allowance from the person concerned. On completion of the necessary investigations on all aspects of his case, a decision will be made and he will be notified directly of the outcome.

### **Social Welfare Offices**

237. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding the proposed social protection office accommodation in Edenderry, County Offaly; and if she will also provide information as to the intended purpose of this building. [39655/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Following on from the transfer of the FÁS employment and community services to the Department of Social Protection with effect from 1 January next, it is proposed to accommodate Social Welfare Inspectors serving that area in the employment service's National Call Centre in Carrick Road, Edenderry. This will fully meet the Department's accommodation needs in Edenderry.

### **Redundancy Payments**

238. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will be reached on an application claim for redundancy in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [39667/11]

253. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a redundancy claim in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick will be paid as soon as possible; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39892/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 238 and 253 together.

A redundancy lump sum claim in respect of the person concerned was received on 12 July 2011. Redundancy lump sums claims received at the start of May 2011 are currently being processed.

### **Social Welfare Code**

239. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will outline

the proposals to change the age for disability allowance from 16 years to 18 years; the implications of these proposed changes on domiciliary allowance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39670/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Budget 2012 proposals relating to the conditions and rates of payment for Disability Allowance and Domiciliary Care Allowance are not being introduced as planned pending a review which will be undertaken by Ms. Ita Mangan, Chair of the Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare.

### Social Welfare Appeals

240. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for rent allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39671/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an oral hearing of this case took place on 15th November 2011. The Appeals Officer is now considering the appeal in the light of all the evidence submitted, including that adduced at the hearing. The person concerned will be notified of the Appeals Officer's decision when the appeal has been determined. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

241. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39674/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I am advised by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that an Appeals Officer, having fully considered all the evidence, disallowed the appeal of the person concerned by way of summary decision. The person concerned has been notified of the Appeals Officer's decision. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

*Question No. 242 withdrawn.*

243. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an oral hearing will take place in relation to an application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39681/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case. There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Depart-

[Deputy Joan Burton.]

ment and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

244. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a date for oral hearing in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [39709/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the appeal from the person concerned was referred to an Appeals Officer who proposes to hold an oral hearing in this case. There has been a very significant increase in the number of appeals received by the Social Welfare Appeals Office since 2007 when the intake was 14,070 to 2010 when the intake rose to 32,432. This has significantly impacted on the processing time for appeals which require oral hearings and, in order to be fair to all appellants, they are dealt with in strict chronological order.

While every effort is being made to deal with the large numbers awaiting oral hearing as quickly as possible, it is not possible to give a date when the person's oral hearing will be heard, but s/he will be informed when arrangements have been made. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

#### Social Welfare Benefits

245. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of applicants for the domiciliary care allowance that were refused in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. [39720/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department has been accepting new claims for domiciliary care allowance (DCA) since the 1st April 2009. Statistics relating to the Allowance for the period prior to April 2009 are a matter for the HSE, the previous administrators of the scheme. The number of applicants for DCA refused in each year to date is detailed in the table.

Domiciliary Care Allowance applications April 2009 to date.

	Applications received	Applications fully processed in year	Applications allowed incl. on review	Applications refused
2009 (From 1st April)	3,389	2,823	1,220	1,603
2010	5,457	5,333	2,576	2,757
2011 (to 30th November)	5,226	5,118	2,347	2,771

246. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will review a matter (details supplied) regarding the household benefits package; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39751/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** There are currently 387,000 customers in receipt of the telephone allowance, administered under the household benefits package at an annual cost of €115 million in 2011. This is a significant increase since 2005 when 311,000 people were in receipt. The household benefits package, comprising telephone and electricity or gas allowance, as well as a free television licence is available for people aged 70 years or

over, people in receipt of carer's allowance and people aged between 66 years and 70 years who are getting a qualifying payment e.g. pension, and are generally living alone. It is also available to people aged under 66 years who are getting a disability or caring related payment.

In recent months, the Department of Social Protection negotiated a deal with Eircom, the main supplier used by 75% of social welfare customers, whereby Eircom customers (including the person on whose behalf the Deputy has made the enquiry) now get a value of €26.86 toward their monthly telephone bill at a cost to the Exchequer of €22.22. This meant that from 1st September this year, the monthly rate of the telephone allowance charged to the Department was reduced from €25.91 to €22.22 achieving annual savings of €16.9 million on the scheme.

There was no change to the telephone allowance in Budget 2012. Difficult decisions had to be made in light of the existing economic situation and commitments made by the previous Government. However I believe the deal negotiated with Eircom provides real savings to the State while minimising the impact on the customer.

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

247. **Deputy Timmy Dooley** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue in relation to an appeal for farm assist in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39787/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 22 November 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by or on behalf of the Deciding Officer on the grounds of appeal be sought. These papers were received in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 06 December 2011 and the appeal will, in due course, be assigned to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

248. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for supplementary welfare allowance in respect of a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39830/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 26 November 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Community Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

### **Social Welfare Fraud**

249. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Social Protection the measures in place to deal with unfounded charges of welfare fraud made against genuine benefit recipients; and if it is normal procedure to suspend benefit payments in such cases while the charge is being investigated. [39833/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The prevention of fraud and abuse of the social welfare system is an integral part of the day-to-day work of my Department which processes in excess of 2 million claims each year and makes payments to some 1.4 million people every week. However, it is important to recognise that the vast majority of people are receiving the entitlement due to them.

The Deputy may be aware that I recently launched a new Fraud Initiative (2011-2013) which is aimed at putting in place a range of actions to combat fraud and abuse of the social welfare system and to ensure there is public confidence and trust in the system. My Department accepts reports of possible fraud from members of the public in relation to operation of its schemes and uses both a dedicated phone number and a facility on the Department’s website for this purpose. Members of the public are asked to provide as much detail as possible about the case they are reporting and they can do so anonymously.

Reports can be made as follows:

- By email: *www.welfare.ie*.
- By phone: (01) 704 3000, ask for Central Control Section or (071) 9672648 or Locall: 1890 927999.
- By Post: Central Control Division, DSP, Shannon Lodge, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim.

All anonymous or confidential reports are examined and, where relevant, are referred to Scheme owners and/or to the Department’s Inspectors.

However, it is important to note that a payment is not normally suspended or stopped solely on the basis of an anonymous report. The anonymous report, however, may be a trigger for the instigation of a review of a customer’s entitlement. A Social Welfare Inspector may then deem it appropriate to interview the customer and to carry out a full review of the circumstances and means of the customer in order to determine on-going entitlement to the relevant payment. The Inspector may then send his report on the case to one of the Department’s deciding officers for a decision regarding entitlement. Where the review indicates that the customer is not entitled to the relevant payment, the claim may be suspended, reduced or terminated.

The following are the number of anonymous reports received in the period January-November 2011:

Anonymous Reports received in the period January-November 2011	
Phone	4,931
Email	10,226
Letter	985
Total January — November 2011	16,142

In approximately 12,300 of these cases, a report of suspected fraud was sent to the relevant area for examination. Some clients about whom a report was received were in receipt of more than one payment. In over 3,800 of the cases received in 2011, it was not possible to issue a report to an investigator due to either a lack of information supplied, or no claim being in payment or the information reported would not impact on entitlement.

My Department is very conscious of its obligation to protect public money and is determined to ensure that abuse of the system is prevented and is dealt with effectively when detected.

Therefore, it is the Department's policy to review all customers on an ongoing basis, and in addition, all cases of suspected abuse are referred for investigation. However, my Department is also very conscious of the fact that most social welfare recipients are fully entitled to their payments.

*Question No. 250 answered with Question No. 221.*

### **Community Employment Schemes**

251. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will respond to a matter regarding community employment (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39840/11]

259. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Social Protection her views on a matter (details supplied) regarding community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39915/11]

262. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will reverse the one person one payment policy as applied to community employment schemes, with immediate effect, in view of the fact that it acts as a disincentive for many welfare recipients to take up community employment. [39975/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 251, 259 and 262 together.

Due to the current economic circumstances and the need for the Department of Social Protection to find savings of €475 million in Budget 2012, it was necessary to examine all aspects of Departmental expenditure. This has resulted in the following changes being made to the Community Employment (CE) scheme, which were announced as part of Budget 2012:

1. A reduction in the training and materials grants from €1,500 to €500 per participant per annum;
2. The ending of the concurrent entitlement to a CE payment and a social welfare assistance payment for new CE entrants;
3. The ending of the dual payment of Qualified Child Dependent Increases to CE participants in receipt of certain DSP payments.

In relation to the reduction in the training and materials grant the Department of Social Protection will seek to minimise the effects of these changes on those schemes most affected and will examine the income and expenditure of schemes with reference to their capacity to absorb the changes made to the grant. The National Training Fund will provide €4.2 million for training on CE in 2012. In addition, SOLAS will continue to provide access to its training programmes to CE participants.

The need for training on CE varies depending on the needs of participants and how long they have already been on the scheme and the training already received. Progression to employment is the key aim of the Government and there is a need to ensure that the supports we have in place aim to substantially improve individuals' chances of securing employment. Forfás published their "Review of Labour Market Programmes" last year which showed that CE participants' progression into employment is low and is only 3% higher than individuals who remain on the Live Register. There needs, therefore, to be a better focus on progression and value for money.

[Deputy Joan Burton.]

The second change to CE announced in Budget 2012 ceases the concurrent entitlement of certain individuals on CE had to both a CE allowance and a proportion or all of their social welfare assistance payment. This measure will take effect from 16 January 2012 and will only apply to new entrants to CE. Any individual who was employed on a CE scheme before 16 January will not be affected by this change.

The third change announced in Budget 2012 relates to the qualified child increase that certain individuals receive when in receipt of a social welfare assistance payment. Under changes announced in Budget 2012 payment of two qualified child increases where the person is on a CE scheme and one parent family payment, deserted wife's allowance/benefit or widow(er)'s pensions will be discontinued for new and existing recipients. Despite the changes outlined above, the Department of Social Protection will be spending in excess of €960 million on employment supports (including CE schemes) in 2012, up from €882 million in 2011.

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

252. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Social Protection when the results of an appeal for domiciliary care allowance will be made available in respect of a person (details supplied). [39854/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 11 October 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

*Question No. 253 answered with Question No. 238.*

### **Social Welfare Code**

254. **Deputy Paudie Coffey** asked the Minister for Social Protection her plans to extend the limit of those in receipt of invalidity pensions and who are on community employment schemes beyond the current seven year limit; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39894/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** In general, the maximum participation limit for community employment (CE) is one year with the opportunity to extend for a further year if this is considered by FÁS as the most suitable and cost effective measure to assist the participant in gaining employment. A participant may be eligible for different periods of engagement and extensions on CE due to a range of circumstances, including their age, the nature of the qualifying payment and/or time already spent on CE. Persons of 55 years or over may be eligible to a maximum of six years overall participation on CE. In general, those in receipt of any of the four disability linked Social Welfare payments (Disability Allowance, Blind Pension, Invalidity Pension, or Illness Benefit) may be eligible for one additional year's participation bringing the total to seven years in the case of a person aged 55 years or over, or four years otherwise. I have no plans to extend the time a person will be allowed to spend on CE.

### Social Welfare Benefits

255. **Deputy Seán Conlan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39899/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned was refused carer's allowance on grounds that she has not established that she is providing full-time care and attention as laid down in the scheme guidelines. The department is satisfied that the care recipient has a requirement for full-time care. She was notified of the decision and the reason for it. Further information was subsequently received from the person in question and, in response, her file was referred to an investigative officer of the Department for further investigation and confirmation that all the conditions for receipt of the allowance are satisfied. On completion of the necessary investigations, the original decision will be reviewed and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

*Question No. 256 answered with Question No. 214.*

### Redundancy Payments

257. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a redundancy payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39906/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy lump sum claim, which included a determination of the Employment Appeals Tribunal, in respect of the person concerned was received on 21 November 2011. The matter is currently receiving attention.

### Social Welfare Appeals

258. **Deputy Michael P. Kitt** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will clarify the social protection entitlements of a person (details supplied) in County Galway. [39910/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the jobseeker's benefit appeal, by the person concerned, was registered in that office on 11 November 2011 and was referred to an Appeals Officer on 22 November 2011 who will decide whether the case can be decided on a summary basis or whether to list it for oral hearing. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

*Question No. 259 answered with Question No. 251.*

260. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an appeal for one parent family allowance payment in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39923/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Following an oral hearing the Appeals Officer decided that the person concerned is disqualified from receiving one parent family payment. She was notified of the outcome of the appeal on 3 November 2011.

### Redundancy Payments

261. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite a redundancy claim in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath [39962/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy lump sum claim in respect of the person concerned was received on 6 September 2011. Redundancy lump sums claims received at the start of May 2011 are currently being processed.

*Question No. 262 answered with Question No. 251.*

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

263. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on a carer's allowance appeal will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39977/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 12 November 2011. It is a statutory requirement of the appeals process that the relevant Departmental papers and comments by the Social Welfare Services on the grounds of appeal be sought. When received, the appeal in question will be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration. The Social Welfare Appeals Office functions independently of the Minister for Social Protection and of the Department and is responsible for determining appeals against decisions on social welfare entitlements.

### **Ministerial Appointments**

264. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39384/11]

265. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each advisor now; the salary of each advisor from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39401/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 264 and 265 together.

As provided for in the Guidelines on the staffing of Ministers' Offices, I have sought and received sanction for the appointment of two special advisers. Also in accordance with these Guidelines, Minister of State McGinley has not sought the appointment of any advisor. I have appointed Mr. James Kenny as special advisor with effect from 7 June 2011. As provided for in the above mentioned Guidelines, Mr Kenny's salary has been appointed at the first point of the Principal Officer Standard Scale. As Mr. Kenny is in receipt of a public service pension, his salary has been abated to €38,215 per annum.

My Department has also received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform for the appointment of Mr. Seán Mac Cárthaigh as special advisor. Details of his contract and remuneration are currently being finalised by my officials in consultation with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The restrictions under the terms of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour on civil servants engaging in political activity do not apply to Special Advisers and they can engage

in political activity or join political parties if they wish. These are not matters for which my Special Advisers would be accountable to me under their contracts of employment.

### Departmental Correspondence

266. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when a reply will issue to correspondence (details supplied) sent on 9 November 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39452/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I have now issued a reply to the correspondence referred to by the Deputy.

267. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht when will a reply issue to correspondence (details supplied) sent on the 5 September 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39453/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I regret the delay in replying to the Deputy and a reply will issue today. The Deputy's letter was received prior to a full day event with representatives from a wide range of organisations with an interest in such matters. The person represented in the letter in question also attended. Each organisation was given an opportunity to make a presentation that outlined their views on the subject issue.

### Grant Payments

268. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the grants or assistance available to an artist to enable them to exhibit their work in Newgrange in June 2012. [39621/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** Primary responsibility for the promotion and funding of the arts at all levels throughout the country is devolved to the Arts Council. The arts community can apply online through the Arts Council website for funding and for other services, including grants for performances and productions. The Arts Council has an excellent online service, which was selected by public vote for the Net Visionary eGovernment Award. Under legislation, the Arts Council is independent in making its funding decisions. The Office of Public Works is responsible for the management of Newgrange.

### Soláthar Caipitil

269. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreachta agus Gaeltachta cén soláthar caipitil a cuireadh ar fáil dá Roinn do 2011, briste síos mír ar mhír mar atá sna meastacháin athbhreithnithe; an méid atá caite go dáta i mbliana faoi gach fomhír agus an méid a bhfuil súil leis a bheith caite ag deireadh na bliana; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [39921/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** Mar is eol don Teachta, tá leithdháiltí caiteachais mo Roinne-se ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn foilsithe sna Meastacháin Athbhreithnithe agus tá próifílí caiteachais foilsithe don bhliain 2011 ar fáil ar láithreán gréasáin na Roinne Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe. Tá leithdháiltí mo Roinne ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn ar fáil ag an nasc seo a leanas chun gur féidir tagairt a dhéanamh dóibh go héasca: <http://per.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011-REV.pdf>

Tá caiteachas maidir le próifílí foilsithe ar fáil ag an nasc seo a leanas: <http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/exchequerstatements/2011/analexpendnov.pdf>

Mar eolas don Teachta, ar an 30 Samhain 2011, ba €€40.512m caiteachas caipitil mo Roinne agus faoi láthair níl mo Roinne ag súil le haon choigilteas substaintiúil ina leithdháileadh

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caipitil don bhliain seo. Mar is eol don Teachta freisin, cé go ndéantar monatóireacht agus bainistiú ar bhonn rialta ar chaiteachas mo Roinne-se i gcoibhneas le próifíl ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn, gur figiúirí sealadacha figiúirí caiteachais leanúnacha dá leithéid agus tá siad faoi réir phromhadh inmheánach trí chóras bainistíochta airgeadais mo Roinne-se agus, ar deireadh, faoi réir phromhadh an Ard-Reachtaire Cuntas agus Ciste. Dá mbeadh tuarascálacha mionsonraithe eatramhacha ar chaiteachas ag leibhéal fo-mhírchinn le foilsiú roimh dheireadh na bliana, feictear dom go mbeadh breis promhaidh ag teastáil, chomh maith le méid díreireach ama agus oibre ar bhonn leanúnach, agus go mbeadh sé deacair cur chuige dá leithéid a chosaint.

270. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht his plans for the future of Irish Heritage Trust; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39958/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** My Department commenced a review of the operation of the Trust earlier this year in accordance with a protocol agreed with the Trust in 2006. In this regard, I invited and have received observations on an Issues Paper, prepared by my Department, regarding the operation of the Trust over the last 5 years. The Issues Paper and the observations received will form the framework for discussions with the Trust, with a view to the completion of the review shortly.

#### Heritage Sites

271. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will advise this Deputy of any scheme which the proprietor of a heritage site (details supplied) can avail of to help cover the costs of public liability insurance (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39963/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** My Department has no role in relation to the provision of public liability insurance and is not in a position to advise on the issue referred to by the Deputy.

#### Heritage Council

272. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the future position of the Heritage Council; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39973/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** Under the Public Service Reform programme announced by Government on 17th November last, the Heritage Council is included in Appendix IIb: *Candidate Bodies for Critical Review by end-June 2012*. The focus of the review is to examine the potential merger of the functions of the Council into my Department. The Deputy will appreciate that any decision in relation to the future of the Council must await the finalisation of that review.

#### Postal Services

273. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has any plans to enhance the role played by post offices in our communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39704/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Government's core policy goal for the postal sector is to ensure that Irish customers, both business and residential, enjoy competitively priced, high quality postal services. The Govern-

ment is committed to a strong and viable An Post and supports its maintenance of the maximum number of economically viable post offices.

While I do appreciate the importance of post offices to communities, the operation of An Post's post office network is a matter for the board and management of the company and not one in which I have a statutory function.

### Ministerial Appointments

274. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39386/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The restrictions under the terms of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour on civil servants engaging in political activity do not apply to Special Advisers and they can engage in political activity or join political parties if they wish. These are not matters for which my Special Advisers are accountable to me under their contracts of employment.

275. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he or she reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time he or she was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39403/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The information requested by the Deputy is outlined in the following table.

Name	Title	Annual Salary	Reports to
Finbarr O'Malley	Special Adviser	€83,337 starting salary on 28 March 2011 and has remained on that salary since	Mr Pat Rabbitte, T.D., Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources
Simon Nugent	Special Adviser	€97,200 starting salary on 11 April 2011 and has remained on that salary since	Mr Pat Rabbitte, T.D., Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources

### Grant Payments

276. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if there is grant assistance available for persons applying for three phase electricity. [39494/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** There is no grant assistance available for individuals applying for three phase electricity, which is used in industry to drive motors and other devices.

277. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if a better energy homes scheme grant will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39527/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers the Better Energy Programme, on behalf of my Department. Queries in relation to individual applications are an operational matter for the SEAI and a dedicated hot line can be reached at 1800 250 204. In addition, the SEAI has recently established a specific email address for queries from Oireachtas members, which can be sent to oireachtas@seai.ie and will be dealt with promptly.

### Alternative Energy Projects

278. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of wind farms he has sanctioned; the number of applications he has received and the number currently in the process of being built; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39617/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Those seeking to build wind farms require a grid connection in order to be able to export the electricity generated to the national electricity grid. The Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) is statutorily responsible for grid connection. The “Gate” process was established by the CER as the mechanism for processing applications from renewable generators. The processing and issuance of grid connection offers to renewable generators are grouped rather than dealt with on an individual basis.

Under Gate 1 and Gate 2, 1755MW of connection offers were made to renewable generators and accepted. Under Gate 3, over 3900MW of offers were made to renewable generators. The total amount of renewable generation under Gates 1, 2 and 3 is capable of delivering Ireland’s 40% renewable electricity target. Between 175MW and 200MW of windfarms are expected to be connected to the grid this year. EirGrid’s website [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com) provides lists of connected and contracted wind farm developments with indicative connection dates for those contracted. The group processing approach facilitates a strategic approach to be taken to network building requirements and aims to put in place efficient connection solutions to cater for large number of applications to ensure optimum network development, minimising network costs and avoidance of network bottlenecks.

Over and above those projects in the Gate process, I am advised that EirGrid and ESB Networks are in receipt of many expressions of interest to connect several thousand megawatts of onshore and offshore wind to the grid.

279. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he has received any applications for the construction of hydro-electric water dams; if these applications have been processed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39618/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** Under a process established by the Commission for Energy Regulation, renewable generators apply for a grid connection to either EirGrid (for the high voltage transmission grid) or to ESB Networks (for the lower or medium voltage distribution system). The information on hydro-electric water dams (valid up to 1st November 2011) is available on the EirGrid (Transmission system Operator — TSO) website at [www.eirgrid.com](http://www.eirgrid.com) and is listed in the following table.

Status	TSO/DSO	No. Applications	Total MEC (MW)
Connected	TSO	14	212.0
Connected	DSO	56	25.4

Status	TSO/DSO	No. Applications	Total MEC (MW)
Contracted	DSO	3	0.9
Energised	DSO	2	0.1
Live	DSO	2	0.1
Queue	DSO	1	0

As can be seen from the table, there are currently 14 hydro installations totalling 212MW connected to the transmission system, and 56 hydro installations totalling 25.4MW connected to the distribution system. Beyond that, there are a further 3 hydro installations totalling 0.9MW that are contracted for connection, 2 totalling 0.1MW which are energised (i.e. construction complete but not yet able to export to the grid), 2 totalling 0.1MW that are live (i.e. in receipt of a grid connection offer) and one that is in the queue (i.e. seeking an offer.)

Pumped hydro storage projects are not “run of river” hydro using dams on rivers. Turlough Hill is a pumped storage project not included in the above figures. Under the energy regulator’s Gate group processing approach, EirGrid issued connection offers to two pumped storage projects totalling 70MW. One of these offers was not taken up. A further 8 applications totalling 2270MW have been submitted to the system operators in respect of grid connections for hydro pumped storage. These applications are not currently part of any Gate process.

280. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the position regarding the required documentation sought by the project promoters to allow the construction of the proposed plant (details supplied) in County Offaly to proceed. [39656/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I assume that the Deputy is referring in the context of the plant mentioned to the Biomass REFIT support scheme. This scheme has received State Aid clearance from DG Competition in Brussels and will open shortly once Government approval has been obtained. Once the scheme is opened, all the relevant documentation will be made available and applications can be made under the scheme.

### Scéimeanna Uisce agus Séarachais

281. D’fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Comhshaoil, Pobail agus Rialtais Áitiúil cén deontas uasta atá ar fáil do ghrúpscéimeanna uisce a síneofar conarthaí ina leith i mbliana ach nach mbeidh an obair orthu críochnaithe go dtí 2012; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [39531/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Beidh mo Roinn ag lorg tairiscintí go luath ó na húdaráis áitiúla le haghaidh maoinithe i 2012 faoin gClár Uisce Tuaithe. Tá na critéir le haghaidh maoiniú den sórt sin á thabhairt chun críche faoi láthair ag mo Roinn, tar éis ionchur ón gCoiste Náisiúnta ar Uisce Tuaithe Seirbhísí. I gcomhthéacs na cionnrointe 2011, deanadh cinneadh chun cur leis an deontas uasta in aghaidh an tí a bhaineann le scéimeanna grúpa nua ar feadh tréimhse teoranta a ardú. Maoiníonn mo Roinn 85% de chostas na scéimeanna den sórt sin, de ghnáth tá an deontas teoranta ag €6,475 in aghaidh an tí. Méadaíodh an teorainn go €7,475 ó 1 Márta, 2011 le haghaidh scéimeanna nua ag tosú sa bhliain 2011 le bheith maoinithe ó leithdháileadh 2011.

Beidh mé ag déanamh athbhreithnithe ar an tsaincheist seo sa san athbhliain nuair a bheidh mé ag cinneadh an bloc leithdháiltí deontais le haghaidh údarais áitiúla faoin gClár Uisce Tuaithe 2012. Mar sin féin, bheadh sé i gceist agam go leanófar ar aghaidh leis an leibhéal

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méadaithe deontais i gcásanna nuair a shíníodh an conradh i 2011 ach nach bhfuil críochnaithe faoi dheireadh na bliana.

### **Local Authority Charges**

282. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government in a situation where an older person is living with a family relative away from home and electricity is still connected to his or her former house, if that person will still have to pay the €100 property tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39788/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Local Government (Household Charge) Bill 2011, which is currently before the Dáil, provides an exemption from the household charge where a residential property is left vacant by an owner on the liability date by reason of his/her long term mental or physical infirmity, certified by a registered medical practitioner, and that person is residing in another property that he/she does not own.

### **Proposed Legislation**

283. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his plans to legislate for a tightening of the rules for vehicles to be declared off the road for the purposes of motor tax; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39836/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I am concerned at the high level of off-the-road declarations being made and I am aware that the current procedures governing the making of such declarations are open to potential abuse. The General Scheme of a Bill to tighten the procedures is at an advanced stage of preparation in my Department and will be brought forward as soon as possible.

### **Departmental Funding**

284. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if funding will be provided to community groups in the event of redundancies occurring for employees, in view of the major difficulties that would arise for such groups as they are not-for-profit organisations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40003/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I understand that the Question refers to groups delivering projects under particular EU co-funded programmes. There is no provision under these programmes for redundancy payments as the programmes fund actual projects rather than the staff employed to deliver these projects. Any redundancies would be a matter for the groups involved in delivering the projects and subject to the contractual arrangements they have in place with their staff.

### **Ministerial Appointments**

285. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39389/11]

286. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he or she reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time he or she was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39406/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 285 and 286 together.

I have appointed two Special Advisers to my office. Both were appointed in accordance with the Instructions on Ministerial Appointments for the 31st Dáil and sanctioned by the Taoiseach and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, where appropriate. Ms. Claire Langton was appointed as a Special Adviser to my office on 10 March 2011 with a salary of €80,051. No pay increase has been awarded to Ms. Langton since her appointment. Mr. Sean McKeown was appointed Special Adviser to my office with effect from 3 October 2011 with an annual salary of €92,672. No pay increase has been awarded to Mr. McKeown since his appointment. The contracts of my Special Advisers have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Section 5.4 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour excludes staff holding a temporary unestablished position and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister from the restrictions on engaging in political activity as set out in section 5 of the Code. There is no obligation on me to know if my Special Advisers are members of a political party and there is no obligation on them to tell me. The same principle applies in relation to whether any of them have been elected to local authorities.

Special Advisers appointed to my Department are required to perform any duties that may be assigned to them from time to time as appropriate to the position of Special Adviser as set out in Section 11 of the Public Service Management Act 1997. Their functions will include the provision of advice and the monitoring, facilitation and provision of assistance in securing Government objectives that relate to the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government.

Minister of State Mr. Fergus O'Dowd has no staff assigned to his office in my Department.

### **Proposed Legislation**

287. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will reply to correspondence (details supplied) regarding Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39451/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I refer to the reply to Question No 58 of 24 March 2011 which comprehensively addressed the issues regarding the registration of the title of Architect. Earlier this year I approved the schedule of fees applicable in respect of the registration of Architects in accordance with the Building Control Act 2007. The fee in relation to candidates who apply for registration under the Technical Assessment route has now been set at €4,500. This amount is considerably less than the amount referred to in the details supplied with this question.

I have no plans to amend the arrangements for the registration of Architects, as set down under Part 3 of the Building Control Act 2007, along the lines suggested. The Act sought to provide for the registration of the title of Architect in order to protect consumers. There is no question of persons who fail to register through one of the routes to registration provided for in Part 3 of the Act being allowed to use the title of Architect.

### Local Authority Charges

288. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will examine the non-principal private residency levy; if he will allow local authorities to enter into an arrears payment schedule when the home owner is in financial difficulty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39460/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Local Government (Charges) Act 2009 provides the legislative basis for the €200 charge on non-principal private residences (NPPR), including the application of late payment fees. The Act places the onus on an owner of a residential property which is situated in the State to assess his or her liability for the charge in the first instance.

Section 9 of the Act places collection of the charge under the care and management of the relevant local authority. It is a matter for an individual who may be experiencing hardship in meeting their payment obligations under the Act to make contact with the relevant local authority in the first instance to establish if there is a basis for amelioration of the charge.

### Local Authority Funding

289. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has agreed with Dublin City Council to provide emergency funding to cover the accommodation costs of residents from Priory Hall; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39511/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** My Department has made a contribution towards the costs necessarily incurred by Dublin City Council, in the context of a judgment of the High Court, in providing temporary accommodation for households evacuated from Priory Hall.

290. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the proposals he has to re-structure the waste market here to restrict side by side competition; the reasons behind these proposals; when he expects to introduce such proposals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39652/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce competitive tendering for household waste collection, under which service providers would bid to provide waste collection services in a given area, for a given period of time and to a guaranteed level of service.

A public consultation designed to inform policy development concluded in September 2011. A large number of responses were received from a broad spectrum of interests. As one might expect, a consensus is not apparent and, on almost all of the relevant issues, a considerable breadth of opinion was expressed. Many responses cited concerns such as the potentially adverse impact of franchise bidding on waste collection firms and the loss of the benefits of ongoing, side-by-side competition. Other responses pointed to the possible significant savings for householders and the potential for improved environmental outcomes if franchise bidding were introduced. All of the responses received, in addition to a summary document, are available on my Department's website.

The responses are being examined and a Regulatory Impact Assessment, which will inform Government's deliberations, is also being prepared. I expect to be in a position to submit final proposals to Government very early in the New Year.

291. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the position regarding waste management (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39669/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The charges applied by waste management companies are a matter between those companies and their customers, subject to compliance with all applicable environmental and other relevant legislation. The company concerned comes within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. Matters of compliance with competition law are proper to the Competition Authority.

### **Building Regulations**

292. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding building regulations. [39844/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Building Regulations in general provide for the safety, health and well-being of persons in and around buildings. The regulations are reviewed on an ongoing basis and any proposed amendments are subject to a full regulatory impact analysis and detailed public consultation prior to their being signed into law.

The concerns expressed in the correspondence supplied extend beyond the scope of the Building Regulations and into matters such as the regulation of trade, consumer protection and environmental protection, which are addressed elsewhere under national and EU law.

In particular, the relationship between a property owner and the supplier of any goods or services to the property is a matter of contract and law between them, including consumer law. In this regard, it is to be assumed that a property owner would have a well-founded right of claim against any supplier who supplied products or services which are defective or which fail to perform to specification.

### **Community Development**

293. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the reason none of the members of the high level steering group set up for streamlining the delivery of services for communities have direct experience of local or community development in Ireland other than institutional and theoretical knowledge on local government; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39856/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I established a Steering Group in September 2011 to advise me on options for improving the alignment between local government and local development. I am satisfied that the Group has the requisite skills to address its terms of reference, as the members bring a wide range of experience and expertise to the task. I have asked the Group to examine the scope for alignment of local government and local development in a way which builds on the strengths of both sectors and I am confident that, full and balanced consideration will be given to relevant issues. A consultation process has been undertaken with key stakeholders which will inform the Group in its final recommendations to me. An Interim Report, recently provided to me, is available on my Department's website at the following link: <http://www.environ.ie/en/Community/AlignmentofLocalGovtLocalDev/#Interim%20Report>. In this, the Group has identified that a more co-ordinated and integrated approach to local service provision is now required and that this should enable greater ease of access and

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deliver more sustainable frontline services for citizens. It should also include meaningful community engagement and involvement within any new framework.

### **Planning Issues**

294. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the planning fee for self catering holiday homes when applying for full planning permission to a local authority. [39885/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Prescribed fees to accompany planning applications are set out in Schedule 9 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001. Different fees are prescribed for different classes of development. It is a matter for the relevant planning authority to decide whether the residential units the subject of an application for planning permission are a commercial development or otherwise and to require the appropriate planning application fee accordingly.

### **Local Authority Property**

295. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the process to be followed by local authorities in the sale of a local authority owned asset (details supplied) that is to be sold on the open market, sale by tender or to invite expressions of interest by placing an advertisement in a local paper only. [39919/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The manner in which a local authority disposes of assets is, in the first instance, a matter for the local authority itself.

I understand that, in the case referred to in the question, the local authority concerned requested, via their website, expressions of interest for the sale or lease of the property and that the council is currently examining expressions of interest received.

Any proposal to sell council land or property must be approved by the elected members under Section 183 of the Local Government Act 2001.

### **Equality Issues**

296. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if Ireland is meeting its obligations under the 2005 Disability Act whereby 3% of the staff of public bodies are required to be persons with disabilities; if he will provide a breakdown by county of the number of persons with disabilities in statistical format in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39635/11]

334. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has approved a draft memorandum of information of the Government in relation to the National Disability Authority 2009 report on Compliance with Disability Act on Employment of People with Disabilities in the Public Sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39951/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 296 and 334 together.

Reporting on the compliance by public bodies with the requirements of Part 5 of the Disability Act 2005 in respect employment of people with disabilities is the responsibility of the

National Disability Authority. Both the 2009 Report and the most recent one, that for 2010, are available on the NDA website, *www.nda.ie*.

### Ministerial Appointments

297. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39394/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The role of Special Advisers in giving assistance with political implications is expressly recognised in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. To ensure public confidence in the political impartiality of the Civil Service, paragraph 5.1 of the Code of Standards restricts civil servants above a certain grade from engaging in political activity; but, under paragraph 5.4, the restrictions do not apply to Special Advisers who hold ‘temporary unestablished positions’ and ‘whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister’. Declaration of membership of, or links to, a political party is not required of a Special Adviser. Neither of my advisers has held elective office.

298. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each advisor now; the salary of each advisor from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39411/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question Number 218 of 22 September 2011, which set out details on Special Advisers appointed in my Department. The position has not changed.

In my capacity as Minister for Justice and Equality I have appointed Ms Jane Lehane and Mr Thomas Cooney as my Special Advisers. They are both paid at the Principal Officer Standard Scale (€80,051 — €98,424).

### Garda Stations

299. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the proposed closure of Whitehall Garda station, Dublin 9; the reasons for this closure; the way that this district will be re-organised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39533/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In making his recommendations on the closure of each of the 31 Garda stations in question, the Commissioner reviewed all aspects of the Garda Síochána’s policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the operation of Garda stations, both in terms of opening hours and possible closures. In addition, all Divisional Officers were asked to assess the level of activity in each Garda Station in their area.

Commenting on the closures, the Commissioner said that the Garda Síochána had decided that resources could be better deployed and a more effectively used on the frontline if these particular stations no longer had to be staffed and maintained.

The Garda Commissioner has reiterated the commitment of An Garda Síochána to providing a professional and effective service to the community. In the coming months local Garda man-

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agement, in places where a station is going to close, will consult with local communities to determine how best to continue to deliver a policing service in their area.

300. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the factors that were considered by the Garda Commissioner in recommending the closure of Goleen Garda station, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39581/11]

301. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Garda Commissioner considered in his decision to recommend the closure of Goleen Garda station, County Cork, the fact that the population in its operational area trebles during the months of May to September and the number of holiday homes and caravans that are empty during the other months of the year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39582/11]

302. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the Garda Commissioner considered in his decision to recommend the closure of Goleen Garda station, County Cork, the known use of the bays, coves and harbours in its operational area that have been used for the illegal importation of illegal substances and contraband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39583/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 300 to 302, inclusive, together.

In making his recommendations on the closure of each Garda station, the Garda Commissioner reviewed all aspects of the Garda Síochána's policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the operation of Garda stations, both in terms of opening hours and possible closures. In addition, all Divisional Officers were asked to assess the level of activity in each Garda Station in their area.

The Garda Commissioner has reiterated the commitment of An Garda Síochána to providing a professional and effective service to the community. In the coming months local Garda management, in places where a station is going to close, will consult with local communities to determine how best to continue to deliver a policing service in their area.

303. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the services that are provided to the public at a Garda station that is open to the public; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39584/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Garda Authorities that the level of services provided at a Garda Station will vary in order to meet the requirements of the local community and may, in addition to the provision of policing services, include the following:

- Insurance claims for lost property
- Passport applications
- Age Card applications
- Firearms Licence applications
- Proof identity forms e.g. for use in opening bank accounts
- Fingerprinting

- Receiving and returning lost/found property
- Witness signatures for replacement documents e.g. vehicle certificates of ownership, lost N.C.T certificates, etc
- Signing of forms for obtaining driving licences, including medical and eye test
- Facilitate persons using postal ballots
- Facilitating the Out of Hours services provided by social care personnel
- Reporting of Missing Persons/Children
- Place of safety for persons at risk
- Facilitating the reporting of crimes
- Key Holders can record their details at the Garda station for premises

Members of the public may also seek crime prevention advice at a Garda Station. Members of the public may, when required, produce driving licences and certificates of insurance at a Garda Station. Sometimes members of the public who are granted bail by the Courts or may be granted temporary release from Prison are required as part of the conditions of the bail/temporary release to ‘sign-on’ at a designated Garda Station. Members of the public who attend a Garda station as victims of crime are provided with a place of safety while they seek advice and receive details of victim support groups, such as the Irish Tourist Assistance Service for tourists.

### **Garda Training**

304. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the recommendations of the Garda Síochána training and development review group report that have been implemented to date; the recommendations that are outstanding; when he expects all of the recommendations to be implemented; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39658/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that approximately 77% of the recommendations of the report are either implemented, completed or currently being progressed. The implementation of the remaining recommendations is under continuing review in the light of available resources and policing priorities. The table sets out the status of each recommendation.

Training Review Report — Progress Chart

No.	Description	Status
1	Develop a strategy for training and development which is updated every three years to align with An Garda Síochána’s corporate strategy.	Completed
2	Adopt the ‘garda training and development model’.	Completed
3	Establish five faculties at the Garda College.	Completed
4	Appoint an Assistant Commissioner Training.	Not yet commenced
5	Establish a National Training Development Unit (NTDU).	In Progress
6	Revise the structure of the Student/Probationer Faculty.	Completed

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No.	Description	Status
7	Restructure the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) School into the Operational Development Faculty.	Completed
8	Amalgamate the Management Supervisory Training School and the Senior Management Development School to form the Leadership and Management Faculty	Completed and implemented
9	Amalgamate the Specialist Training School and Crime Training Faculty to form a new Crime and Functional Faculty.	Completed — Crime and Operational Training Faculty
10	Restructure and integrate the Learning and Development Unit into the Garda Civilian Faculty in the Garda College.	Not Yet Commenced
11	Explore best practice in administration and facilities management.	In Progress
12	Establish divisional training managers for each division.	Not yet commenced
13	Provide ownership of training to district and divisional officers.	In progress
14	Develop existing training governance in the organisation to facilitate efficient management of training in An Garda Síochána.	In progress
15	Establish an executive training board.	Not yet commenced
16	Establish expert panels.	Not yet commenced
17	Establish divisional training boards for each division.	Not yet commenced
18	Establish an Academic Council at the Garda College.	Completed and implemented
19	Establish programme boards for accredited programmes delivered in An Garda Síochána.	Completed
20	Establish programme review boards.	Completed
21	Implement a strategic approach to training planning in An Garda Síochána.	Completed
22	The Garda College should prepare an annual business plan to support the delivery of the garda training and development strategy.	Completed and implemented
23	HRM should explore and identify an appropriate competency framework for both garda and civilian staff and ensure that all Garda Síochána training is aligned to this competency framework.	In Progress
24	Ensure that all training is compliant to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).	In Progress
25	Introduce a single defined process that facilitates requests to design, develop or redevelop courses to meet new training needs.	In progress
26	The National Training Development Unit should design all new training courses to guarantee consistency to agreed standards.	In progress
27	Maintenance of course content must be completed by the National Training Development Unit to ensure that training remains up to date and relevant to the needs of staff and the organisation.	In progress
28	Development and maintenance of a central repository of training materials should be managed by the National Training Development Unit.	Not Yet commenced
29	Modularise all training and development. In determining the boundaries of module aims and outcomes, consideration should be given to garda and civilian roles.	In progress

No.	Description	Status
30	Evaluate all training against the Kirkpatrick model.	In progress
31	Evaluate all internal trainers, instructors, teachers and presenters.	In progress
32	Ensure that all internal appointments to the role of instructor are the result of open competition using a standard interview process.	In progress
33	Ensure that all newly appointed garda instructors complete an instructor's basic-training course.	In progress
34	Prepare and distribute an annual training prospectus for An Garda Síochána.	Completed and implemented
35	Introduce voluntary individual development plans (IDPs) to the organisation and ensure that individuals take responsibility for their own training via these IDPs.	In progress
36	Implement a standardised training request process for all staff in the organisation.	Not yet commenced
37	Implement agreed standards to prioritise training for all staff members across the organisation.	Not yet commenced
38	Acknowledge and record attendance at training programmes through the granting of learning points to staff.	In progress
39	Notify the divisional training board of allocation of places on training no less than one month prior to the commencement of the training course.	Not yet commenced
40	Determine suitability for some training courses by psychological assessment. The National Training Development Unit should have sufficient expertise to advise on the development of psychological assessments.	Not yet commenced
41	Implement and operate a process to manage external training providers.	Completed
42	Conduct organisational training needs analyses every three years.	In progress
43	Implement a learning management system across the organisation	Completed
44	Develop a new student/probationer programme delivered over three phases	In Progress
45	Revise the structure of the new three-phase student/probationer	Completed awaiting implementation
46	Implement a practical scenario-student based student/probationer training programme, utilising hybrid problem-based learning delivery methodologies	Completed awaiting implementation
47	Implement a fully-assessed modular approach to competency development across the student/probationer programme	In progress
48	Implement a phase two liaison team in the student/probationer faculty	Completed awaiting implementation
49	Revise the structure of field training and implement field-training tutors	Not yet commenced
50	Ensure that field-training tutors have appropriate experience and receive training for their role	Not yet commenced
51	Ensure that the supervisory sergeant takes an active role in the development of probationer Gardaí and receives appropriate training	Not yet Commenced
52	Support probationer Gardaí development on Phase two with regular training interventions	Not yet commenced

