

## 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 11, inclusive, answered orally.*

### **Agri-Food Industry**

12. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he is satisfied that in conjunction with his EU colleagues he can ensure the viability of the food industry throughout Europe in the future with particular reference to the need to achieve food security and employment for farm families and the wider ancillary sectors, reduced dependency on imports throughout the EU and that such objectives are not frustrated by subsequent discussions at the World Trade Organisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39822/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I believe there is a good commitment within the EU to a strong agri-food sector and an increased recognition of the importance of the sector's contribution to the achievement of economic, social and environmental objectives. In developing the EU2020 strategy for recovery and growth in Europe, Heads of State and Government in the European Council recognised this contribution concluding that "a sustainable, productive and competitive agricultural sector will make an important contribution to the new strategy, considering the growth and employment potential of rural areas while ensuring fair competition".

Moving forward to the CAP Reform Package, the three key principles underpinning the EU Commission's proposals for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy are to preserve food production potential in the EU, to ensure sustainable management of natural resources and to maintain viable rural areas. In those circumstances, I am satisfied that there is good support to ensure the future viability of the food industry in Europe while achieving security of food supply and maintaining farm families on the land.

Over recent years an alliance of some 14 Member States, including Ireland, has pressed on a continuous basis for a strong CAP and to defend EU agricultural interests in the WTO. Indeed this alliance has been augmented from time to time by support from additional Member States. It is worth noting that the conclusions drawn up earlier this year by the Hungarian EU Presidency seeking a strong CAP with resources commensurate with its objectives gained the

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

support of twenty Member States. These Member States also agreed that one of the three main objectives for the future CAP should be to ensure viable food production. They also endorsed the other objectives of sustainable management of natural resources and climate action as well as balanced territorial development.

As to the WTO Doha Development Round, talks are stalled at present and the prospects for conclusion of an agreement are uncertain at this point in time. Nevertheless, I will continue to maintain pressure to secure an acceptable outcome from these negotiations that does not undermine the development of European and Irish agriculture.

### **Fur Farming**

13. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his position on fur farming; if it will be included in the Animal Health and Welfare Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39053/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I have established a Review Group in my Department to review all aspects of fur farming. The terms of reference of the group are as follows:

- To review fur farming in Ireland taking into account existing legislative provisions for the licensing of mink farming
- To comment on the economic benefits of the sector
- To consider the effectiveness of existing welfare controls, and
- To make appropriate recommendations

Submissions have been invited on the review with a 31 December 2011 closing date for receipt of submissions. I will consider what action, if any, to take following the submission of the Review Group's findings.

*Question No. 14 answered with Question No. 8.*

### **Milk Quota**

15. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect the budget announcements for 2012 will have on Ireland's ability to deal with the removal of milk quotas in 2015; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38936/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am satisfied that the removal of milk quotas in 2015 represents a major opportunity for the Irish dairy sector to expand production, increase its contribution to the Irish economy and improve returns to dairy farmers.

The Deputy will appreciate that the significant challenge facing the Government in the context of Budget 2012 was to address the very large deficit the public finances while continuing to provide support for the productive sectors. I am satisfied that in framing budget 2012, the Government demonstrated its commitment to the development of the agri food sector, including the dairy sector.

In particular, the budget day announcement included a strategic tax package designed to assist the development of the agrifood sector, and these measures will be of particular assistance to the dairy sector. These include:

- a stock relief incentive to encourage milk production partnerships;
- reduction in the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, so as to stimulate land sales and land transfers. Facilitating land transfers to dairy farmers who are developing their production capacity in the run up to 2015 is a key strategic aim ;
- a restructuring of retirement relief available on capital gains tax to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation. Encouraging new blood into the dairy sector has been a key element in dairy policy for a number of years now and this measure is entirely consistent with that aim.;
- the retention of the 90% agricultural relief on Capital Acquisitions Tax for transfers of farms valued at €2.5 million or less which are transferred to a son or daughter, or a favoured nephew or niece. This measure will also facilitate the transfer of land to the next generation of dairy farmers;
- the doubling for farmers of the income tax deduction in respect of the increased costs arising from the change in carbon tax on agricultural diesel;
- An amendment to the VAT refund order for farm construction to allow farmers, including dairy farmers, to claim a refund on wind turbines purchased from 1st January 2012.

On the expenditure side, I have provided for significant funding to re-open TAMS, which will include a component for a Dairy Equipment Scheme to encourage capital investment at farm level. I have also provided some €128 million in grant in aid to Teagasc, which plays a key role in the research and knowledge transfer in the dairy sector. This is in addition of course to the €6 million which will be provided in 2012 through unspent Single Farm Payment Scheme funds for the Dairy Efficiency Scheme, which has been a singular success in encouraging participants to adopt best practice and improve their efficiency through their participation in discussion groups.