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No.	Description	Status
53	Demonstrate evidence of achieving learning outcomes in all individual assessments. Practice of compensation is to cease.	Completed
54	Ensure that students achieve the minimum standard of Irish and a cadre of students will be supported to achieve an advanced standard.	Completed awaiting implementation
55	European languages (French/German) will no longer form part of the student/probationer programme	Completed
56	Replace dissertation with a requirement to complete a portfolio of investigation files during phase two	Completed and awaiting implementation
57	Implement pre-selection requirements for entry into An Garda Síochána and review the existing selection process	In Progress
58	Implement First Aid training for reserve Garda members or set first aid certification as an entry requirement	Completed
59	Adopt a lifelong learning approach to garda training and development.	In progress
60	Continuous professional development programmes should be replaced by operational development programmes.	In Progress
61	Divide the Operational Development Faculty into two schools; the Core Operational Development School and the Command Operational Development School.	In progress
62	The Operational Development Faculty will be responsible for the delivery of the core operational development programme to ranks within the core level (reserve garda and garda) and the command operational development programme for delivery to ranks within the command level (Sergeant, Inspector and Superintendent).	In progress
63	A suite of elective courses will be designed by the National Training Development Unit in conjunction with the Operational Development Faculty and made available to each rank at core and command levels.	In progress
64	Introduce a broad range of suites of elective courses to address the need for courses relevant and specific to individual roles performed	In progress
65	Facilitate the delivery of the command operational development programme for superintendents through a virtual learning environment (VLE) and instructor-led training delivered on a regional basis.	Not yet commenced
66	Use a blended learning approach to deliver the suite of elective courses.	In progress
67	Deliver operational development programmes on a shift basis and during non-peak times, to facilitate and coincide with operational policing requirements.	Not yet commenced
68	Use briefing times for delivery of short training interventions.	Not yet commenced
69	The Leadership and Management Faculty will have three primary responsibilities: the executive development programme, promoting courses and higher education options.	Completed
70	Deliver the executive development programme to the executive levels within the organisation and make it available through a suite of elective courses.	Completed

No.	Description	Status
71	Refer to promotion development courses collectively as 'promotion courses', with courses for each rank referred to as sergeants promotion course, inspectors promotion course, superintendents promotion course and chief superintendents promotion course.	Completed
72	Promotion course modules outlining the key operational training required within the rank should follow the foundation module, with the latter modules focusing on human resource related topics and management skills.	Completed
73	The Leadership and Management Faculty should be responsible for higher education options, which will include the BA (Hons) in Police Management, garda executive leadership programme and funded education programmes.	Completed
74	Make the current BA in Police Management programme available to all command ranks including sergeant rank.	Completed and implemented
75	The current 'garda executive leadership programme'(GELP) should be reconfigured to GELP I (higher diploma) and made available to superintendent rank.	Completed and implemented
76	Build on GELP I by introducing a GELP II, which will be at master degree level. GELP II will be available at executive level and will be aimed at strategic development.	Completed and implemented
77	Continue to operate funded education programmes focusing on specific skills required within An Garda Síochána and the development of personnel in key areas.	Completed and implemented
78	Develop the centre of excellence in Dromard House as a matter of priority to cater for the needs of crime and functional police training.	In Progress
79	Ensure the suite of courses delivered by the Crime and Functional Faculty meet best practice international standards	Completed and implemented
80	Accredit appropriate crime and functional training programmes	Completed and implemented
81	Continue to ensure all staff within the Crime and Functional Faculty have the expertise and capacity to deliver the suite of courses provided by the faculty.	Completed and implemented
82	Develop and implement a competency-based model of driver training to meet the operational requirements of the organisation.	Completed and implemented
83	Integrate training of garda and civilian staff within An Garda Síochána	In progress
84	Adopt the civilian training and development model	Completed
85	Deliver a training curriculum focused on the ongoing needs of civilian staff	In Progress

305. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of gardaí who undertook the standard motorcycle course, pulse course, stinger course, advanced motorcycle course, senior investigation officer course, family liaison officer course and the mountain bike course for the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the length of time of each course; the frequency of courses commencing; the maximum number of gardaí by class; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39659/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the following is a break down of the courses facilitated by the Garda College and Garda Headquarters. The Stinger Course is facilitated at a Divisional Level and collating the relevant data would require a disproportionate amount of time and resources to compile.

Course	Year	Nos undergo course*	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Garda Headquarters Standard Motorcycle Course:	2008	42	4 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 6
	2009	36	4 weeks	6 courses held	Up to 6
	2010	20	4 weeks	3 courses held	Up to 6
	2011	12	4 weeks	3 courses held	Up to 6

\*Figures include members returning to re-sit the final assessment.

Course	Year	Nos undergo course	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Garda Headquarters Advanced Motorcycle Course:	2008	22	2 weeks	6 courses held	Up to 4
	2009	19	2 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 4
	2010	19	2 weeks	6 courses held	Up to 4
	2011	10	2 weeks	3 courses held	Up to 4

Course	Year	Nos undergo course*	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Garda College Standard Motorcycle Course:	2008	31	4 weeks	5 courses held	Up to 6
	2009	44	4 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 6
	2010	49	4 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 6
	2011	39	4 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 6

\*Figures include members returning to reset the final assessment.

Course	Year	Nos undergo course	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Garda Headquarters Advanced Motorcycle Course:	2008	8	2 weeks	4 courses held	Up to 4
	2009	16	2 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 4
	2010	22	2 weeks	7 courses held	Up to 4
	2011	7	2 weeks	4 courses held	Up to 4

Senior Investigation Course (HETAC approved)

Duration:	Frequency of Course	Maximum No. of Gardaí
3 week Course	1 to 2 per year as required	16 course capacity

2008	2009	2010	2011
34	28	32	32

## Mountain Bike Course

Course	Year	Nos undergo course	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Mountain Bike:	2008	395	5 Days	41 courses held	10 members
	2009	309	5 Days	31 courses held	10 members
	2010	353	5 Days	36 courses held	10 members
	2011	196	5 Days	24 courses held	10 members

## Family Liaison Officers Course

Course	Year	Nos Trained	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses*	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
Family Liaison Officers	2008	110	4 Days	7 courses held	18
	2009	31	4 Days	2 courses held	18
	2010	43	4 Days	3 courses held	18
	2011	101	4 Days	6 courses held	18

\*Subject to schedule of Garda College policing plan, availability of trainer & divisional demand

## PULSE Courses:

Course	Year	Nos Trained (CPD Trainers)	Length of time of each course	Frequency of Courses*	Maximum no. of Gardaí per class
PULSE Release 4.5	2008	62	1 Day	Subject to release and Divisional demands	Subject to hardware availability in training locations approx. 20
PULSE Release 5.0	2009	59	1 Day		
PULSE Release 6.0	2010	50	1 Day		
PULSE Release 6.3	2011	Deployed via Garda Portal			
PULSE Merge	2008	18	2.5 days	*Subject to schedule of Garda College policing plan, availability of trainer & divisional demand	Subject to hardware availability in training locations approx. 20
PULSE Merge	2009	20	2.5 days		
PULSE Merge	2010	40	2.5 days		
PULSE Merge	2011	12	2.5 days		

## Irish Prison Service

306. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of handlers and dogs currently in the Irish Prison Service canine unit; if this number will be increased; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39660/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Canine Unit was established within the Irish Prison Service in early 2008 and currently has 26 trained dog handlers and a complement of 36 trained dogs consisting of 23 passive dogs, 3 active dogs and 10 patrol dogs. All dogs are housed in-house at purpose built kennels located at designated prisons throughout the country.

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While it is not proposed to increase the number of handlers and dogs in the Prison Service Canine Unit in the short term, the Canine Unit does play a particularly important role in the prevention of contraband entering prisons. It is intended to maintain existing resource levels in the Canine Unit through a tender for the provision of dog handler training and trained dogs. This is currently being developed and the Irish Prison Service intend to publish the tender in the near future.

### **Disability Support Service**

307. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money that will be channelled to People with Disabilities Ireland offices in Counties Westmeath, Longford and Roscommon when funding ceases in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39668/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** It has been decided that funding to People with Disabilities in Ireland (PwDI) must cease at the end of 2011.

On the basis of a value for money review, it has been clearly established that the vast majority of the money allocated to PwDI is being spent disproportionately. The largest proportion of PwDI's annual budget has been spent over the last number of years on the operation of its office headquarters and on administration rather than on the development of projects which would directly benefit people with disabilities. This was an untenable situation that could not be allowed to continue as people with disabilities were benefiting very little from the allocation in real terms. However, there is no reason why the local PwDI networks around the country should not continue to be active as volunteer bodies and continue their work with people with disabilities.

It is my wish to ensure that people with disabilities directly benefit from any money allocated to this sector. With this in mind, I am currently overseeing the finalisation of a major Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services in the Department of Health to ensure that existing funding allocated for people with disabilities is spent to best effect. I am also interested in hearing what people with disabilities have to say on issues affecting them. I recently established and am personally chairing a new National Disability Strategy Implementation Group to develop and progress disability strategy. The new group includes representation from a number of disability stakeholder organisations and also a number of people with disabilities who will bring their lived experience directly to bear on the very important work of this high level group. This will ensure the voice and perspective of people with disabilities will continue to be heard in a more focused and cost effective way.

The Government must ensure in 2012, and continuing thereafter, that funding is allocated for maximum provision of services for people with disabilities, having regard to overall resource constraints which affect all sectors at this time.

### **Courts Service**

308. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review a matter (details supplied) regarding the Circuit Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39687/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The assignment of unassigned Circuit Court judges is a matter for the President of the Circuit Court. As the Deputy is aware the judiciary are independent in the exercise of their judicial functions subject only to the

Constitution and the law. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that in a situation such as that referred to by the Deputy, it is open to the parties to have the matter brought to the attention of the President of the Circuit Court through the local circuit court office.

### **Garda Accommodation**

309. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the status of plans to locate a new regional Garda headquarters on a site at Murrough, Renmore, County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39722/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The programme of replacement and refurbishment of Garda accommodation around the country is progressed by the Garda authorities working in close co-operation with the Office of Public Works (OPW), who have the responsibility for the provision and maintenance of Garda accommodation.

I am advised by the Garda authorities that plans for the provision of the new regional Garda headquarters are being developed by the OPW. These plans will be progressed in the context of An Garda Síochána's identified accommodation priorities and in the light of available resources.

### **Garda Operations**

310. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the way the €70 million cut will impact on Garda services in 2012. [39737/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Garda Commissioner is the Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote. In that context the Garda authorities have informed me that they are currently examining the allocations for the Vote in 2012 which were published just last week.

I dealt with the reduction in the Garda Vote for 2012 in the course of my speech to this House on the Justice Sector Estimates for 2012 on the 7th of December 2011. I would refer the Deputy to the relevant portion of the speech.

It is, of course, the case that the Garda Commissioner has specifically confirmed that priority will be given to maintaining frontline services to the maximum extent possible. For my part, I have no doubt that the Garda organisation will continue to provide a fully effective and efficient policing service throughout the country in 2012 and beyond.

### **Garda Stations**

311. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the running costs and other associated costs, any capital invested, to be outlined on a station by station basis, and any other investments in each of the Garda stations (details supplied) in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; if he will outline this information on a tabular basis, station by station and cost by cost. [39738/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have requested the information sought by the Deputy from the Garda authorities. I will be in contact with the Deputy when this information is to hand.

### **Garda Retirements**

312. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline on

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a county basis and by rank, the number of gardaí who have applied to retire from the force by the end of November 2011. [39739/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I have been informed by the Garda Commissioner that the number of Gardaí who have applied to retire from the An Garda Síochána by the end of November 2011 broken down by rank was as set out in the table.

Rank	No retiring in December 2011	No retiring in January 2012	No retiring in February 2012	No Retired by 30 November
Commissioner	0			0
D/Commissioner	0			0
A/Commissioner	1			2
C/Superintendent	3		2	5
Superintendent	11	1	7	13
Inspector	8	2	8	13
Sergeant	36	7	40	77
Garda	79	27	105	203
Total	138	37	162	313

The breakdown of retirees on a county basis is not readily available and the compilation of the information, as requested, would require a disproportionate amount of Garda time and resources.

### Garda Stations

313. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm that there will be no further station closures in 2012 apart from those notified on Monday, 5 December 2011. [39740/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Any plans the Commissioner has in relation to the closure of Garda Stations must be detailed in his annual policing plan. The only stations due for closure in 2012 have been listed in the Policing Plan for 2012 and copies of that plan have been lodged in both houses of the Oireachtas.

### Departmental Bodies

314. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the name of each body supported by him via funding in 2010 and in 2011; the way the proposed cutback of €12 million will affect each body; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39741/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The reduction referred to by the Deputy will present a challenge to the running of my Department and the associated bodies included under Vote 24 (Vote 19 in 2011). Details of the various bodies concerned are listed on pages 171-173 of the recently published Part IV — Estimates for Public Services and Summary Public Capital Programme of the Comprehensive Expenditure Report 2012-2014.

The dreadful financial legacy inherited from the previous Government requires all of us to make difficult decisions and, like all other areas of public expenditure, there is no magic formula for generating money for the Justice area. We have a continuing obligation to contribute to the overall reduction in public expenditure that must be achieved in the public interest to enable our State regain economic sovereignty.

While the reduction in budget is challenging, we now have to plan to ensure that the most critical areas within the sector are prioritised for funding, and that the resources will be concentrated on those areas.

The 2006 Justice Vote current expenditure outturn was €362 million. The Department and the associated bodies concerned functioned with that allocation, and will continue to function properly with the new allocation.

The total current expenditure funding available to the Justice Vote for 2012 is €392 million. This covers nearly 60 subheads, and includes allocations of funding to agencies and organisations in the areas of immigration and asylum, equality, disability and human rights, charities, youth justice and others. This represents a reduction of €15 million and, in light of this, priority will be given to those organisations that are actually providing services and, accordingly, there will be limited funding available for non-governmental organisations which are largely engaged in an advocacy role.

In any given year, even if the overall funding available was the same as in the previous one, the amounts allocated to each of the various bodies included in the Justice Vote would not necessarily remain constant year on year. Similarly with 2012, those tasked with managing my Department and the various bodies funded from Vote 24 will take into consideration the annual fundamental task of managers everywhere when preparing their business plans for the year ahead i.e. the utilising of the resources available in order to achieve their business objectives.

I would also point to the significant transformation programme in place across the Justice Sector with the objective of ensuring that key front-line services are efficiently maintained in an era of reduced budgets and staffing resources. The transformation programme is examining every aspect of the way in which work is done and resources are deployed, with the objective of maintaining front-line services to the public to the maximum extent possible.

While much has been said about reduced budgets of late it should be borne in mind that some budgets are reduced as a result of greater efficiencies and savings. At the same time, other budgets have increased in order to meet new strategic objectives.

For example, funding of over €40 million, which represents a modest increase of €1.4 million over 2011 expenditure levels is being made available to the Probation Service in 2012, which will support a range of initiatives in this area, including the pilot project for an incentivised scheme for earned temporary release under which offenders who pose no threat to the community are offered early release in return for supervised community service.

I am also pleased also that there is funding in the Justice estimates of over €2.8 million in respect of the Family Mediation Service. This is reflected in the budget for the Legal Aid Board, which has recently taken over responsibility for the Service. It has also been possible, despite the difficult financial climate, to maintain the budgetary levels for both the Equality Authority and Human Rights Commission at broadly the same levels as in 2011.

There is, of course, a need to effect essential savings in the Criminal Legal Aid Scheme and in this context there is a reduction of €10 million on the expected expenditure level in 2011. However, the Government has recognised that in the current economic circumstances there are considerable pressures in the resources available to the Civil Legal Aid Scheme, and has maintained funding to the Scheme at existing levels. In addition, funding to the Free Legal Advice Centres has been maintained at 2011 levels.

Finally, I would also like to mention the substantial progress being made in relation to a number of proposals which emerged from the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure which has been undertaken across the Sector over recent months. In particular, the cross-cutting reforms which will be implemented across the Sector to ensure more streamlined interaction

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between the various components of the Criminal Justice system, with consequent efficiencies and cost savings for all concerned, and the structural reform being progressed in areas such as the immigration and asylum areas, which aim to achieve a more streamlined and less costly operation while maintaining the current high levels of transparency and standards in operations. It is envisaged that the savings and efficiencies which will flow from these initiatives will help the Department and its associated bodies in their efforts to maintain and, where possible improve, the level of services they provide during times of reducing budgets.

### **Departmental Schemes**

315. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for the community alert scheme in 2012; if his attention has been drawn to the impact that the 25% cut in funding to Muintir na Tíre will have on this scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39743/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In the context of the fiscal difficulties being experienced in the economy and in keeping with the budgetary cutbacks implemented by the previous Government to enable the State to comply with its obligations pursuant to the European Commission/ECB/IMF agreement concluded in 2010 and the reduced funding available this year as a consequence, it is regrettably necessary to reduce the level of support which my Department is in a position to provide to Community Alert in 2011.

Funding totalling €137,000 has been provided to Community Alert in 2011 to date, and further funding of €23,000 is being provided, bringing the total for the year to €160,000. This reduction in funding, of 11%, is due to the financial legacy which this Government has inherited. The work of Community Alert continues to be highly valued. No final decision has been taken as to the precise level of funding which can be provided to the organisation in 2012.

### **Garda Commissioner Functions**

316. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm and list all duties, functions and authorities exercised on behalf of the Garda Commissioner by the Garda Commissioner's personal assistant and the legal authority governing this; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39758/11]

317. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will confirm and list the functions of the Garda Commissioner which are delegated and the particulars of to whom each function is delegated; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39759/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 316 and 317 together.

I have requested the relevant information from the Commissioner and when it is to hand I will contact the Deputy directly.

### **Residency Permits**

318. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of applicants who have sought business permission in 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the number of applications which were received, approved, refused or abandoned; the number on hand at the end of each year; his plans to reform this system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39772/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The information requested by the Deputy can be obtained from the following table provided by the Irish Naturalisation & Immigration Service (INIS) of my Department.

Business Permission

Applications for permission to set up a business in the State

Year	Received	Approved	Refused	Abandoned	On Hand
2009	164	86	90	14	10
2010	103	70	31	3	9
2011 (Nov)	57	37	19	3	7

The current business permission arrangements are in place for a considerable period and in my view are no longer appropriate to the economic needs of the State. In that regard, INIS has been working on new immigration schemes in the area of entrepreneurship and investment. I believe there is scope for a pro-active approach in this sphere so as to contribute to our national recovery. I anticipate being in a position to publish the details of these schemes shortly.

**Subsidiary Protection Applications**

319. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding a subsidiary protection application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39789/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The person concerned is a failed asylum applicant who has submitted an application for Subsidiary Protection. When consideration of this application has been completed, the person concerned will be notified in writing of the outcome.

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

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

**Pension Provisions**

320. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason retirement lump sums received by gardaí retired before 40 years of service are deducted in a lump sum for the remaining part of the 40 year period rather than on an ongoing monthly basis. [39839/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Outstanding contributions to the Garda Síochána and Garda Spouses' and Children's Superannuation Schemes are taken from the retirement gratuity in accordance with normal procedures applicable to Public Service

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Superannuation Schemes. This procedure ensures that the appropriate pension entitlements can be paid in full on retirement and there are no plans to change the procedure.

### **Garda Investigations**

321. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding investigations (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39842/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I attach the highest priority to the full investigation of white collar crime and bringing the perpetrators of such crime to justice. I have already expressed my unhappiness at the protracted nature of the investigations underway. This is not a criticism of the investigators and prosecutors, who face tough challenges as a result of the complexities of the matters being investigated. At the same time, I am anxious to ensure that I do not say anything which might jeopardise any prosecutions.

Within eight weeks of taking up office, I moved urgently to draft, and seek Government approval to the introduction of, additional legislation. This new legislation, the Criminal Justice Act 2011, was enacted on 2 August. The Act is an important step in delivering on the Government's commitment to tackle white collar crime. Its main purpose is to address delays in the prosecution and investigation of complex white collar crime by improving certain important procedural matters and strengthening Garda investigative powers. The Act's provisions are based on the experiences of those involved in investigations and prosecutions of white collar crime, and in particular on the experiences of those involved in current investigations into bank fraud and financial irregularities. It provides new procedures and powers which will speed up both current and future investigations, including investigations into offences in the areas of banking and finance, company law, money laundering, fraud and corruption.

It provides for offences committed by persons or witnesses who are unwilling or reluctant to assist with an investigation. The provisions of the Act include a new power for the Garda Síochána to apply to court for an order to require any person with relevant information to produce documents, answer questions and provide information for the purposes of the investigation of relevant offences. Failure to comply with such an order will be an offence, punishable by way of a term of imprisonment or a fine or both. This is a central provision of the Act.

It is expected that the Act will provide vital assistance to An Garda Síochána in the completion of current investigations as well as providing assistance to them in investigations undertaken in the future.

The Programme for Government contains a commitment that rogue bankers and all those that misappropriate or embezzle funds are properly pursued for their crimes and that the full rigours of the law will apply to them. I am determined to see this commitment fulfilled.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the investigations into Anglo Irish Bank by An Garda Síochána and the Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement (ODCE) are ongoing, with a full investigation team employed at the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation. This team continues to conduct necessary follow up enquiries in respect of investigations, as well as investigations into separate complaints received regarding other alleged malpractices.

All members of An Garda Síochána allocated to such investigations have previous experience in the investigation of fraud related offences, and the investigations are augmented by experienced investigators from ODCE. There is close cooperation and ongoing liaison between An Garda Síochána and ODCE, with members of An Garda Síochána seconded to ODCE.

I am informed that three comprehensive investigation files have been submitted by the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation to the Law Officers, in December, 2010 and October, 2011. In addition, a supplementary investigation file was submitted in May. The files remain under consideration by the Director of Public Prosecutions, and directions are awaited. Following recent developments it is anticipated that a further investigation file will be submitted to the DPP.

Garda management is satisfied there are sufficient personnel and technical expertise available to assist in the various aspects of the ongoing investigations.

### **Citizenship Applications**

322. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason for the delay in processing an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; if he will provide a specific date by which this application will be determined; if the person should forward correspondence from their employer detailing the need for their application to be processed to enable them to continue to work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39874/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in August, 2010.

The application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. As the processing requirements and time taken to complete necessary checks vary from case to case, it is not possible to provide a specific date for determination of an individual application. However, I can inform the Deputy that good progress is being made in reducing the time taken to process the generality of applications and it is my objective that by the spring of next year, save in exceptional circumstances, persons applying for citizenship will be given a decision on their application within six months.

It is open to applicants for a certificate of naturalisation to submit whatever additional documentation they wish in support of their application. Any such documentation will be considered. However, it is important to reiterate that all applications are now being dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

### **Inter-Country Adoptions**

323. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding Garda clearance certificates in respect of inter-country adoptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39897/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides vetting services for a large number of organisations in Ireland registered with the Gardaí for a range of purposes including employing persons in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or training capacity to positions where they would have substantial, unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults. The vetting service is also provided in cases of fostering and adoption.

Where requests for vetting in respect of persons seeking to adopt a child are received, the GCVU is not generally made aware by the registered organisations concerned of specific details such as the country from which it is proposed to adopt.

In the case of the individual who is the subject of this Parliamentary Question, I am informed by the Garda authorities that it is not possible to check the status of an application for Garda vetting in the absence of the person's date of birth. Should this information become available the necessary checks will then be made.

I also wish to advise the Deputy that more general matters pertaining to inter-country adoption come within the remit of my colleague, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Ms Frances Fitzgerald, T.D.

#### **Private Rented Accommodation**

324. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will review a matter (details supplied) regarding living conditions. [39904/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As I noted in my reply to Question No. 178 of 24 November, 2011, which deals with the same matter, I am not in a position as Minister to provide legal advice in response to a Parliamentary Question on a particular case. However, I can indicate the following by way of general information.

Section 24 of the Multi-Unit Developments Act 2011 establishes a new Circuit Court jurisdiction for the resolution of disputes in relation to multi-unit developments. It means that if such a dispute cannot be resolved by means of mediation or other dispute resolution mechanism, the Court may, where it is satisfied that a right has been infringed or an obligation has not been discharged, make an order with a view to ensuring effective enforcement of the right or effective discharge of the obligation concerned. An order transferring control of an owners' management company from a developer to the apartment owners may be made where the Circuit Court is satisfied the developer has unreasonably refused to effect such a transfer.

#### **Garda Ombudsman Commission**

325. **Deputy Michael McCarthy** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will outline in detail the full remuneration packages arranged for the three new members of the Garda Ombudsman Commission, specifying in total the amount set to be paid to each individual each year, including gross annual income, expenses, bonus related payments and any other entitlements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39916/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission consists of one Chairperson and two members as provided for in section 65 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The terms and conditions relating to remuneration are determined by the Government at the time of appointment or reappointment.

The remuneration of the Chairperson has been set at Deputy Commissioner level of An Garda Síochána. The remuneration of the two members which was previously set at Deputy Commissioner level of An Garda Síochána has now been reduced to Assistant Secretary level.

No provision for bonus-related payments have been allowed for in their contracts. The three Commissioners may avail of Civil Service agreed travel and subsistence rates in connection with their work.

The salary levels of the Commissioners reflect their responsibilities and the importance of securing the most appropriate people for these positions.

### **Residency Permits**

326. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the current or expected position in respect of an application for residency in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39924/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy was granted permission to remain in the State on 4 October, 2005 under the revised arrangements for the non-EEA parents of children born in Ireland prior to 1 January, 2005, commonly known as the IBC/05 Scheme. This permission to remain was renewed in 2007 and in 2010, and is currently valid to 25 June, 2013. I am also advised by the Citizenship Division of the INIS that an application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in September, 2011. This application is currently being processed with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision as expeditiously as possible. The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

### **Comprehensive Review of Expenditure**

327. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which the comprehensive review of expenditure for the justice Vote group was presented to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39931/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Comprehensive Review of Expenditure Report for the Justice Vote Group was submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on the 7 July, 2011.

### **Garda Stations**

328. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he received a report from the Garda Commissioner containing a list of Garda stations proposed for closure or change of opening times; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39932/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** On 1 November 2011, I received, from the Garda Commissioner, a draft policing plan for 2012 which included a number of recommendations for Garda Station closures and reduced opening hours.

### Legal Aid Service

329. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the details of each of the solicitors and barristers who received payments for legal aid during each of the past three years; and the amounts each individual received for their services. [39946/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I wish to inform the Deputy that, while the information requested has been collated, it was so voluminous in nature that I have made arrangements to have it delivered directly to him at the Houses of the Oireachtas.

### Equality Issues

330. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of the scoping paper prepared by him with regard to a review of equality infrastructure and policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39947/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Scoping Study by PA Consulting which was commissioned by the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs in 2010 was published on my Department's website on 13 October 2011. As the Deputy will be aware, the Government has agreed that the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority be merged to form an integrate human rights and equality commission for the State. I have established a Working Group to advise me on practical arrangements in that regard and the Scoping Study is one of a number of reports and submissions made available to the Group to assist them in their work.

### Proposed Legislation

331. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of his proposals for a family leave Bill to transpose the new EU parental leave directive and consolidate existing legislation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39948/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** My Department is working on detailed proposals to transpose the EU Directive concerned and to consolidate all existing family leave legislation in one Act. These proposals are being prepared in consultation with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, which currently has responsibility for carer's leave. I will bring my proposals to Government once the necessary preparatory work has been completed within the Department.

332. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide the details of any proposals to amend the Equality Acts through a civil law (miscellaneous provisions) Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39949/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I would refer the Deputy to the amendments made to equality legislation in the recently-enacted Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2011. While equality legislation is kept under continuous review, I have no plans currently for additional technical amendments to this legislation of the type made in the 2011 Miscellaneous Provisions Act. The amalgamation of the Human Rights Commission and the Equality Authority will require legislation, which will, *inter alia*, amend the Equal Status and Employment Equality Acts. I have established a Working Group to advise me on practical arrangements in relation to the amalgamation. I understand that the group will finalise its work early in the New Year, after which draft Heads of the necessary legislation that have been prepared within the Department can be finalised and submitted to Government.

### National Disability Strategy

333. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which a national disability strategy recession plan he received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39950/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I understand that the National Disability Strategy Recession Plan to which the deputy refers was a commitment in the Programme of the previous Government and that it was not finalised before that administration left office. However, I can inform the Deputy that the current Programme for Government commits to publishing, “following wide consultation, a realistic implementation plan for the National Disability Strategy (NDS), including sectoral plans with achievable time scales and targets within available resources and ensuring whole-of-government involvement and monitoring of the Strategy, in partnership with the disability sector”. As the Minister with responsibility for disability, in line with this commitment, I have established and am personally chairing a new National Disability Strategy Implementation Group, which held its inaugural meeting on 30 November. The NDSIG will develop and implement the required Implementation Plan for the NDS over the lifetime of the Government.

*Question No. 334 answered with Question No. 296.*

### Migrant Integration Policy

335. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans for co-ordination of migrant integration policy; and his plans for the ministerial council on migrant integration and the cross-departmental group on integration. [39952/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The functions of the Office for the Promotion of Migrant Integration in my Department include leading and coordinating work interdepartmentally. To that end, a cross-departmental groups exists and will meet as and when required. I will decide on the future of the Ministerial Council on Migrant Integration shortly.

### Citizenship Applications

336. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the circumstances of an application for citizenship in respect of a person (details supplied); the position regarding same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39956/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Citizenship Division of the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that a valid application for a certificate of naturalisation was received from the person referred to by the Deputy in April, 2010. I can inform the Deputy that the application is at an advanced stage of processing and will be submitted to me for decision shortly. The granting of Irish citizenship through naturalisation is a privilege and an honour which confers certain rights and entitlements not only within the State but also at European Union level and it is important that appropriate procedures are in place to preserve the integrity of the process.

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

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consider using the e-mail service except in cases where the response from INIS is, in the Deputy's view, inadequate or too long awaited.

### **Garda Stations**

337. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality when the decision was taken to close a Garda station (details supplied) in County Cork; the reason for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39966/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** On the 5 December I announced plans, prepared by the Commissioner under the draft policing plan for 2012 for the closure of 31 Garda stations throughout the country, including the Garda Station referred to by the Deputy, and for a reduction in the public opening hours of 10 Garda stations in the Dublin Metropolitan Region. In making his recommendations, the Garda Commissioner reviewed all aspects of the Garda Síochána's policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the operation of Garda stations, both in terms of opening hours and possible closures. In addition, all Divisional Officers were asked to assess the level of activity in each Garda Station in their area. Commenting on the closures, the Commissioner said that the Garda Síochána had decided that resources could be better deployed and a more effectively used on the frontline if these particular stations no longer had to be staffed and maintained. The Garda Commissioner has reiterated the commitment of An Garda Síochána to providing a professional and effective service to the community. In the coming months local Garda management, in places where a station is going to close, will consult with local communities to determine how best to continue to deliver a policing service in their area.

### **Criminal Prosecutions**

338. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding the case of a person (details supplied). [39998/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that following an investigation of an incident, a person was arrested, charged with assault and convicted following a plea of guilty. The court ordered compensation to be paid to the injured party, and I understand this was done. I am also informed that subsequently civil proceedings instituted by the injured party were settled before coming to court. Where an offence is disclosed, the matter is investigated by An Garda Síochána and an investigation file prepared for the law officers, who, in the exercise of their independent role, determine the matter of criminal charges against any person. The incident referred to was fully investigated and brought before the criminal courts, where a conviction was secured. As the Deputy is aware, the courts are, subject only to the Constitution and the law, independent in the exercise of their judicial functions, and it is not open to me to comment on or intervene in any way in the conduct of, or decision in, any individual court case.

### **Garda Stations**

339. **Deputy John Lyons** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality further to his decision to close 31 Garda stations, if he will outline the basis for deciding on these particular stations; the person or body that took these decisions; the criteria which applied in respect of these decisions; the consultation, if any, which took place with Garda representative organisations; if he will outline the way these decisions will impact on staff working at the 31 stations and when they will be notified of same; and if he will engage with Garda personnel as a matter of urgency to address their many concerns in this regard. [40001/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Each year the Garda Commissioner prepares a Policing plan which must be submitted to me for approval and any plans the Commissioner has in relation to the closure of Garda Stations must be detailed in that annual policing plan. As the Deputy is aware, the 2012 policing plan provides for the closure of 31 Garda stations throughout the country and the formal closure of a further eight non-operational stations. Details of these developments were formally conveyed to organisations representing staff interests in An Garda Síochána shortly before they were publicly announced. In making his recommendations, the Garda Commissioner reviewed all aspects of the Garda Síochána's policing model, including the deployment of personnel, the utilisation of modern technologies and the operation of Garda stations, both in terms of opening hours and possible closures. In addition, all Divisional Officers were asked to assess the level of activity in each Garda Station in their area. Garda management will continue to engage with the organisations representing staff interests on how this decision will be implemented, and there are mechanisms in place in An Garda Síochána to facilitate discussions on any concerns their members may have.

### Departmental Properties

340. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Defence the plans if any he has for the future use of a property (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39673/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Defence property portfolio is kept under review to ensure the most effective use of military resources having regard to the roles assigned by Government to the Defence Forces. The property referred to is surplus to military requirements and has been earmarked for disposal. The Chief State Solicitors Office has been instructed by my Department to prepare the necessary documentation for its sale by public tender.

### Legal Advice

341. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Defence if he will provide an update in respect of an issue (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40002/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The position is that I have sought legal advice from the Attorney General in respect of a number of matters that arise in the context of considering the issue raised by the Deputy and as soon as a response is received to these I will consider the matter further.

### Ministerial Appointments

342. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39387/11]

343. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Defence the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he or she reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time he or she was appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39404/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 342 and 343 together.

In my role as Minister for Defence I have not engaged the services of any ministerial advisors. I have however engaged the services of a personal assistant who assists me in constituency matters. The annual salary attached to this post is €56,060 which is in accordance with Department of Finance guidelines concerning ministerial appointments.

### Overseas Missions

344. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if his attention has been drawn to any further requirements in the terms of Defence Forces deployment on peace-keeping or peace enforcement issues; if he will outline the locations requiring such ongoing attention; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39483/11]

346. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the number and location of overseas deployment of the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39485/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 344 and 346 together.

Ireland is currently contributing 529 Defence Forces personnel to 11 different missions throughout the world. Full details of all personnel currently serving overseas are listed in the tabular statement below.

The main overseas missions, in which Defence Forces personnel are currently deployed, are the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) with 455 personnel, the NATO-led International Security presence (KFOR) in Kosovo with 12 personnel, the EU Training Mission (EUTM) Somalia with 7 personnel, the EU-led operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with 7 personnel, and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan with 7 personnel. Participation by the Defence Forces in these missions is subject to annual review by the Government and ongoing review by the Minister for Defence. As regards participation in UNIFIL, which is our largest mission, Ireland's participation is expected to continue for 3 to 4 years.

Ireland receives requests, from time to time, in relation to participation in various missions and these are considered on a case-by-case basis. When considering any particular request, the existence of realistic objectives and a clear mandate, which has the potential to contribute to a political solution, consideration of how the mission relates to the priorities of Irish foreign policy and the degree of risk involved are amongst the factors considered.

Apart from the recent deployment of a battalion to UNIFIL and the appointment of Colonel Michael Beary in August 2011 to the post of Mission Commander for EUTM Somalia, no other requests have been received at this time.

Members of the Permanent Defence Force Serving Overseas  
as of 1st December 2011

1	UN Missions	
	(i) UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) HQ	10
	UNIFIL 105 Infantry Battalion	437
	Sector West HQ	8
	(ii) UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation) — Israel, Syria and Lebanon	12

Members of the Permanent Defence Force Serving Overseas as of 1st December 2011		
	(iii) MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara)	3
	(iv) MONUSCO (United Nations Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)	3
	(v) UNOCI (United Nations Mission in Ivory Coast)	2
	Total	475
	<i>UN Mandated Missions</i>	
	(vi) EUFOR (EU-led Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina)	7
	(vii) EUTM Somalia (EU-led Training Mission in Uganda)	7
	(viii) KFOR (International Security Presence in Kosovo) — HQ	12
	(ix) ISAF (International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan)	7
	Total Number of Personnel Serving with UN Missions	508
2	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)	
	(i) OSCE Mission to Bosnia & Herzegovina	2
	(ii) OSCE Mission in Belgrade — Serbia	1
	(iii) Staff Officer, High Level Planning Group, Vienna	1
	Total Number of Personnel Serving OSCE	4
3	EU Military Staff	
	Brussels	7
4	Military Representatives/Advisers/Staff	
	(i) Military Adviser, Permanent Mission to UN, New York	1
	(ii) Military Adviser, Irish Delegation to OSCE, Vienna	1
	(iii) Staff Appointments, Irish Delegation to OSCE, Vienna	1
	(iv) Military Representative to EU (Brussels)	4
	(v) Liaison Office of Ireland, NATO/PfP (Brussels)	2
	(vi) Military Representative to NATO/PfP Co-ordination Cell/Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), Mons, Belgium	1
	Total Number of Defence Forces Personnel Serving Overseas	529

*Question No. 345 answered with Question No. 59.*

*Question No. 346 answered with Question No. 344.*

### **Defence Forces Facilities**

347. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the adequacy of the various military installations throughout the country as being adequate to meet requirements in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39486/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Department is engaged in an ongoing capital building programme designed to modernise and enhance the living, training, operational and accommodation facilities available to members of the Defence Forces. The programme focuses mainly on infrastructural projects comprising the construction of new buildings and the refurbishment of existing buildings. The gross capital provision for the coming year is €9.0m. The Estimates also provide for the carryover from 2011 of €500k.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

Some €2.8m of the capital budget has been allocated to provide for the upgrade and replacement of existing IT hardware and associated licensing support costs. The balance of the provision, amounting to some €6.7m, has been allocated to the building programme for the Defence Forces.

I am satisfied that existing military installations, and the financial resources allocated for 2012, are adequate to meet the ongoing needs of members of the Defence Forces.

### **Defence Forces Training**

348. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the modernisation and upgrading of the Defence Forces in line with modern requirements and international developments in view of the likelihood of Irish troops serving abroad alongside other defence forces; the extent to which training and equipment has been standardised for such operations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39487/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Government White Paper on Defence of 2000 set out as a fundamental objective the development of an affordable and sustainable conventional Defence Forces, with an appropriate investment in training and equipment necessary to carry out all assigned roles. Since the publication of the White Paper and subsequent Strategy Statements, the Defence Forces have undertaken a continuous modernisation process, and the production of the ten-year Equipment Development Plan (2009-2018) aims at prioritising equipment procurement to ensure that the Defence Forces have the most modern and effective range of protective equipment, weaponry and training available. The Equipment Development Plan is regularly reviewed to ensure that Defence Forces procurement is kept in line with new technology, and where possible, cooperation is undertaken with other like minded countries in achieving economies of scale.

Preparations for Defence Forces operational deployments and the development of military capabilities have necessitated coherence in a number of key planning areas, particularly an equipment procurement plan complemented by demanding training programmes which ensures interoperability with other defence forces deployed on UN-mandated missions abroad. The Defence Forces have been able to bench-mark the success of this interoperability through their deployments with the EU Battlegroups and extensive deployments on UN-mandated missions abroad.

I am advised that military training techniques are up to date in all respects. Defence Forces training plans are structured to provide the capabilities needed to execute the roles assigned to them by Government. The challenges of preparing military units for participation in international peace support operations constitute the major dimension of Defence Forces collective training. The primary focus of this training is the attainment of a capability for military interoperability in order to conduct peace support operations to international standards. Training standards in the Defence Forces are constantly benchmarked against best international practice and Defence Forces personnel have full access to the best international training standards available.

The Defence Forces deployment to EUFOR CHAD/CAR, later with MINURCAT and now in Lebanon proved that the Defence Forces having trained to a very high standard, were able to operate at a very high tempo where our equipment and personnel proved equal to other troop contributing nations.

### Defence Forces Strength

349. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the number of posts at all levels vacant or waiting to be filled throughout the Defence Forces; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39488/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The following table outlines the number of vacancies in the Permanent Defence Force by rank. The number of vacancies set out in the table is based on the current Employment Control Framework of 10,000 all ranks in the Permanent Defence Force versus the strength of 9,460 as at 30 November 2011, the latest date for which figures are available. As the Deputy will be aware a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces will now be initiated resulting from the Government decision to maintain the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500. This re-organisation, which will prioritise “front line” service delivery, will have an impact on the number of vacancies in each rank. I have asked the Chief of Staff and Secretary General to bring forward detailed re-organisation proposals for my consideration. The effect of the changes cannot be determined until the proposals are considered and decisions made.

Rank	ECF Strength	Total Current Strength	Vacancies
Lt. Gen	1	1	0
Maj. Gen	2	1	1
Brig. Gen	9	7	2
Colonel	43	35	8
Lt. Col	152	138	14
Comdt	370	311	59
Capt	494	461	33
Lt*	280	361	0
Sgt Maj	48	39	9
BQMS	48	34	14
CS	260	190	70
CQMS	280	213	67
Sgt	1425	1206	219
Cpl	1825	1755	70
Private**	4763	4708	55
Total	10,000	9460	621

\*Lt figure includes 2/Lt

\*\* Private figure includes recruits and Cadets

### Defence Forces Equipment

350. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which regular reviews take place of the need for modernising and upgrading equipment including aircraft and or training in the Air Corps; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39489/11]

351. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which regular reviews take place of the need for modernising and upgrading equipment including sea-going vessels and or training in the Naval Service; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39490/11]

352. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence the extent to which regular reviews take place of the need for modernising and upgrading equipment and or training in the Army; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39491/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 350 to 352, inclusive, together.

In the current economic situation, the acquisition of defensive equipment and training takes place on a strictly prioritised basis to ensure that the Defence Forces can carry out their roles at home and overseas. A particular focus is maintained on ensuring that modern and effective equipment is available for overseas peace support operations as is the case with the UNIFIL deployment in Lebanon.

Investment in new equipment and upgrading of existing equipment for the Defence Forces is provided for under various Subheads of the Defence Vote relating to defensive equipment, mechanical transport, aircraft, Naval Service ships and stores, communications and Information Technology equipment. The provision for defensive equipment for 2011 allows for the acquisition of a restricted range of priority equipment such as Chemical Detection Equipment, Body Armour, Force Protection Equipment, Rifle enhancement and Communication Equipment in order to maintain the Defence Forces capabilities. The 2011 provision also allows for the acquisition of ammunition needed to maintain stocks given the training and overseas requirements throughout the year.