I have also announced that I intend to begin a consultation process to determine whether additional activity could be undertaken by Bord Bia to complement the efforts underway by industry to ensure the successful promotion and marketing of the expected increase in dairy production. I must stress in this regard that there should be no duplication and overlap between the activities of Bord Bia and IDB or other operators in the industry. It is precisely to avoid any such duplication, and to ensure that any additional activity by Bord Bia adds value to the very successful work of existing operators in this field, that such a consultation is critically important. The question of any additional funding required will be considered in the context of these consultations.

Finally, I should say that the opportunities in the dairy sector will primarily be driven by increasing global population and an associated increase in demand for dairy products as developing economies expand, their peoples become more affluent and their diets become more westernised. These factors, are driving strong milk prices at present, and the medium and long term forecasts are positive, and this will help to support the dairy expansion in Ireland.

Food Harvest 2020 includes a strategic roadmap for the development of the dairy sector and I am personally chairing the High Level Implementation Group to ensure that all of the stakeholders in this very important sector are committed to achieving the ambitious targets that the industry has set for itself.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

I am satisfied that we have made a very positive start to the implementation of Food Harvest 2020 and that with a continuation of the commitment that is evident from all stakeholders to date, the target for a 50% increase in production is achievable.

### **Job Creation**

16. **Deputy Jim Daly** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the work that has been undertaken in order to retain and create jobs within coastal communities here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38947/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am committed to continuing the path set out in Food Harvest 2020 for the development of the seafood sector in Ireland. Food Harvest identifies the potential of the seafood industry to increase employment by 3,000 to 14,000 full time equivalent jobs by 2020, mostly in peripheral coastal communities. The strategy set out in Food Harvest involves the catching, processing and value adding and aquaculture sectors. Achievement of the targets set out in Food Harvest is supported by Bord Iascaigh Mhara's Strategy for the period 2010 to 2012 — '*Delivering on the potential of Irish Seafood*'. That BIM Strategy sets out 69 individual actions to stimulate and grow the seafood sector, with a focus on creating jobs in coastal communities. The Strategy seeks to add value to output, assist in industry restructuring, improve route to market and grow aquaculture volumes.

In relation to the seafood processing sector, Food Harvest 2020 recognised that the sector was fragmented, lacking in scale, uncompetitive in terms of production costs, too focussed on export of commodity products and constrained by inconsistent supply of raw material. BIM, with Enterprise Ireland and Udaras, is working to address each of these issues. Grant aid support under the Seafood Processing Business Investment Scheme was provided in 2011 to improve competitiveness and help the companies concerned develop export markets for high value added products. Some 18 seafood processing projects with a total investment of €7 million were made through the Scheme. These investments are expected to generate new sales of €32 million and 158 jobs in the seafood processing sector by 2014.

BIM launched a new Seafood Value Adding Scheme in 2011 to support seafood companies with developing added-value products. The scheme assists with concept development, including business planning, product development and packaging. Fifteen projects have been approved, covering testing, developing a range of new products, new packaging formats and development of high value by-products from primary processing.

BIM's Seafood Development Centre (SDC) in Clonakilty has been open for two years now and in that time has brought market-led seafood innovation and new product development to the forefront in the Irish seafood industry. The SDC is working with over 330 large, small, and innovative start up companies to develop Ireland into an international seafood leader. New product sales developed by the Centre are estimated at roughly €10 million per annum to date and growing. The Centre is also leading graduate placement and sustainable innovation through training programmes.

With regard to employment in aquaculture, my Department and its agencies have been working together on a twin track approach to overcoming existing constraints, firstly through the comprehensive bay by bay environmental impact assessments required by EU Birds and Habitat Directives for Natura 2000 sites and secondly through development of the feasibility of locating aquaculture in less sensitive but more challenging conditions offshore. I have tasked BIM, working with the Marine Institute, to investigate suitable sites for the development of finfish aquaculture in deeper waters outside Natura 2000 sites. It is expected that BIM will submit a licence application for a suitable site early in 2012 and if granted, will source a major

commercial investor to develop the site. This initiative will serve to develop finfish farming to a sustainable commercial level, while maintaining the highest protection for the environment. It is estimated that just one of these production areas could generate 350 direct jobs, while a further 150 jobs will be created indirectly in the service sector. BIM is also exploring other areas off the west coast for suitable sites.

In June of this year, following on from the Economic Report for the European Commission, which assessed the status, development and potential diversification of Killybegs as a fisheries dependent community I initiated the formation of a High Level Group whose brief was to focus on the advancement of job creation opportunities in the Killybegs region. The group which comprised both public and private stakeholders worked to a target that was both ambitious and timely. This High Level Group reported back to me on 23 November and I made their report available on the following day. The report sets out how a target of 250 jobs in a number of diverse areas can be achieved for the Killybegs region. Achieving the jobs target will require the co-operation and involvement of many stakeholders. I look forward to seeing the actions identified in the report being completed and the benefits that they will bring to the Killybegs region.