The priority in the coming years will be on maintaining the capability of the Defence Forces to deliver effective services across all of the roles assigned by Government.

One of the most significant allocations provided for this year, and which will be required in the coming years, relates to the Naval Service subhead which provides for the provision of two new Off Shore Patrol vessels, the first of which is to be delivered in 2014.

With regard to the Air Corps, the equipment and aircraft available are of a high standard and are maintained by the Air Corps in accordance with best practice. The main expenditure in the Air Corps in 2011 relates to the maintenance and Power by the Hour contracts set up to keep the fleet fully operational.

Training is at the core of all things military. I am satisfied with the ongoing actions to keep military training techniques up to date in all respects and that Defence Forces training plans are structured to provide the capabilities needed to execute the roles assigned by Government.

### **Search and Rescue Service**

353. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Defence if he is satisfied regarding the availability of resources for air, sea and or other rescue missions, on and off shore; the extent to which backup facilities and equipment is available in such instances; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39492/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Irish Coast Guard has overall responsibility for the provision of search and rescue services within the Irish search and rescue region. In accordance with the roles assigned to them in the White Paper on Defence, the Air Corps and the Naval Service are committed to providing support to the civil authorities including in relation to search and rescue. In this regard, the Air Corps and the Naval Service provide support to the Coast Guard as the need arises and within their available capabilities. A Service Level Agreement is in place with the Irish Coast Guard which sets out the search and rescue assistance that the Air Corps and Naval Service can provide, within their capabilities, to the Coast Guard. The provision of onshore assistance by Air Corps helicopters for mountain rescue

operations is covered in the agreement as is the fixed wing top cover by the Air Corps Casa aircraft to Coast Guard helicopters offshore. Assistance that is provided by the Naval Service to the Coast Guard during maritime search and rescue and recovery operations is also included in the SLA.

I am satisfied that both the Air Corps and Navy have the necessary resources to meet all their operational requirements including the provision of search and rescue assistance to the Coast Guard.

### **Defence Forces Strength**

354. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Defence the bodies that were consulted in advance of his proposal to reduce the number of Army brigades to two; the process to achieve this reduction; the envisaged savings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39742/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am pleased to say that following the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, the Government decided to maintain the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 9,500 personnel. This recognises the significant modernisation that has been achieved to date and reflects the Government's intention that the Defence Forces retain the capacity to operate effectively across all of the assigned roles within the restricted financial allocation. In response to this revised strength ceiling of 9,500, it is necessary to undertake a major re-organisation of the Defence Forces encompassing a reduction in the number of Army Brigades from three to two. The Chief of Staff was consulted in this regard. I have asked the Chief of Staff and the Secretary General of the Department of Defence to bring forward detailed proposals for my consideration.

The reduction in the strength of the PDF to 9,500 personnel will deliver sustainable savings. The re-organisation is a response to this reduction and is not intended as a cost saving measure in its own right. The primary focus is to free up the maximum number of military personnel from administrative and support tasks. In short the re-organisation is about maintaining operational outputs and capabilities to best effect, within a reduced strength.

### **Defence Forces Property**

355. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Defence if he will outline in detail the oft-claimed savings that would accrue to his Department on the closure of Dún Uí Néill Military Barracks in Cavan town; the timeframe for his planned closure of the facility; the details of the planned transfer of the serving soldiers attached to Dún Uí Néill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39871/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** As I have said previously annual savings in respect of utilities, security duty allowances and maintenance amount to approximately €1.3 million per annum in respect of the four barracks being closed. In relation to O' Neill Barracks Cavan these savings amount to approximately €0.35m based on the most recent figures available. In addition to the cost of utilities each barracks requires a security detail and additional further personnel are tied up on purely administrative duties connected to the management of the particular barracks. Because maintaining barrack security can require around the clock cover, a much larger pool of personnel is required. Therefore, several hundred additional man years will become available for operational duties. At a minimum, the value of this efficiency gain across the four locations will exceed €5 million per year. The consolidation of the Defence Forces formations into a smaller number of locations is a key objective in the ongoing defence modernisation programme and has been recommended in many reports over the past number

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of years. This was a key consideration of Government in addressing this issue as releasing personnel from security and support functions enables the operational capacity of the Defence Forces to be maintained notwithstanding the fall in strength.

O' Neill Barracks will close on 30th March 2012 with the personnel serving there being re-located to Custume Barracks, Athlone.

### **Defence Forces Recruitment**

356. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Defence if there is a recruitment drive in the Army at the moment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39879/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Government has decided to accept my recommendations that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force will be maintained at 9,500. I believe that this is the optimum level required to fulfil all roles assigned by Government. I am advised by the Military Authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force at 30 November, 2011, the latest date for which details are available, was 9,460 comprising 7,671 Army, 806 Air Corps and 983 Naval Service.

Targeted recruitment has continued in 2011 to maintain the appropriate level of Defence Forces personnel and capabilities. It is my intention that targeted recruitment will continue in 2012, within the resource envelope allocated to Defence, so as to maintain the Government approved strength of the Defence Forces. There is currently an intake of recruits underway to the Curragh the majority of which were enlisted on 5 December.

### **Defence Forces Property**

357. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence if he will ensure that the artifacts and memorabilia based in Columb Barracks, Mullingar, County Westmeath, will remain in Mullingar and not be transferred to Athlone; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39959/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Whilst the process of vacating Columb Barracks Mullingar has commenced, no decision has yet been made in relation to any artifacts or memorabilia located at the barracks. This matter will be addressed over the coming weeks in consultation with the military authorities.

### **Ministerial Appointments**

358. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39383/11]

360. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39400/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 358 and 360 together.

In response to the Deputy's question, Áine Kilroy was appointed as my Special Advisor on 18/4/2011 and was placed on the first point of the salary scale appropriate for the position i.e. €80,051. Her salary has not changed since she was appointed. Ms Kilroy provides general policy advice to me on a range of areas including implementation of the Programme for Government.

Fergal Leamy was employed as my special adviser from 11/4/2011 up to his date of resignation on 9/9/2011. Mr Leamy was on an annual salary of €130,000 and his position remains vacant.

The Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour excludes staff holding temporary unestablished positions and whose tenure is coterminous with that of the relevant Minister from the restrictions on engaging in political activity as set out in section 5 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour.

In line with Government policy, the staffing complement of my office and that of the Minister of State has been reduced. In that context, I have assigned additional responsibilities to those within my allocated complement of staff where necessary and appropriate.

### **Grant Payments**

359. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 540 of 22 November 2011, when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their agri-environment options scheme payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39399/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named was paid 75% of 2010 entitlement under the Agri-environmental Options Scheme (AEOS) amounting to €434.02 on the 7th December 2011. The person named has an area based overpayment against which the balancing payment under AEOS of €144.67 will be offset.

*Question No. 360 answered with Question No. 358.*

### **Horticulture Sector**

361. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the progress made in expanding the horticulture sector here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39416/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Horticultural industry consists of a number of different sectors, each of which has differing problems and needs. In terms of fresh fruit and vegetables, Irish self sufficiency levels vary greatly depending on the product in question. For example Ireland is well over 1000% self-sufficient in mushrooms but many fruit types can't be grown in Ireland due to our climate. Overall Ireland is circa 85% self sufficient in vegetables (including potatoes) but the corresponding figure for fruit is much lower. We are also net importers of nursery stock and flower crops.

Following the publication of Harvest 2020, a Horticultural Action Group was established and this Group made a number of specific recommendations. Many of the recommendations address general issues of competitiveness, costs of production and availability of credit which the Government is tackling right across the economy, whilst my colleague Minister of State, Mr Shane McEntee has been involved in progressing those recommendations which come within the remit of my Department. He has had many meetings with different elements of the industry stressing the need for greater co-operation in order that we can compete against imports, whilst meeting the demands of the retailers.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

Within my Department, we have two main means of promoting the industry. In its 2007 reform of the common organisation of the market for fruit and vegetables, the EU made further provision for financial assistance to producers grouping, on a voluntary basis, to form recognised Producer Organisations (POs) under the EU Scheme of Aid for Producer Organisations in the Fruit and Vegetables Sector. The POs play a vital role in supporting Irish producers of fruit and vegetables. The strengthening of their role is a core part of the EU strategy for improving the competitiveness of the fruit and vegetable sector in the future and was one of the main recommendations for the horticultural industry in the Harvest 2020 Report. My Department continues to encourage growers to become actively involved in Producer Organisations.

Through the Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector, my Department continues to provide grant aid for horticultural growers who are making capital investments in specialist plant and equipment. The main objectives of the scheme are to improve the quality of products, to facilitate environmentally friendly practices and to promote diversification of on-farm activities in response to market demand. Under the 2011 Scheme, my Department approved 157 projects.

I am pleased to note that, in the recent Budget, €3.25 million was allocated to the Scheme for 2012 and applications under the scheme will be accepted shortly. The grant aid covers all areas of the horticultural industry and will assist in funding investments of approximately €8 million in 2012.

### **Grant Payments**

362. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39433/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 9 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payment to issue on 8 December, directly to the nominated bank account of the applicant.

363. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39437/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named registered seven beef breed animals under the 2010 Suckler Welfare Scheme. Payment has already been made in respect of five of the animals. My Department has raised some queries in relation to one of the animals and a letter issued to the applicant on 7 December in this regard.

According to the information provided by the person named, meal was provided to the animal in question on 24 September 2010 and the calf was weaned on 22 October 2010. My Department's records indicate that the dam of this animal was moved to the mart on 19 August 2010. Under the Terms and Conditions of the Scheme, the movement of a cow from the herd before its calf is weaned renders it ineligible for payment.

364. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39454/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 16 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payment to issue on 6 December, directly to the nominated bank account of the applicant.

365. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39455/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 29 April 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payment to issue on 8 December, directly to the nominated bank account of the applicant.

366. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39457/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 19 April 2011, following processing of which over-claims were identified on two of the parcels declared. The person named has been written to in this regard and, on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payment issuing shortly thereafter.

### **Irish Horseracing Industry**

367. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the prospects for the thoroughbred industry in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39518/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am keenly aware of the significance of the horse racing and breeding sector. This an industry in which we are world leaders. It provides significant employment, foreign direct investment and export sales with Irish thoroughbreds exported worldwide.

I want to ensure that this sector's world-class standing and reputation is protected and maintained into the future.

As a clear signal of intent and despite our current very serious financial difficulties the Government last week retained the annual allocation to the Horse and Greyhound Fund.

The Deputy will be aware that, yesterday, I announced I will, shortly, be commissioning an external review of the structures and legislation governing the industry. The 1994 Irish Horseracing Act and the 2001 Horse and Greyhound Racing Act achieved structural reform but I believe the reform now needs to be completed to ensure that governance and administrative procedures are modernised and fully effective in supporting a world class industry into the future.

In taking this action I am acutely aware of the huge effort and commitment which has been given by so many in bringing the industry to where it is today. But now we need to build on this foundation and provide the framework that will provide further progress.

In order to allow the completion of this review I asked the current Chairman of Horse Racing Ireland Denis Brosnan to continue in his role until the end of November 2012. I am

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delighted Mr Brosnan has agreed to do this. His experience and advice will be of considerable value in the year ahead. I believe it is vitally important for the sector that we all work together constructively in the months ahead in order to have an infrastructure in place to grow and develop this great industry while maintaining the pre-eminent position of Ireland on the international stage.

### **Sheep Industry**

368. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the prospects for the sheep industry in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39523/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Irish sheep sector continues to show positive signs of renewal. Last year saw a halt in the decline of sheep numbers. The results of the Crops and Livestock Survey for June 2011 (provisional estimates) confirm that, after successive years of decline in our national flock, the trend has been reversed with our total sheep numbers increasing by 3.5% on the previous year to 4.8 million. Of significance was the 4% rise in the number of younger ewes being used for breeding, which reflects a sense of confidence amongst farmers in terms of rebuilding breeding stock numbers which will ultimately lead to an increase in through-put. Whilst it is still early to provide an accurate estimate for the 2012 lamb crop, it is estimated that it will be up in the order of 1-2%. The Grassland Sheep Scheme is proving to be a valuable support mechanism in terms of improving income and confidence in the Sector.

Added to the rise in sheep numbers, average prices to date for the sheepmeat sector are also up by 9% on last year and the outlook for the sector in 2012 is both upbeat and positive. Against this backdrop of renewed confidence at producer level the market outlook remains promising for the Irish sheep sector. Bord Bia anticipates that prices will continue to hold firm in 2012 given the reduced availability of New Zealand lamb entering the EU market. Traditionally, New Zealand has played an influential role in determining sheep meat prices in Europe. However on account of a fall in their domestic production, coupled with a 40% increase in average export prices, New Zealand lamb prices are almost at an equivalent level to Irish sheep meat prices.

2012 looks set to remain strong, however with ongoing tight supplies, much will depend on demand levels in key markets such as France and UK and on the industry's ability to meet the needs of the market.

### **Dairy Sector**

369. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the prospects for the dairy sector in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39525/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I believe the prospects for the dairy sector are very positive in 2012 and beyond. Dairy markets have recovered fully from the 2009 price collapse, with EU and World Markets performing strongly this year, and the short term outlook remains positive. This market buoyancy is good for Ireland, as we export over 80% of our dairy production. Last year exports of Irish dairy products and ingredients were valued at some €2.3 billion, an increase of 17% from 2009.

The effect of this recovery can be seen in the average milk price paid to Irish producers. In 2010 this was over 30 cent per litre, well above the 2009 average of 24 cent. This year farmers are currently receiving 34 cent per litre for their milk.

In recent years the dairy sector has experienced extreme volatility in product prices, primarily caused by an imbalance of supply and demand in international markets. While there will always be short term fluctuations in dairy prices, it is important to remember that the medium term prospects for global dairy markets are good. Growth in global population and wealth is forecast to stimulate strong levels of demand for dairy products, and I am confident that the Irish dairy sector is well placed to benefit from this additional demand.

### **Grant Payments**

370. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when payments will issue to farmers under the agri-environment options scheme. [39543/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under EU Regulations governing the Agri-environment Options Scheme (AEOS) and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. This administration check has been completed and payments under AEOS in respect of 2010 commenced in September. My Department is now dealing with applications on which queries and issues arose in the course of the administrative checking process and further payments are issuing on an ongoing basis as queries are resolved. The administrative checks have also been carried out in respect of 2011 and those payments will commence shortly.

I continue to give high priority to the processing and payment of AEOS applications and to the elimination of all unnecessary delays.

371. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm and disadvantaged area payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39569/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 18 April 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payments under both Schemes to issue to the applicant in the coming days.

### **Rural Environment Protection Scheme**

372. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding REP scheme 4 payment due in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39575/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2009 and received payments for the first two years of the contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and accordingly is subject to EU Regulation which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. The administrative checks in relation to the 2011 payments have been finalised and payments have now commenced. However, the person named was selected for an on-farm inspection and following the completion of this inspection the file is being processed further with a view to early payment in respect of 2011.

### Grant Payments

373. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding an outstanding single farm payment and area aid disadvantaged payment due in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39576/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 5th April 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility/Cross Compliance Inspection.

This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases, including this case, amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. This work is ongoing and every effort is being made to complete the processing of those who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

### Fishing Industry Development

374. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the current EU fish quotas across all categories that Ireland currently enjoys; if he is seeking to increase these quotas; the progress made on this issue to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39616/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The levels of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and ultimately the quotas for Ireland in 2012 will be determined at the December Council of Fisheries Ministers being held on December 15th and 16th in Brussels.

A summary of the main 2011 quotas for Irish fishermen are detailed in the table below.

The European Commission proposals for 2012 are based on formal advice received from ICES (the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas), and also on the views of the STECF (the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries), which gives the Commission its views on the economic and social impacts of the scientific advice. The advice shows that many stocks where Ireland has a quota are not in a healthy biological state and therefore are in need of urgent remedial action. The Commission has proposed cuts of 15% and 25% in many stocks that they deem to be in data poor situations. At the October Fisheries Council in Luxembourg, the Council considered TAC and quota proposals for the Baltic Sea. In that context, and in response to concerns that I and other colleagues expressed about the overall policy being pursued, Commissioner Damanaki gave a commitment to rethink her previously stated policy of applying automatic reductions of 15 or 25% to a swathe of stocks in the absence of full scientific advice. The Commission now appears receptive to looking at the scientific advice on a case by case basis, which is what I have been advocating. She did, however, state that she intends to implement, as a matter of principle, a level of cut to all stocks without full scientific advice, regardless of the indications of available data and advice.

I have consistently stated that wherever the scientific advice indicates a need for a cut in TAC levels I will accept this measure. The Sustainability Impact Assessment on TACs and quotas for 2012, which I presented to the Dail on 23rd November, agrees with the need to cut the quotas for some of the stocks in 2012, though the level of these cuts is queried in some cases, while in others there is clear scientific data to suggest that a cut is unwarranted. In other cases, the available evidence is that an increase in the TAC can be justified.

There is a high cost from a social and economic perspective when quota cuts are proposed and we have to be satisfied that in every case these cuts are justifiable. Fishing ports and whole communities all around our coast are dependent on fisheries for their very survival.

We need to use all sources of verifiable science when determining our decisions on fishing levels and try to strike the right balance to ensure the health of the fishing resource and the wider ecosystem with the economic and social realities of our network of rural coastal communities. I will be making every effort to ensure, at the Fisheries Council this week, we deliver on these objectives.

Summary of main Irish quotas and total TAC for 2011

Demersal	AREA	Total EU TAC (tonnes)	Ireland's quotas (tonnes)
Cod	Norwegian waters of I and II	14,127	211
Cod	VIb Vb XII and XIV	78	17
Cod	VIa Vb	180	40
Cod	VIIa	506	333
Cod	VIIb-c,e-k, VIII, IX and X; EC waters of CEECAF 34.1.1	4,023	825
Haddock	EC waters of VIb; international waters of XII and XIV	3,748	295
Haddock	EC waters of Vb and VIa	2,005	328
Haddock	VIIb-k, VIII, IX and X; EC waters of CEECAF 34.1.1	13,316	2,959
Haddock	VIIa	1,317	570
Whiting	VI; EC waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV	323	97
Whiting	VIIa	118	68
Whiting	VIIb, VIIc, VIId, VIIe, VIIf, VIIg, VIIh and VIIk	16,568	5,250
Hake	VI and VII; EC waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV	30,900	1,704
Monkfish	VI; EC waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV	5,289	529
Monkfish	VII	32,292	2,447
Megrim	VI; EC waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV	3,233	419
Megrim	VII	18,300	3,025
Plaice	VI; EC waters of Vb ; international waters of XII and XIV	672	267
Plaice	VIIa	1,627	1,063
Plaice	VIIb and VIIc	76	61
Plaice	VIIf and VIIg	410	200
Plaice	VIIh, VIIj and VIIk	185	81
Common sole	VI; EC waters of Vb ; international waters of XII and XIV	58	46
Common sole	VIIa	390	73
Common sole	VIIb and VIIc	43	36
Common sole	VIIf and VIIg	1,241	39
Common sole	VIIh, VIIj, and VIIk	423	190
Norway lobster	VI; EC waters of Vb	13,681	185
Norway lobster	VII	21,759	8,025

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

Demersal	AREA	Total EU TAC (tonnes)	Ireland's quotas (tonnes)
Pollack	VI; EC waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV	385	54
Pollack	VII	13,082	999
Saithe	VI; EC waters of Vb; EC and international waters of XII and XIV	9,682	429
Saithe	VII, VIII, IX and X; EC waters of CECAF 34.1.1	3,240	1,500
Other		33,359	2,592
Total		246,636	34,957

Pelagic	AREA	TAC	Ireland
Herring	Vb and VIb; EC waters of VIaN (1)	21,755	3,286
Herring	VIIbc; VIaS (1)	4,471	4,065
Herring	VIIa (1)	5,040	1,312
Herring	VIIg(1), VIIh(1), VIIj(1) and VIIk (1)	13,200	11,407
Herring	EC, Norwegian and international waters of I and II	64,319	5,705
Mackerel	VI, VII, VIIa, VIIb, VIIc, VIId and VIIe; EC Vb; nonEC IIa; Int Wat XII and XIV	353,355	68,700
Horse mackerel	EC IIa, IVa, VI, VIIa-c, VIIe-k, VIIa,b,d,e Int Waters of Vb, XII, XIV	158,787	40,439
Horse mackerel	IVb, IVc, VIId	41,531	1,243
Blue whiting	EC Int Wat I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIIa, VIIb, VIIc, VIId, VIIe, XII and XIV	10,042	1,187
Greater silver smelt	EC and international waters of III and IV	1,176	8
Greater silver smelt	EC and international waters of V, VI and VII	4,691	331
Boarfish	(all waters)	33,000	22,227
Albacore	Atlantic Ocean N of 5N	27,917	3,554
Total		739,284	163,464

### Rural Environment Protection Scheme

375. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; the reason for the delay; the measures he will take to ensure this payment will be made before Christmas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39622/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named commenced REPS 4 in June 2008 and received payment for the first three years of the contract.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and accordingly is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Administrative checks in respect of 2011 payments have been finalised and I expect the 75% payment for 2011 to issue to the person named shortly.

### Grant Payments

376. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the single farm payment for 2011 will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Laois. [39624/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Issues have arisen regarding land declared by the person named in support of his claim under the Single Payment Scheme, pending resolution of which the payment in question cannot issue to the person named.

377. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm payment and area based payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Waterford; the reason for the delay; the measures he will take to ensure that this payment will be made prior to Christmas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39627/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 6th May 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection. This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases, including this case, amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. This work is ongoing and every effort is being made to complete the processing of those who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

378. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding farm payments in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39664/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 13 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payment to issue directly to the nominated bank account of the applicant in the coming days.

379. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive their area aid payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39665/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 21 April 2011. The 50% advance payment was issued to the applicant on 17 October 2011, while the 50% balancing payment issued on 1 December 2011.

380. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not received their single farm payment or area based payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39680/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 9 May 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

This inspection was completed and the results are now being processed.

In the vast majority of inspected cases, including this case, amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to farmers is kept up-to-date. This work is ongoing and every effort is being made to complete the processing of those who were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

381. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason outstanding payments still have not yet been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39682/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 11 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payments under both Schemes to issue in the coming days.

### **Turbary Rights**

382. **Deputy Paul J. Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will outline the current registered owner of a bog plot (details supplied); if he will state if this property was transferred on to an area as a result of two other pieces of turbary from another folio; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39683/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The first and second folios supplied are registered in the name of Bord na Mona. There is a dealing pending on both of these folios but they relate to the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The third folio appears to be registered in the name of the individual referred to. Appurtenant turbary rights are not mentioned on any of the three folios.

### **Pension Provisions**

383. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding payments in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39684/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person mentioned was awarded a lump sum and pension on his retirement on ill health grounds in 1982 in respect of his service in the Forest Service. As he was not a member of the Spouses and Children's Pension Scheme, his widow is not entitled to a spouse's pension under the terms of the Scheme. Any caretaking duties he subsequently carried out would have been on behalf of Coillte.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme**

384. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have received their 2011 disadvantaged area aid payments; the total amount paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39697/11]

385. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have not yet received their 2011 disadvantaged area aid payments; the total amount owed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39698/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 384 and 385 together.

The following tabular statement shows the position regarding applications and payments to County Kerry herd-owners under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme:

	Applications received	Applications paid	Value of payments
Kerry	7,845	7,369	€18,065,941

There are no delays in payments to farmers under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, in relation to which there is no regulatory payment date — however, it is generally recognised and indeed acknowledged in the Farmers' Charter, that a payment target of late September of the year in question is the most realistic.

Payments commenced, on target, on 22 September, with payments issuing to those farmers whose applications had been confirmed eligible for payment at that time. I can confirm that my Department has, in the interim, continued to pay individuals, as their cases became clear, with payment runs taking place twice a week. This is normal practise and will continue on an ongoing basis, as necessary. In this regard, while I am pleased to note that payments worth in excess of €212 million have issued to date, representing over 93% of applicants, I remain confident that the full budget for the Scheme will have been exhausted by year-end.

Where in-house checks reveal anomalies in applicants' applications, the necessary correspondence issues immediately. By replying to all such correspondence as quickly as possible farmers ensure the rapid resolution of issues, thereby allowing their payments to be made.

#### **Rural Environment Protection Scheme**

386. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have received their 2011 REP scheme payments; the total amount paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39699/11]

387. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have not yet received their 2011 REPS payments; the total amount owed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39701/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 386 and 387 together.

REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and is subject to EU regulation which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. These checks have been completed in respect of 2011 and payments have now commenced.

There are 2,117 REPS 4 participants in Co. Kerry of which 932 have been paid the first 75% instalment of the payment due in respect of 2011 leaving 1,185 cases remaining to be paid. Further payments are issuing on an ongoing basis and payment of the balancing 25% payment will commence shortly. My Department is also examining cases on which queries have arisen with a view to an early resolution and payment of all outstanding cases as quickly as possible.

#### **Single Farm Payments**

388. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have received their 2011 single farm payments; the total amount paid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39702/11]

389. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in County Kerry that have not yet received their 2011 single farm payments the total amount owed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39703/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 388 and 389 together.

Earlier this year, I successfully sought the approval of the Commissioner to have advance payments made. I am pleased to say that these payments started issuing, on target, on Monday, 17 October. To date, payments worth in excess of €1.162 billion have issued nationally to over 117,202 farmers, representing over 95% of eligible applicants. The following tabular statement shows the position regarding applications and payments to County Kerry herd-owners under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme:

Year	Applications received	Applications paid	Value of payments
2011	7,563	7,387	€57,544,524

As is clear, while the timing of all direct aid payments to farmers is crucial, it is the Single Farm Payment that is of most importance to farmers, given that it represents in excess of €1.2 billion of the €1.7 billion that is paid out in direct aid. The SFP forms a significant part of the annual income of all farmers in Ireland, in many cases is used to subsidise the running costs of the farming enterprise and is, therefore, greater than the net farm income.

#### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme**

390. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in receipt of the disadvantaged area payment in County Mayo; the cumulative amount received in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; and the way the proposed reductions will impact on each claimant. [39723/11]

391. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in receipt of the disadvantaged area payment in County Sligo; the cumulative amount received in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the way the proposed reductions will impact in each claimant. [39724/11]

392. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in receipt of the disadvantaged area payment in County Leitrim; the cumulative amount received in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the way the proposed reductions will impact in each claimant. [39725/11]

393. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in receipt of the disadvantaged area payment in County Roscommon; the cumulative amount received in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the way the proposed reductions will impact in each claimant. [39726/11]

394. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of farmers in receipt of the disadvantaged area payment in County Donegal; the cumulative amount received in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the way the proposed reductions will impact in each claimant. [39727/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 390 to 394, inclusive, together.

The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme is very important for this country, as the total area designated as disadvantaged is almost 75% of Ireland's total land area. From an economic perspective, the Scheme is particularly significant, contributing to the support of almost 100,000 applicants, whose ability to farm is restricted by the physical environment and, in particular, the impact of the prevailing wet cold climatic conditions.

However, in light of the recognised, ongoing difficulties in the public finances, savings had to be found in my Department's 2012 budget, in the context of which a decision was taken to limit the spend under the 2012 Scheme €190 million. To achieve this saving, priority is given to active farmers and a range of adjustments to the qualifying criteria are under consideration, including:

- increasing the minimum stocking density requirement, from 0.15 livestock units per hectare to 0.30 livestock units per hectare;
- doubling the minimum retention period from three to six months;
- excluding horses from the stocking density calculation;
- providing for reduced rates of aid where applicants hold both eligible and ill-eligible land (non-Disadvantaged Areas land);
- excluding land located more than 80 kilometres from an applicant's main holding where that main holding is situated outside the Disadvantaged Areas.

I would emphasise that these changes are not yet confirmed and their potential impact is still being considered, therefore is not possible to give numbers of farmers affected. Furthermore, given that the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme is part of the wider Rural Development Programme 2007/2013, it will be necessary to obtain Commission for any changes beforehand.

The following tabular statement details the numbers of farmers in receipt of payments under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the value of their payments, in respect of 2009, 2010 and 2011 (to date), for counties Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon and Donegal:

	Recipients	Payments	Recipients	Payments	Recipients	Payments
Mayo	11,456	€24.6m	11,408	€24.3m	11,043	€23.5m
Sligo	4,013	€8.7m	4,002	€8.6m	3,787	€8.2m
Leitrim	3,459	€7.7m	3,431	€7.6m	3,179	€7.0m
Roscommon	5,722	€12.5m	5,694	€12.4m	5,387	€11.7m
Donegal	8,219	€19.4m	8,127	€19.1m	7,659	€17.8m

In relation to the proposed changes it will be open to individual farmers to alter their farming activities to meet the new requirements. I will also make provision, if the proposed changes are adopted by the Commission, to cater for farmers with a stocking density of less than 0.3 livestock units per hectare in 2011. Account will be taken of farmers who into any of the following categories and had a lower stocking density in 2011 due any of the following reasons:

- Participation in an Agri-Environmental Scheme, which required a lower stocking density.
- Participation in other Agri-Environmental measures, which required a lower stocking density.
- Lower stocking density due to an illness or death in the family.

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- Lower stocking density due to animal disease.
- New entrants to farming will also be covered.

### **Rural Environment Protection Scheme**

395. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if REP scheme disadvantaged and single farm payments have been made in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite the matter. [39760/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 5 May 2011.

This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility/Cross Compliance Inspection. This inspection was completed and the application has now been fully processed. Payments under the Single Payment Scheme and the Disadvantaged Area Scheme issued on the 7 of December 2011.

The person named commenced REPS 4 in January 2009 and received payments for the first two years of their contract. REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and accordingly is subject to EU Regulation which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. The administrative checks in relation to the 2011 payments have been finalised and I expect payments in respect of this case to issue shortly.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme**

396. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of applicants under the disadvantaged area aid scheme who solely have horses and the value of such claims; the estimated total number of applicants who will be impacted upon under Budget 2012 changes to the scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39773/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** This is a very important Scheme for the country, as the total area designated as disadvantaged is almost 75% of Ireland's total land area. From an economic perspective, the Scheme is particularly significant, contributing to the support of in excess of 100,000 Irish farm families, whose ability to farm is restricted by the physical environment and, in particular, the impact of the prevailing wet cold climatic conditions.

However, in light of the recognised, ongoing difficulties in the public finances, savings had to be found in my Department's 2011 budget, in the context of which a decision was taken to limit the spend under the 2011 DAS to €190 million. To achieve this saving priority has been given to active farmers and a range of adjustments to the qualifying criteria, including the exclusion of horses for the stocking density calculations, are currently under consideration, also including:

- increasing the minimum stocking density requirement, from 0.15 livestock units per hectare to 0.30 livestock units per hectare;
- doubling the minimum retention period from three to six months;

- providing for reduced rates of aid where applicants hold both eligible and ill-eligible land;
- excluding land located more than 80 kilometres from an applicant's main holding.

I would emphasise that these changes are not yet confirmed and their potential impact is still being considered. Furthermore, given that the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme is part of the wider Rural Development Programme 2007/2013, it will be necessary to obtain Commission for any changes beforehand.

In relation to the exclusion of horses from the stocking density calculation, I must also emphasise that the exclusion will not apply to equine breeding enterprises. My Department paid over €3.3 to 2,171 applicants under the 2010 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, whose only livestock were horses. This figure is likely to increase further in 2011. There is a clear pattern evident when these applications are subjected to detailed analysis. The applicants were generally maintaining livestock but when ceased doing so they lost their entitlement to the Disadvantaged Area aid as they no longer met the minimum stocking density requirement. Subsequently, they acquired some horses and submitted horse passports in support of their case that they had met the stocking density requirement. Applicants, who submitted passports applied for the Scheme in a very haphazard manner. Some years they submitted passports and other years they did not. That meant that were not eligible for the aid every year. In fact, only six such applicants submitted passports for each of the years from 2007 to 2011.

In addition, the average number of horses maintained by these applicants was minimal with an average of four horses per applicant in 2010. Finally, it is important to note that many of these farmers continue to benefit from aid payments under the Single Farm Payment and REPS. It is also an option for these farmers to resume livestock production and they will continue to benefit from aid under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme if they meet the proposed revised minimum stocking density criteria.

### **Beef Sector**

397. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the prospects for the beef sector in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39865/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The market for the beef sector is very good at present with cattle prices up over 15%-18% on average for all categories of animals over 2010. With the supply of cattle expected to continue to be tight into the first 6 to 8 months of 2012, with Irish and EU production forecast to be down between 3%-5%, we expect the prospects for the returns from the sector to remain strong.

On the trade side the expected contraction of UK production by 6% in 2012 will provide further opportunities for Irish producers. The UK remains our largest export market which together with continental Europe accounts for 97% of beef exports. For third country trade, prospects will be impacted by developments in Turkey and Russia and from imports from the Mercosur region which are down by 17% to date in 2011. While some slight increase in production is expected in Argentina, Australia and Brazil these will be offset by reduction in US beef production due to higher feed prices.

In order to support the sector in responding to the needs of the marketplace the long term development plan for the sector is set out in the relevant part of the Food Harvest 2020 report. Among the measures that my Department will be implementing in response to the requirements of Food Harvest 2020 are continued support for the Suckler Cow welfare scheme. Some

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€25 million has been allocated for the scheme in 2012. Also I have been able to secure €5 million in funding for a beef technology adoption programme. This programme will be modelled on the successful dairy group concept, and my department is, at present, working with Teagasc to put the final technical and administrative arrangements in place.

### **Tillage Sector**

398. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the proposals for the grain sector in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39866/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Ireland is a deficit market for cereals, and prices here are greatly influenced by world market conditions. The maintenance of an efficient and viable cereals sector in Ireland is clearly very important. Not only does the sector generate an income for our tillage farmers but it is also a key source of feedingstuffs for our livestock sector.

#### *Harvest 2011*

The most recent Teagasc Crop Report estimates total grain production to be in the region of a record 2.4 million tonnes. This is well above the long-term average production of 2 million tonnes. The highest national yield in more than 20 years has been recorded in winter and spring barley and the spring oats crop. It represents a 17% increase on the 2010 harvest figure mainly due to the combination of increased area planted and exceptional yields. Increased growing costs and land rental cost would balance out the grain sale benefits for most growers.

In line with world and EU markets, cereal prices in Ireland peaked in February of this year, with barley at €226/t and wheat at €239/t. Current prices have levelled off with average prices for barley at €183/t and wheat at €183/t. Over two thirds of Irish grain is used for animal feed purposes and the remainder is used as a raw material for the brewing, distilling and flour milling industries. Spring barley is the main cereal crop grown by farmers and is used for the malting, seed and feed industries.

Winter and spring wheat, winter barley and winter and spring oats are the other important grain crops produced for the agri-food industry. My Department operates a range of services aimed at improving the efficiency, quality and viability of cereal production. These services include seed certification, seed testing and recommended lists of varieties. In addition, Teagasc provides research, training and advisory services for cereal producers. The value of all these support services is reflected in the fact that Irish cereal producers have consistently achieved some of the highest yields in the world.

#### *CAP Reform Proposals*

The CAP Reform Proposals are the main reforms facing agriculture in general and the cereal sector in the coming years. The greening measures in the proposals will have a direct effect on the cereals sector. Two of the three greening proposals will apply directly to cereal farmers, those relating to Crop Diversification and Ecological Focus Areas. Under the proposed Crop Diversification measure, farms with over 3 hectares of cereals will be required to grow at least 3 crops, with any one crop occupying a minimum of 5% of the arable area and a maximum of 70% of the arable area. Cereal farms will also be required to set aside 7% of the area as an ecological focus area.

In order to minimise the impact of the reforms on the Irish cereal sector, these issues along with a number of other aspects of the reform proposals will be subject of ongoing discussions with the EU Commission and other Member states.

### Sport Horse Sector

399. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the prospects for the sport horse sector in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39867/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The sport horse sector is a very important contributor to the Irish economy. It is worth €400m annually to the Irish economy and supports the equivalent of 16,000 jobs. Responsibility for the development of the sport horse industry rests primarily with Horse Sport Ireland, the organisation established in 2007 in accordance with the proposals outlined in The Dowling Report. Horse Sport Ireland, working with its affiliate organisations, has been proactive with regard to the development and implementation of policies and strategies for the sustainable development of a vibrant sport horse sector in this country.

Statistics from Horse Sport Ireland indicate that foal numbers registered by them continued to decline from their peak of over 10,000 registrations in 2008 and it is expected that this trend will continue in 2012. It is crucial that breeding quality animals remains the focus of Sport Horse breeders in Ireland. To this end, and to aid the breeders with their breeding decisions, Horse Sport Ireland have recently launched an on-line, database called Capaill Oir, which contains the pedigree records of over 320,000 horses. In addition, this facility contains the performance records of 30,000 horses which provides very useful information for breeders.

I am pleased that my Department and the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport have been able to support the work of Horse Sport Ireland.

### Forestry Sector

400. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when the pre-application for forestry planting will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39927/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The application for pre-planting approval by the person named was approved, and the applicant notified accordingly, on 28 November 2011.

### Grant Payments

401. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding agri environment option scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39968/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS 2) with effect from 1 September 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. These checks are currently under way and in the event of any queries arising my Department will be in direct contact with the person named. I expect to commence payments in the first quarter of 2012.

402. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding agri environment option scheme payment in respect of

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a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter.  
[39969/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named was approved for participation in the Agri-Environment Options Scheme with effect from the 1 September 2010. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, had to be completed before any payment could issue. The person named was also randomly selected for an on farm inspection. These checks have now been successfully completed and payment will issue shortly.

403. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding single farm payment and disadvantaged area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39970/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2011, processing of which has recently been finalised, thereby allowing payments under both Schemes to issue directly to the nominated bank account of the person named in the coming days.

404. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding agri environment option scheme payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter.  
[39971/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named was approved for participation in the 2011 Agri-Environment Options Scheme (AEOS 2) with effect from September 2011. Under the EU Regulations governing the Scheme and other area-based payment schemes, a comprehensive administrative check, including cross-checks with the Land Parcel Identification System, must be completed before any payment can issue. These checks are currently under way and in the event of any queries arising my Department will be in direct contact with the person named. I expect to commence payments in the first quarter of 2012.

405. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the position regarding the outstanding single farm and disadvantaged area payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39972/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2011, following processing of which over-claims were identified on two of the land parcels declared. The applicant has been written to in this regard and, on receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed with a view to the appropriate payments issuing immediately thereafter.

406. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm the number of persons in County Monaghan who have received their dis-

advantaged area payment; the number who are still awaiting payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39978/11]

409. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of persons in County Cavan who have received their disadvantaged area payment; the number who are still awaiting payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39981/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 406 and 409 together.

The following tabular statement shows the position regarding applications and payments to herd-owners in counties Monaghan and Cavan under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme:

	Applications received	Applications paid	Value of payments
Monaghan	4,138	3,902	€7,723,024
Cavan	4,899	4,605	€9,852,450

There are no delays in payments to farmers under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, in relation to which there is no regulatory payment date — however, it is generally recognised and indeed acknowledged in the Farmers' Charter, that a payment target of late September of the year in question is the most realistic.

Payments commenced, on target, on 22 September, with payments issuing to those farmers whose applications had been confirmed eligible for payment at that time. I can confirm that my Department has, in the interim, continued to pay individuals, as their cases became clear, with payment runs taking place twice a week. This is normal practise and will continue on an ongoing basis, as necessary. In this regard, while I am pleased to note that payments worth in excess of €212 million have issued to date, representing over 93% of applicants, I remain confident that the full budget for the Scheme will have been exhausted by year-end.

Where in-house checks reveal anomalies in applicants' applications, the necessary correspondence issues immediately. By replying to all such correspondence as quickly as possible farmers ensure the rapid resolution of issues, thereby allowing their payments to be made.

407. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will confirm the number of persons in County Monaghan who have received their single farm payment; the number who are still awaiting payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39979/11]

408. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of people in County Cavan who have received their single farm payment, the number who are still awaiting payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39980/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 407 and 408 together.

Earlier this year, mindful of the difficulties caused for farmers by the current financial crisis and also being acutely aware of the significance to the wider rural economy of the Single Payment, I successfully sought the approval of the Commissioner to have advance payments made. I am pleased to say that these payments started issuing, on target, on Monday, 17 October. To date, payments worth in excess of €1.162 billion have issued nationally to over

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117,202 farmers, representing over 95% of eligible applicants. The following tabular statement shows the position regarding applications and payments to herd-owners in counties Monaghan and Cavan under the 2011 Single Payment Scheme:

	Applications received	Applications paid	Value of payments
Monaghan	4,306	3,921	€29,768,163
Cavan	5,114	4,728	€34,288,473

As is clear, while the timing of all direct aid payments to farmers is crucial, it is the Single Farm Payment that is of most importance to farmers, given that it represents in excess of €1.2 billion of the €1.7 billion that is paid out in direct aid. The SFP forms a significant part of the annual income of all farmers in Ireland, in many cases is used to subsidise the running costs of the farming enterprise and is, therefore, greater than the net farm income.

*Question No. 409 answered with Question 406.*

410. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a single farm and disadvantaged area payment will issue to persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39993/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2011. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection. This inspection was completed and the application has now been fully processed. Payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme issued on the 9 December 2011 and payment under the Single Payment Scheme will issue within the coming days.

### Child Care Services

411. **Deputy Michelle Mulherin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the reason an after care service is not being provided by the Health Service Executive in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Sligo; and the support that will be provided to them when they turn 18 years of age. [39537/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** As this is a service matter, I have asked the Health Service Executive to respond directly to the Deputy with the most up-to-date information.

### Ministerial Appointments

412. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in her Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39385/11]

413. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in her Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom she reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each advisor from the time they were appointed; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39402/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 412 and 413 together.

The Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001 sets specific responsibilities on office holders in relation to the employment of special advisers. Generally speaking, any special adviser who is appointed pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997 will be required, not later than 31 January each year, to provide a statement of interests to the employing office holder and the Standards in Public Office Commission. The office holder is then required to lay a copy of that statement before each House of the Oireachtas.

Additionally, where a special adviser has a material interest in a function falling to be performed, he or she will provide the employing office holder, and the Standards Commission, with a statement of the facts of the interest. An office holder will also, in the case of a special adviser, lay, before each House, a statement of the qualifications of the person which are relevant to the position.

In addition, an office holder is required to lay two other documents before the Houses, (1) a copy of the contract of service and (2) a statement as to whether the person is a relative of the office holder. There is no requirement under the Ethics in Public Office Acts for a declaration from special advisers of current or previous membership or association with a political party. I can confirm that I have laid the appropriate documentation before the Houses and, as such, they are a matter of public record.

#### **Child Care Services**

414. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the capital funding available to a group which wish to establish an Irish language pre-school childcare facility (details supplied) in County Cork; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39504/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have responsibility for the implementation of the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) which included a capital grant programme to develop childcare facilities.

Under the NCIP capital funding was made available to community and commercial childcare providers for the development and refurbishment of childcare facilities. However, due to the economic downturn, and following a review of capital expenditure, the previous Government decided to close the programme to new grant applications. There is therefore no capital funding to assist with the setting up of new creche or childminding facilities currently available to my Department.

#### **Departmental Funding**

415. **Deputy Mary Lou McDonald** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs when youth services funded through City of Dublin Youth Services Board will receive their funding for 2012. [39888/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The City of Dublin Youth Service Board (CDYSB) has been for many years promoting, supporting and co-ordinating the development of voluntary youth clubs and youth services in Dublin City and I am aware of the valuable work carried out by CDYSB in the youth work sector,

In light of current budgetary constraints, the youth budget requires careful management with a focus on prioritising front-line services and protecting jobs in so far as is possible. Officials from my Department have met with representatives of the youth sector including CDYSB, on

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an ongoing basis to ascertain the sector's views on how best to minimise the impact of budgetary constraints with a view to consolidating, in so far as is practicable, the progress made in previous years. Every effort will be made to notify the various youth work organisations and administering agencies of their 2012 allocations as speedily as possible.

### **Inter-Country Adoptions**

416. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the position regarding Garda clearance certificates in respect of inter-country adoptions; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39896/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides a vetting service to the HSE in respect of applicants for an assessment of eligibility and suitability to adopt. Applications made to the Unit are made by organisations registered with the Unit. Applications are not accepted from individuals. In the case of adoptions the Unit deals with requests from the HSE. The GCVU does not refuse any vetting application provided it is made by a registered organisation. I am not aware of any difficulties in this regard.

As this question would appear to concern an individual application for a declaration of eligibility and suitability to adopt, I have referred it to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Children in Care**

417. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 28 of 3 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39983/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Health Service Executive to update the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

### **Child Care Services**

418. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 31 of 3 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39984/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Health Service Executive to update the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

### **Health Service Staff**

419. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 36 of 3 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39985/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The HSE has confirmed that a response was forwarded to Deputy Sandra McLellan on the 15th November 2011. A further copy has been reissued.

420. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question No. 477 of 8 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39986/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Health Service Executive to update the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

421. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 478 to 480 of 8 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39987/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have asked the Health Service Executive to update the Deputy as a matter of urgency.

#### **Children in Care**

422. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will outline a plan to deal with the crisis at Gleann Alainn special care unit, County Cork, for the delivery of special care services for vulnerable teenage girls; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [39990/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** The HSE has responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations from the report on the inspection by HIQA that was undertaken last October. I have been informed by the National Manager for Special Care and High Support for the HSE that a number of critical actions identified by HIQA have already been undertaken. HIQA has indicated that it will carry out another full inspection of Gleann Alainn in January 2012. The implementation of the recommendations made in this report will be assessed at this time. It is critical that the HSE take prompt action to deal with the remaining issues and officials of my Department will continue to liaise closely with the National Manager in this regard.

HIQA currently undertake inspections of Special Care Units under the Child Care Act 1991 and report their findings to me. I have written to Mr Gordon Jeyes, National Director of Children and Family Services, HSE asking him to inform me directly of his plans to ensure the standard of care in Gleann Alainn is safe and acceptable.

#### **Community Care**

423. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the funding and-or grant aid options available to the south Tipperary hospice group to enable it to continue the most valuable work it does for sick persons in their hour of need; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39629/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

#### **Hospital Procedures**

424. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare can receive a date for a medical procedure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39858/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

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As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### **Hospital Accommodation**

425. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question Nos 72 and 77 of 8 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive. [39988/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I understand the HSE has recently issued a response to the Deputy in this matter.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

426. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the basis for the difference in calculating waiting lists by the Health Service Executive and the special delivery unit [40257/11]

473. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the criteria he uses to calculate the length of time patients are on waiting lists for surgery; if it has changed over the course of the year; if so, the way that it has come about; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39728/11]

474. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the reason the number of patients who are waiting for more than one year for surgery in Galway University Hospital has increased in one year to 1,496 from 600; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39729/11]

475. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide in tabular form, the number of patients who are waiting for more than one year for surgery in each hospital; the same figure for this time last year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39730/11]

476. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the recently published figures from the Health Service Executive regarding 30,756 patients on the waiting lists for surgery are correct; if they have improved or disimproved; the actions he is taking to reduce them; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39731/11]

477. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the number of patients waiting for more than one year for surgery now calculated by the Health Service Executive as 3117, as of September, is correct; if incorrect, if he will provide the correct figure waiting for more than one year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39732/11]

478. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if the methodology used to calculate patients waiting for surgery used is the one used by the Health Service Executive or the National Treatment Purchase Fund; and if it is validated by European guidelines on waiting lists; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39733/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 426 and 473 to 478, inclusive, together.

In July of this year I requested that public hospitals ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. In order to achieve this target a new calculation methodology was introduced, the new method is described as the ‘Maximum Waiting Time Target’.

The NTPF working on behalf of the Special Delivery Unit was first tasked with creating a comprehensive list of those persons — who if not treated — would be waiting for over 12 months by the 31st of December 2011. The creation of such a list therefore had to effectively search into the future to estimate the number of people that might require treatment. In July of this year the NTPF established the list by ascertaining all the names of people who had been listed for treatment on or before the 31st of December 2010. The list contained approximately 14,000 names. It is clear that that database had to include ALL of the patients who would have reached or exceeded a 12 month target on the 31st of December 2011. This list is referred to as the Primary Targeting List (PTL).

This explains why the list being operated by the NTPF for the SDU is calculated on a different basis to the list offered by the HSE in its performance reports. The HSE list, also compiled by the NTPF, is a snapshot and relates to those who had already been waiting longer than 12 months on a specific day. By the end of August it was determined that 9,657 persons listed on or before 31 December 2010 continued to be available for treatment. Of these all but 684 had received their treatment by 8th December last.

The NTPF determined in August that University College Hospital Galway (UCHG) had 2,530 patients whose treatment must be provided by the end of December this year in order for UCHG to meet the new target that no patient could be waiting for longer than 12 months for treatment at the end of this year. I can confirm that as of 8th December this number has fallen to 455. The NTPF and the SDU continue to work closely with UCHG to reduce this figure further.

In relation to the Deputy’s question regarding the 30,756 September figure for patients waiting over three months, I can confirm that this number is correct. However I wish to advise the Deputy that the number for people waiting over 3 months at the end of November is 26,832 indicating a significant reduction of 13%. The NTPF calculation methodology has been in place for some time and there have been no changes in this regard.

The NTPFs Patient Treatment Register was established in 2005 and is compliant with the Council of Europe Recommendations. The number of patients who are waiting for more than one year for surgery in each hospital now and this time last year is set out in the following table. The figures are from the Patient Treatment Register and show the numbers of patients waiting 12 months or more as of 8 December 2011. They differ somewhat from the PTL.

8th December 2011

HOSPITAL NAME	Dec-10 > 12mths	Dec-11 > 12mths	Variation
AMNCH (Tallaght)	37	1	-36
Bantry General Hospital	0	0	0
Beaumont	155	50	-105
Cappagh Orthopaedic Hospital	12	2	-10
Cavan General Hospital	5	0	-5
Children’s University Hospital, Temple Street	54	1	-53

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HOSPITAL NAME	Dec-10 > 12mths	Dec-11 > 12mths	Variation
Connolly (Blanchardstown)	0	1	1
Cork University Hospital	183	37	-146
Kerry General Hospital	0	0	0
Kilcreene Orthopaedic	25	0	-25
Letterkenny General Hospital	20	1	-19
Louth County Hospital	2	0	-2
Mallow General Hospital	0	0	0
Mater Misericordiae Hospital	79	15	-64
Mayo General Hospital	0	0	0
Mercy University Hospital	42	0	-42
Merlin Park Hospital Galway	25	50	25
Midland Regional at Mullingar	24	1	-23
Midland Regional at Portlaoise	1	0	-1
Midland Regional at Tullamore	34	0	-34
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Croom	2	0	-2
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Dooradoyle	55	30	-25
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Ennis	0	4	4
Mid-Western Regional Hospital, Nenagh	0	0	0
Monaghan General Hospital	0	0	0
Naas General Hospital	0	0	0
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda	4	0	-4
Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children Crumlin	139	0	-139
Our Lady's Hospital Navan	12	0	-12
Portiuncula General Hospital	0	0	0
Roscommon County Hospital	0	0	0
Royal Victoria Eye and Ear	1	0	-1
Sligo General Hospital	10	3	-7
South Infirmary — Victoria University Hospital	8	3	-5
South Tipperary General	0	0	0
St. Columcille's Loughlinstown	0	0	0
St. James's Hospital	0	0	0
St. John's Hospital Limerick*	1	0	-1
St. Luke's Hospital, Kilkenny	2	0	-2
St. Michael's, Dun Laoghaire	0	0	0
St. Vincent's University Hospital	11	0	-11
University College Hospital Galway	94	430	336
Waterford Regional Hospital	46	0	-46
Wexford General Hospital	0	0	0
Grand Totals	1,083	629	-454

### Ministerial Appointments

427. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39392/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Dr. Sean Faughnan worked in the office of the Leader of the Opposition from late 2008, prior to becoming my Special Adviser in 2011. My Press Adviser, Mr Mark Costigan, deals with a wide range of press enquires from both the national and local media and from the specialised health publications sector. He also works closely with the my Department in arranging the output of information on health issues. To that end he is in constant contact with the Health Service Executive and a range of other bodies regarding developments in the delivery of health care. He is in regular contact with government ministers and backbenchers to provide information related to matters under coverage by the media and to answer their questions. The enquiries from the media which relate to health are sometimes political in nature and require a response which take that into account. He has never been a member of a political party and has never stood for election.

Dr. Maev-Ann Wren is an expert in health economics and is working as an Adviser to Minister Róisín Shortall on a part-time basis. Dr. Wren is not currently, nor has ever been, a member of any political party. She has never been elected to any local authority.

428. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39409/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to Special Advisers is set out in the following tabular format.

Name	Office	Whole Time Equivalent	Salary now	Salary date appointed
Mark Costigan	Dr. James Reilly T.D. Minister for Health	1	€92,672	€92,672
Sean Faughnan	Dr. James Reilly T.D. Minister for Health	1	€80,051	€80,051
Maev-Ann Wren	Róisín Shortall T.D. Minister of State with responsibility for Primary Care	0.5	€40,025	€40,025

### Health Services

429. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health the services available throughout the country for adults with special needs who need dental care under anaesthetic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39435/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** Dental services for people with intellectual disabilities are managed predominantly in a primary care setting; mostly in public dental service clinics. Supporting facilities and resources (theatre space, anaesthetists) in a hospital based setting are essential for a small proportion of special needs adults. General anaesthetic services are available in a number of hospitals throughout the country on a sessional basis.

430. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health the measures in place for adults with special needs in the north County Dublin area who require dental care under anaesthetic since the closure of the acute ward in James Connolly hospital, Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39436/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### Hospital Services

431. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the cost per patient of running all hospitals, community hospitals and public nursing homes in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39443/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** One of the key elements of the Government's health reform programme is financial reform of the acute hospital sector. We are committed to introducing a more efficient and transparent 'money follows the patient' funding system for hospitals. Various initiatives to facilitate achievement of the 'money follows the patient' funding system are already under way. These include a patient-level costing project that tracks resources actually used by individual patients in hospitals. This project is ongoing at present.

I would also like to advise the Deputy that the HSE currently operates a national casemix programme. Under this programme, the national average cost per inpatient case in 2009 (the latest full year for which data is available), based on hospitals participating in the programme, was €5,217, and the national average cost per case for an elective daycase in 2009 was €703.

In relation to the cost of long-term residential care in public nursing homes, this is published on the HSE's website at <http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find—a—Service/Older—People—Services/nhss/costs.html>. The cost of care in public nursing homes is currently being reviewed.

### Hospital Accommodation

432. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the benefit to the Exchequer of moving patients from Valentia Hospital to Tralee, County Kerry; if patients were consulted in advance of the decision being made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39444/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Mental Health Services

433. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Health his plans to implement the recommendations of the 2007 Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health and Children in relation to the Irish Medicines Board to ensure that any revision of the Mental Health Act 2001 complies with human rights; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39459/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Programme for Government contains a commitment to review the Mental Health Act 2001, "informed by human rights standards and in consultation with service users, carers and other stakeholders."

The Government and I attach great importance to this review and following my appointment as Minister of State with responsibility for Mental Health policy, I established a Steering Group to oversee the review within three months of taking up office. Included in the Group's Terms of Reference is a commitment to undertake the review having regard to the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

To ensure that the review attracted wide attention, a public consultation campaign was launched in September and a series of meetings with key stakeholders are being held to discuss the issues arising. Among the organisations which the Steering Group have met are the Irish

Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International and Mental Health Reform, all of whom, among others, have a strong focus on the human rights aspect of our mental health legislation.

When the meetings are completed, it is the intention of the Steering Group to produce an Interim Report setting out the results of the consultation process and the main issues and questions to be resolved in the full review. The substantive work of the review would then commence in January with the final report to be completed by June 2012.

### Medical Cards

434. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Health if the decision to refuse a medical card to a person (details supplied) will be reviewed without re-applying; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39496/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

435. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a child (details supplied) in County Laois will be scheduled for an operation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39502/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### General Practitioner Services

436. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health regarding the childhood immunisation programme, the expenditure reductions achieved by enacting the Health Professionals (Reduction of Payments to General Practitioners) (National Immunisation Programmes) Regulations 2011 (SI 556 of 2011); the amount he expects this will save each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39507/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The estimated full year savings on payments to GPs in respect of immunisation services are €6.7m, this includes approximated €1m savings on the childhood immunisation programme.

### Health Services

437. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to reduce the cost of pathology testing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39510/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

438. **Deputy Derek Keating** asked the Minister for Health if he will review a matter in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39515/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### Care of the Elderly

439. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Health if he will quantify the average cost of providing a public nursing home bed in facilities catering for up to 30 patients, versus the cost of providing a similar service in a private facility of similar or higher capacity. [39528/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Health Services

440. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Health if he will investigate and review a decision to refuse home help in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork. [39542/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Community Care

441. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the impact the budget cuts in his Department will have on community nursing homes here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39547/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Health Service Executive is facing challenges in respect of all services in 2012, and in the case of Community Nursing Units these include challenges regarding staffing, funding and the age/structure of the units.

The Department and HSE are working together regarding the 2012 National Service Plan. Should there be concern for the future of any unit, the HSE will engage fully in a local consultation process with all stakeholders before any decision is taken.

442. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Health the impact the recently announced budget cuts in his Department will have on nursing homes (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39548/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Hospital Procedures

443. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health if selective dorsal rhizotomy operation is approved here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39549/11]

444. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health if selective dorsal rhizotomy operation is recommended by the Health Service Executive for the treatment of cerebral palsy spastic diplegia which reduces spasticity and improves sitting and standing posture; if the procedure is not recommended, the reason it is not recommended when clinicians in hospitals here are recommending selective dorsal rhizotomy. [39550/11]

446. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the funding available from the Health Service Executive for a selective dorsal rhizotomy operation required by a person (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39552/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 443, 444 and 446 together.

As these are service matters, they have been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Health Services

445. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the policy in place to inform doctors and Health Service Executive clinicians of the timeframe within which letters and queries from patients and families of patients need to be answered; the recommended timeframe according to this policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39551/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

*Question No. 446 answered with Question No. 443.*

447. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health following a selective dorsal rhizotomy operation, the State funding available for intensive physiotherapy required by a person (details supplied). [39553/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Services

448. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Health the funding available

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from the Health Service Executive if a person (details supplied) in County Dublin chooses to have a required selective dorsal rhizotomy operation in Bristol Hospital rather than St. Louis Hospital in the USA; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39554/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Health Service Executive operates a Treatment Abroad Scheme which allows for an Irish-based consultant to refer a patient who is normally resident in Ireland for treatment within the public health system in another EU/EEA member state or Switzerland, where the treatment in question meets certain criteria. The application to refer a patient abroad must be assessed and determination given prior to the patient availing of the treatment abroad.

Contact details and further information on the scheme can be found on the HSE website [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie) link [http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find a Service/entitlements/E112/](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/Find_a_Service/entitlements/E112/).

### Hospital Waiting Lists

449. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when an MRI scan will be scheduled in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39560/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### Drugs Payment Scheme

450. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health his position regarding the removal of pradaxa from the list of approved prescribed drugs under the drugs payment scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39574/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** Pradaxa is available on prescription to patients availing of the GMS and the Drug Payment Schemes for the prevention of venous thromboembolism in adult patients who have undergone elective hip replacement surgery or elective knee replacement surgery.

The HSE is assessing the availability of resources in 2012 to consider long term treatment with Pradaxa for the prevention of stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation. This is a complicated process with long term implications. The HSE has written to all GMS doctors and community pharmacy contractors to clarify the position in relation to Pradaxa. The HSE will continue to update health care professionals in relation to the matter.

The HSE does not intend to disturb established therapeutic regimens for patients whose treatment with Pradaxa for the prevention of stroke was initiated prior to the recent clarification.

### Services for People with Disabilities

451. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the promised publication of the report on the value for money review of the section 38 agencies. [39592/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Value for Money and Policy Review of HSE-funded disability services is due to be completed in the first quarter of 2012. The review, which encompasses statutory and non-statutory service providers, is assessing how well current services for people with disabilities are meeting their objectives and how the future planning and development of services should be supported and delivered.

As part of the overall VFM review, a separate Expert Reference Group on Disability Policy was established to look specifically at existing disability policy and whether it needs to be changed to better meet the expectations and objectives of people with disabilities. The Group's final report has been the subject of internal consultation within the Department of Health and with other Government Departments. During November it was released for the public and interested parties to have their say and these submissions are now being collated and analysed.

On completion, it is my intention to look at both reports together and in conjunction with Minister Reilly to ensure that proposals for the future of our disability services are brought to Government for its consideration and publication in due course.

### Medical Cards

452. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 3. [39602/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Hospital Procedures

453. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will receive an appointment for a medical procedure. [39604/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### Health Services

454. **Deputy Kevin Humphreys** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding speech and language therapy in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39614/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### National Lottery Funding

455. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding national lottery funding for groups providing health care services; the funding or grant aid options that are available to hospice groups that carry out such work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39633/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** My Department administers a National Lottery Discretionary Fund from which once-off grants are paid to community and voluntary organisations, providing a range of health related services. If an organisation wishes to make an application for National Lottery Funding they should send in a formal application. Detailed procedures, along with the application form are set out on the Department's website — *www.doh.ie*.

### Health Services

456. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Health if the Health Service Executive will approve home help for persons (details supplied) in County Laois who were assessed by the local public health nurse as a high priority; if the HSE will take responsibility should an incident occur to the person in question should the HSE continue to refuse home help; if he will respond to a letter sent to him dated 15 November 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39637/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply. The Department of Health responded on the 23 November 2011 to the person in question in relation to the original letter on this matter.

457. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health if he will review the case of persons (details supplied) as a matter of urgent priority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39647/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters I have arranged for the question to be referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Medical Cards

458. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if medical cards will be approved on appeal in respect of a persons (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite a response. [39653/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### **Ambulance Service**

459. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm if there are any plans to upgrade and improve facilities at Edenderry ambulance service station, County Offaly, in view of the fact that the facilities at the fire station are not adequate and are currently based at Ofalia House, Edenderry, County Offaly. [39657/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Hospital Waiting Lists**

460. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Health the number of consultant neurophysiologists currently at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; the number of persons on the waiting list; the average waiting time to see the consultant; the steps being taken to reduce the waiting times to see the consultant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39662/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As these are service matters, they have been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### **Health Services**

461. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Health if it is his aim to close or amalgamate services in County Meath for those who suffer from domestic violence; the services he will provide to support men who have suffered from domestic violence in County Meath and in the State as a whole; and if the plans to amalgamate Amen and the Women's Refuge will proceed. [39685/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** There is currently a review of Domestic and Sexual Violence service provision nationally being undertaken by the HSE which is looking at potential for efficiencies within domestic violence services. However as this review is not yet complete, no decisions have been made in relation to amalgamation of any service or a reduction in current front line service provision.

462. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a travel allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wicklow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39686/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Deputy's question relates to service delivery matters and accordingly I have asked the HSE to respond directly to him.

### **National Lottery Funding**

463. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application in respect of funding in respect of a national lottery grant for a centre (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39700/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** My Department has received an application for funding from the 2011 National Lottery allocation from the organisation in question. This is one of a large number currently being assessed by my Department, and the Deputy will be informed of the outcome of the application as soon as a decision has been made.

### **Health Services**

464. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that no

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beds will be closed in 2012 by the Health Service Executive at Buncrana nursing unit, County Donegal. [39705/11]

465. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that no beds will be closed in 2012 by the Health Service Executive at Carndonagh Community Hospital, County Donegal. [39706/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 464 and 465 together.

As these are service matters they been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

466. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that no beds will be closed in 2012 by the Health Service Executive at Ramelton nursing home, County Donegal. [39707/11]

467. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that no beds will be closed in 2012 by the Health Service Executive at Lifford Community Hospital, County Donegal. [39708/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 466 and 467 together.

As these are service matters they been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

468. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if approval for change of general practitioner will be granted in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if he will expedite the matter. [39710/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

469. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a respite bed or aftercare will be provided at the district hospital or home in Carlow in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow. [39712/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

470. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health if he will arrange to have a person (details supplied) in County Wexford given an appointment by Waterford general hospital as a matter of urgency. [39714/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am determined to address the issues which cause unacceptable delays in patients receiving treatment in our hospitals. In this regard I have established the Special Delivery Unit (SDU), which will work to unblock access to acute services by dramatically improving the flow of patients through the system, and by streamlining waiting lists, including referrals from GPs. The SDU is working closely with its partner agencies — mainly the HSE and the NTPF.

As a priority, public hospitals have been instructed to ensure that, by the end of 2011, they have no patients waiting more than 12 months for treatment. Where they fail to do so, the NTPF will source the necessary treatments elsewhere and an appropriate budgetary adjustment will be made.

As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply. Should the patient's general practitioner consider that the patient's condition warrants an earlier appointment, he/she would be in the best position to take the matter up with the consultant and facility involved.

### Hospital Accommodation

471. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health the way the contract was awarded for the overseeing of the construction of the emergency department at Waterford Regional Hospital; the name of the company or person who submitted the successful tender; if that company continues to provide the service as outlined in the tender documentation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39715/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The management and delivery of the health capital programme is a service matter. Therefore your question has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Health Services

472. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Health if Letterkenny General Hospital, County Donegal, is one of the most efficiently run hospitals here then the fact that it will face a €8 million overspend in its 2011 budget suggests that the budget provided to it is completely inadequate. [39718/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

*Questions Nos. 473 to 478, inclusive, answered with Question No. 426.*

### Medical Cards

479. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health when a medical card will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite this matter. [39763/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

480. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny as a matter of urgency [39764/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

481. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health when medical cards will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite an early response [39768/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Long-Term Illness Scheme

482. **Deputy Seamus Kirk** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the long-term illness scheme; when the new changes in the LTI scheme will commence; if applicants will be notified regarding changes; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39774/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** Free GP care will be extended to persons in receipt of drugs and medicines under the Long Term Illness Scheme. Primary legislation is required to give effect to this commitment. There will be an announcement in due course about the start date for the new arrangements. It is hoped that the new arrangements will be in place by early Summer.

### HIV Infection

483. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will implement a national HIV-AIDS awareness campaign. [39793/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** HIV surveillance data published by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre have shown that sex between men has become the predominant mode of transmission of HIV in Ireland. A National HIV Prevention and Sexual Health Awareness Programme for men who have sex with men (MSM) was launched on 1st December to address this situation.

This new initiative is particularly timely and relevant as it targets younger MSMs with messages which are designed and delivered by their peer groups and aimed at raising awareness, building self-esteem and equipping them to be able to make safer sex choices. The programme will take into account social and cultural aspects of the target population to ensure the message will be accessible and is a collaborative partnership between the Gay Health Network, Dublin City Council and the HSE. The awareness programme is in line with the recommendations of the National AIDS Strategy Committee's 'Education and Prevention Plan, 2008-2012' which provides a roadmap for HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention.

### Health Service Staff

484. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health if the occupational therapist currently working in a school (details supplied) in Dublin 7 on a three year programme has been withdrawn; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39831/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the Deputy's question relates to service matters, I have arranged for this question to be transferred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Nursing Homes Support Scheme

485. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide the average processing time for applications made under the fair deal scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39850/11]

492. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that applicants to the fair deal scheme are not entitled to benefit from the scheme until such a time as their application has been approved, if he will be assigning additional staff to ensure a more efficient processing of applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39900/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 485 and 492 together.

The Minister for Health agreed to the amendment to the backdating provision in the HSE's *National Guidelines for the Standardised Implementation of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme* subject to certain assurances from the HSE. Among these were the fact that average processing times for complete applications should not exceed 4-6 weeks and that geographical location would not disadvantage applicants. However, it should be noted that a significant volume of applications are submitted to the HSE without the necessary supporting documentation. This can create delays which are outside of the HSE's control. It is my understanding that the HSE is currently processing complete applications within the 4-6 week timeframe.

#### Medical Cards

486. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 210 of 23 November 2011, when a reply will issue from the Health Service Executive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39853/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** I have asked the Health Service Executive for a report on the issue raised by the Deputy. I will revert to the Deputy on the matter as soon as possible.

#### Care of the Elderly

487. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that there are no plans to either further reduce the capacity or close a unit for the elderly (details supplied) in County Cavan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39870/11]

488. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health if he will confirm that there are no plans to reduce the capacity, let alone close, St. Mary's Hospital in Castleblayney County Monaghan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39872/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 487 and 488 together.

As these are service matters they been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

#### Health Services

489. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Health in view of the fact that Letterkenny General Hospital supports 160 children with type 1 diabetes, if he will ensure that paediatric diabetes services are not removed or downgraded at the hospital; and if he will work with the Health Service Executive to ensure that a dedicated paediatric diabetes nurse specialist is appointed to the hospital in line with recognised best practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39876/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

#### Hospital Board

490. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will provide an update on his proposal to reorganise the board of Tallaght hospital, Dublin; the schedule being followed in this matter; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39880/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The plans to reorganise the board of Tallaght Hospital are continuing in consultation with the relevant parties and I expect to be in a position to make an announcement in this regard in the very near future.

### Health Regulations

491. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the regulation for sunbed use here; the regulations in place at present; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39881/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Currently, there are no statutory regulations governing sunbed use. However, the Government recently approved the drafting of legislation to regulate sunbed use, and in particular to prohibit their use by those under 18 years of age. Other proposals include ensuring that adequate protective eyewear is provided, that information on the health risks associated with sunbeds use is provided, and prohibiting sunbed outlets and retailers from attributing health benefits to sunbed use. The Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government has been requested to draft the necessary legislation and the matter has been accorded priority drafting in view of the health risks involved. My aim is that the legislation will be initiated in the Oireachtas before the Summer recess next year as my Department has already completed a considerable body of work in relation to the proposed legislation

*Question No. 492 answered with Question No. 485.*

### Social Insurance

493. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a PRSI refund will be paid by the Health Service Executive to a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39913/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

### Medical Cards

494. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will expedite an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39914/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

### Services for People with Disabilities

495. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the level of cuts to be provided to service providers of persons with disabilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39925/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I am acutely aware of the challenges facing the disability services as a result of reduced resources in 2012. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform announced that an efficiency saving of 2% is being applied to the budget for disability services in 2012. Services will also have to make provision for savings in employment and procurement costs which are required of the health services as a whole next year. The precise levels of savings required will vary depending on the

profile of individual service providers and will be determined within the context of the HSE's service planning process. Services will also have to meet anticipated extra demand from within their budgets in 2012.

### **Value for Money & Policy Review of Disability Services**

A major priority for the Government in the coming months will be to finalise the current Value for Money and Policy Review of Disability Services to ensure that existing funding for people with disabilities is spent to best effect. It is now more important than ever that large scale spending programmes of this nature are subject to detailed periodic review. The VFM Efficiency and Effectiveness Review will make recommendations that will ensure that the very substantial funding of €1.5 billion provided to the specialist disability health sector is used to maximum benefit for persons with disability, having regard to overall resource constraints which affect all sectors at this time.

### **Health Services**

496. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health if transport will be provided for a medical patient (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39928/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

497. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application made under the fair deal scheme in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39930/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### **Departmental Staff**

498. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Health when the vacancy for the research leader post at Assistant Secretary level in his Department will be filled; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39934/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The process of filling this Assistant Secretary post in my Department is in train. An open competition is currently being held by the Public Appointments Service on behalf of the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC). I expect an appointment to be made early in 2012.

### **Mental Health Services**

499. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health if he will examine the policy of the Health Service Executive to reduce the mental health service in Caherciveen catchment area, County Kerry, which entails a huge peripheral geographic area and the urgent need to restore the reduced bed numbers from 13 beds to ten beds and the stoppage of any further admissions to Island View House (details supplied) [39954/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

### Nursing Home Refurbishment

500. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when emergency works including electric wiring and floors will be carried out at a nursing home (details supplied) in County Kerry; if he will ensure that the necessary work is completed at an early date; and when will patients in fuchsia ward, who have been re-located to other wards temporarily in the home, will be transferred back to fuchsia ward, [39955/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

### Services for People with Disabilities

501. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce a permanent programme of independent inspections of all residential care centres for children and adults with disabilities, both intellectual and physical; if this is a responsibility he intends extending to the Health Information and Quality Authority; if existing legislation provides for such oversight of existing and future facilities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39957/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As the Deputy will be aware, there is currently no statutory, independent inspection system in place in relation to residential services for people with disabilities. The lack of regulation of this sector is acknowledged as a matter of concern and the Government is committed to addressing this issue.

The legislative framework for the regulation of these services is provided for by the Health Act 2007, which imposes a statutory obligation on HIQA to register and inspect designated centres for older people, people with disabilities and children in need of care and protection. It envisages the registration and inspection schemes being supported by standards and underpinned by appropriate regulations.

The Health Act 2007 was commenced in respect of residential services for older people on 1 July 2009 and from that date all residential services for older people have been regulated and inspected by HIQA.

The Act has not yet been commenced in respect of residential services for people with disabilities. However, standards for the sector have been prepared and published by HIQA. The standards outline what is expected of a service provider and what a person with a disability, his or her family, and the public can expect to receive from residential care services. They clearly set out what a quality safe residential service for people with disabilities should be and support the delivery of person-centred care.

The current programme for Government includes a specific commitment to put these standards on a statutory footing and ensure that the services are inspected by HIQA. As I announced on 16 June, discussions have begun between the Department of Health and HIQA to progress this commitment. Given the complex nature of residential service provision for people with disabilities, ranging from congregated settings to dispersed housing in the community, careful consideration is being given to designing the most appropriate regulatory model and this work is ongoing. Appropriate regulations will be drafted as part of this process.

A target date of January 2013 has been provisionally set for the commencement of the proposed registration and inspection scheme for the sector.

### Health Service Expenditure

502. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the action he intends

taking to address the situation presenting at Cork University Hospital and other hospital sites in the south and south east, at which management are refusing to pay non-consultant hospital doctors for unrostered overtime; if he will ensure that all overdue payments are made immediately and that, in line with his stated view of the proposed withholding of travel and subsistence payments to other Health Service Executive employees, he will insist that the health services always pay what is due and will never again seek to treat NCHDs in this way; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39960/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Hospitals must remain within budget so that planned services are delivered safely and efficiently and core activities maintained. Management of acute hospitals in the HSE-South have adopted appropriate measures to ensure that these objectives are met.

As part of ongoing cost-containment measures, steps have been taken to control unrostered overtime. Within the HSE-South, Cork University Hospital, Kerry General Hospital and Wexford General Hospital now give time off in lieu of unrostered hours worked. Waterford Regional Hospital has adopted a policy whereby NCHDs are rostered to work overtime (on-call) as part of their rostered working week. Such rostered overtime is remunerated. Any hours worked outside the rostered hours and not approved in line with rosters agreed with clinical departments are deemed to be unrostered. NCHDs in the hospitals have been advised of the rules in place. The HSE advises that the position at South Tipperary General Hospital is currently the subject of local negotiation.

#### **Hospital Complaints Procedure**

503. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health further to Parliamentary Question No. 212 of 24 November 2011, if he will give an update regarding a death at Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, (details supplied) and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39965/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I arranged for the Deputy's earlier question to be forwarded to the HSE for investigation and reply. I understand from the HSE that the hospital referred to has written to the person concerned with regard to having the particular case referred to by the Deputy examined under the complaints procedure.

#### **Hospital Accommodation**

504. **Deputy Michael Moynihan** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the future of Millstreet Community Hospital, Millstreet, County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39967/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

#### **National Lottery Funding**

505. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Health if he has distributed all funds in the national lottery grant for 2011; if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the organisations granted funding and the amounts that they received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39982/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** My Department administers a national lottery discretionary fund from which grants are paid to community and voluntary organisations providing a range of health related services. I am currently assessing all outstanding applications and final a decision will be made shortly. The funding made available by my Department from

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the national lottery fund including a list of each body in receipt of funding will be set out on my Department's website — *www.doh.ie* thereafter.

### Health Service Staff

506. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Health the increments made payable to Health Service Executive staff in the years 2010 and 2011; the estimated number of increments due in 2012; the cost of increments for each year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39989/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

507. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the number of agency staff, split between nurses and other agency staff currently employed by the Health Service Executive; the total amount used in 2009 and 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40005/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

508. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the total spend on agency staff by the Health Service Executive in 2009 and 2010; the estimated total spend for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40006/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

509. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Health the difference in cost for the Health Service Executive between using an agency nurse or hiring a full time equivalent to carry out the same role; the extra costs that will be incurred on using the agency nurse as a result of the implementation of the agency workers directive; the estimated overall cost increases that will be incurred in 2012 on the use of agency staff as a result of the implementation of the agency workers directive; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40007/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** It is not possible to provide a direct cost comparison between directly-employed nursing staff and agency staff, since the rate of pay varies as between individuals. Directly-employed staff may be in receipt of additional remuneration in respect of working unsocial hours, as well as allowances in respect of particular types of work or qualifications held. On average, such additional payments add approximately 20% to a nurse's basic pay. Agency nurses are currently paid, depending on experience, at either the first or fifth point of the 2010 consolidated salary scales and receive the statutory minimum annual leave. Additional costs arise in respect of commission payable to the employing agency, on which VAT is levied.

In the context of the expenditure allocation for the health service in 2012, the HSE will be focusing on a range of measures to contain the costs of service provision, including a reduced reliance on the use of agency staffing. The cost implications for the health service arising from the implementation in Ireland of the EU Temporary Agency Work Directive will therefore be dependent on both the extent of ongoing usage of agency staffing and the precise terms of the legislation when enacted by the Oireachtas.

### Tourism Industry

510. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the grants available from him for equipment related to tourism activities, namely fishing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39909/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** My Department's role in relation to tourism relates primarily to the area of national policy and it is not involved in the administration of tourism-related funding programmes. This is a matter for the State tourism agencies and other bodies.

Support for capital investment in tourism is provided through Fáilte Ireland's Tourism Capital Investment Programme. Therefore, the matter raised is an operational matter for Fáilte Ireland. My understanding is that equipment for fishing is ineligible for support under the terms of the Programme. However, I have referred the Deputy's Question to Fáilte Ireland for direct reply. He should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### Ministerial Appointments

511. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the political activities of each special adviser, special press adviser, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; if any of them were members of a political party; if so, which parties; if any of them are or have been elected local authority members; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39398/11]

512. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the number and names of all special advisers, special press advisers, or any other type of ministerial adviser in his Department; the name of the Minister or Minister of State to whom he reports; the salary of each adviser now; the salary of each adviser from the time they were appointed; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39415/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 511 and 512 together.

There are two special advisers appointed in my Department, Mr Nick Miller and Mr Brian Murphy. The remuneration of Mr Brian Murphy, who is my Special Adviser, is €105,837 and Mr Miller's salary as my Press Advisor is €80,051.

In addition to the above, in lieu of appointing a Personal Assistant, I appointed Mr John Carroll as a Policy Adviser. Mr Carroll is on the same grade as a Personal Assistant and his salary is €48,520.

The restrictions set out in Sections 5.1 and 5.2 of the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour with regard to political activity do not apply to Ministerial staff, including special advisers, appointed to temporary unestablished positions coterminous with that of the Minister. None of the above has ever been elected as a Local Authority Member.

### Cycle Facilities

513. **Deputy Brian Walsh** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will quantify the expressions of interest received from the private sector regarding investment in a public bike scheme for Galway city; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39529/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Recognising the success of the Dublinbikes scheme, the Programme for Government commits my Department to look

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to extend the scheme to other cities. The National Transport Authority has, at my request, had an assessment of the potential for similar bikes schemes in the regional cities carried out which included initial analysis on how to address key issues identified such as the changed commercial environment to that pertaining when the Dublinbikes scheme was negotiated and different characteristics of scheme provision in smaller cities.

I am committed to exploring a range of mechanisms to seek to secure public bike schemes in other cities. To that end I arranged Symposiums in Cork, Waterford, Limerick and Galway with the National Transport Authority and the City Councils to inform and involve key business and civic stakeholders, to consider the various issues involved and to provide a defined channel via my office or the National Transport Authority, which any interested parties could avail of to discuss engagement with the scheme publicly or in commercial confidence. Work is ongoing in that regard and expressions of interest in potential funding arrangements for a scheme or elements of a scheme are welcome on a city by city basis or more broadly on a national basis.

The NTA will further assess the potential for delivery of bikes schemes in the regional cities in the light of all additional information and consideration will then be given to whether procurement of any further public bike scheme or schemes should take place on a national or individual city basis.

### **Public Transport**

514. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport further to Parliamentary Question No. 574 of 2 November 2011, if he will arrange the immediate supply of the details referred to in same. [39591/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The information sought has been supplied to the Deputy.

### **Tourism Promotion**

515. **Deputy Seán Kenny** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he plans to have a tourism information office in Terminal 2 of Dublin Airport and in Dublin Port; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39661/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Fáilte Ireland operates an extensive network of Tourism Information Offices throughout the country and the management and staffing of the offices, their opening hours and their locations are administrative matters for Fáilte Ireland.

The matter raised is an operational one for Fáilte Ireland. I have referred the Deputy's Question to the agency for direct reply. He should advise my private office if he does not receive a reply within ten working days.

### **Road Network**

516. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if his attention has been drawn to the fact that there is potentially an amount of money available through INTERREG that would allow for the Narrow Water bridge project to move forward; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39689/11]

517. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he has had any contact with INTERREG on the matter of the Narrow Water bridge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39690/11]

518. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he is prepared to release a small amount of money that would be necessary to facilitate the Narrow Water bridge project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39691/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 516 to 518, inclusive, together.

The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area, is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants where available.

As the Deputy is aware, this Government has had to scale back capital spending considerably in recent times. This will have a particular impact on the number of larger projects, such as Narrow Water Bridge, which can be undertaken.

The Narrow Water Bridge project is estimated to cost approximately €19 million. In recent months, Louth County Council has expressed a willingness to complete the next stage of the planning process from its own resources. I have no objection to this and my permission is not required.

I also understand that Louth County Council hopes to secure INTERREG funding for the project. To do so, they will need to secure a commitment from the Northern Ireland authorities to fund in the order of 75% of the project from their resources (some of which could be recouped through INTERREG). To date this commitment has not been forthcoming.

#### **Search and Rescue Service**

519. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will confirm the State funding that has been paid to the Mountain Rescue Ireland over the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39765/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Over the past five years a grant funding scheme administered by the Irish Coast Guard division of my Department has provided €836,000 to Irish mountain rescue teams and management organisations.

#### **Road Network**

520. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport his views on the condition of the country's roads in particular rural county roads that are being neglected by local authorities; his plan to ensure that these roads are not further neglected; his further views that the long-term neglect of these roads will lead to increased cost to him and local authorities and have a devastating effect on local infrastructure and business; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39791/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The improvement and maintenance of regional and local roads in its area, is a statutory function of each road authority in accordance with the provisions of section 13 of the Roads Act, 1993. Works on such roads are a matter for the relevant local authority to be funded from its own resources supplemented by State road grants.

While my Department provides these grants (which are administered through the NRA) to road authorities for works on regional and local roads, such grants are intended to supplement their own resources. My Department's grants are not and never were intended to provide for the full funding of regional and local roads.

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This year local authorities have been provided with grants totalling €452 million for the maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads, This includes an additional €60 million allocated for road strengthening under the Jobs Initiative in May of this year. However, there is also a need for local authorities to provide sufficient monies for the maintenance and improvement of regional and local roads from their own resources budget.

### Public Transport

521. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the position regarding the National Transport Authority's NaPTAN project; the current and projected overall cost of the project; the expected date at which the project will go live; if the Dublinbikes municipal bike scheme is included in this project; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39852/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Following its establishment in December 2009, the implementation and development of an integrated public transport information scheme in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA) came under the remit of the National Transport Authority (NTA).

The information scheme currently being developed by the NTA includes the National Intermodal Journey Planner (NIJP) and NaPTAN (the National Public Transport Access Nodes Database Project) which will support the Journey Planner.

As such, I have referred the Deputy's question to the NTA for direct reply. He should advise my private office if does not receive a reply within 10 working days.

### Driving Tests

522. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if any grant assistance is available for persons to undertake the rigid driving lessons. [39908/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** In April of this year I signed regulations under which learner drivers are now required to undergo Essential Driver Training (EDT) before they can sit the driving test. EDT is one of a number of measures being introduced as part of a Graduated Driver Licensing system for Ireland. I appreciate that this entails additional costs for learners. However, EDT is a major step forward in terms of road safety and offers great benefits both for learners and for all road users. It will ensure that learner drivers develop a baseline of knowledge and skills which would not have been the case before. This will improve the quality of driving in general on our roads over time, benefitting the learners themselves and as well as other road users. My Department has no funding available to provide assistance with the cost of EDT lessons.

### International Sporting Events

523. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if he will consider putting forward an Irish bid to host the Rugby World Cup in the future. [40000/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The normal procedure for the hosting of international sporting events is that the Irish affiliate of the relevant governing body will bid to host the event in question in Ireland. In this case, it would be a matter for the IRFU to decide if it wishes to make a bid to host the rugby world cup in Ireland.

If the IRFU decides to make a bid, my Department will be pleased to provide assistance in the preparation of such a bid.