### **Food Labelling**

17. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he has taken to implement the new EU country of origin labelling system for pork, sheep meat, poultry meat and goat meat; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39805/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Responsibility for the enforcement of general food labelling legislation including country of origin, rests with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI), a body under the aegis of the Minister for Health. This is achieved through service contracts between the FSAI and the relevant agencies including the Health Service Executive, the Local Authority Veterinary Service, the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority and my Department.

EU Council and Parliament Regulation 1169/2011 of 25 October 2011 on the provision of Food Information to the Consumer extends country of origin labelling to pork, sheepmeat, poultrymeat and goatmeat with effect from 13th December 2014 when, following impact assessments at EU level, the Commission shall adopt implementing acts. My Department fully supports this development and will continue to liaise with the Department of Health, the FSAI and relevant bodies representing farmers, processors and the retail sector regarding any requirements to be adopted to ensure conformity with new labelling requirements.

I am committed to ensuring that Irish consumers will have all the necessary information on the origin of meat products to allow them to make appropriate choices when purchasing food items.

### **Forestry Sector**

18. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the changes to the capital budget 2012 will make to the forestry sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38953/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Government will provide almost €112 million in funding for the forestry programme in 2012. The total amount of funding for forestry is the amount announced in the 2012 Estimates augmented by a carryover of Departmental savings of €27 million from 2011.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

This allocation reflects the Government's continued commitment to a sector which is important both in creating and maintaining employment in rural areas, while also playing a significant climate change role. €110.1 million of the allocation for forestry in 2012 will be expended on the capital side with the remainder funding promotion, training and forestry development on the current side.

The capital funding will ensure continuation of the afforestation programme. In the current economic circumstances this is a clear acknowledgement of the many benefits accruing from this programme. The continued investment in afforestation will help sustain employment in sectors such as nurseries and the planting sector. It is also an investment for the future in terms of meeting our climate change targets.

The allocation will enable us to pay for new planting at a level similar to this year of almost 7,000 hectares. In addition it will pay for annual premiums to existing forestry owners. Approximately 16,000 recipients, the majority of whom are farmers, will receive almost €75 million in premium payments in 2012. It is envisaged that the annual premium run will take place in April 2012. I am pleased to confirm that there will be no change in relation to the rate of payment of forestry premiums, which continue at current levels.

In addition to the afforestation budget there is provision for forestry management schemes. These schemes support best management of forests already planted to ensure that the State investment is fully realised. Since the late 1980s, the State has invested a significant amount of money in forestry — approximately 300,000 hectares of new forestry has been planted with the assistance of grant aid. In order to capitalise fully on this investment, it is important to ensure mobilisation of this timber resource. Forests planted in the 1990's are now approaching the time of first and second thinning. Providing a level of support for the creation of forestry harvesting roads incentivises thinning. It also ensures that a sustainable level of timber supply is provided to the downstream wood processing sector and the emerging vibrant wood energy sector.

The capital funding provided by the Government to forestry in 2012 is an acknowledgement of the importance of forestry to the economy both in terms of its employment creation and maintenance and as an investment for the country's future.

### **Proposed Legislation**

19. **Deputy Michael Colreavy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when he will be publishing the Animal Health and Welfare Bill; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39052/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Programme for Government 2011 contains a commitment to amend and strengthen legislation on animal cruelty and animal welfare. The main vehicle to fulfil this commitment will be the Animal Health and Welfare Bill which is a wide-ranging piece of legislation providing a basis for regulating the related areas of animal health and welfare. I intend to publish the Animal Health and Welfare Bill as soon as possible. The exact timing will depend on the legal text being finalised by the Attorney General's Office and the Cabinet agreeing to publication. As the Bill is a major piece of legislation with over seventy sections, I am sure that the Deputy will appreciate that it requires careful consideration and examination. I am hopeful however that matters will be progressed early in the New Year during the next Dail Session.

### **Job Creation**

20. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the

extent to which any evaluation has been done to determine the degree to which minor or major, new or existing food processing enterprises can be encouraged with a view to job creation, increased exports, import substitution and economic recovery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39823/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** *The Food Harvest 2020* report identified opportunities to sustain jobs in food processing and in the primary sector by improving competitiveness, achieving greater scale and innovation. The report concluded that a net gain of 6,500-7,000 jobs in food and aquaculture could be achieved by 2020.

The Government's recently announced Action Plan for Jobs highlighted the agri-food sector as an area that offers significant potential for generating jobs and growth and my Department has identified key actions to enhance the industry's sustainability and capacity in this regard.

In addition, Government Agencies are providing key supports to help food companies, both large and small, to create jobs, supply a quality product and grow businesses. Bord Bia, Teagasc, Enterprise Ireland and agencies at county level are each working towards a common goal of helping companies develop and expand; be it through opening doors in local or exporting markets, providing assistance in research or new product development or by way of providing key funding.

This week, I announced grant awards of approximately €10 million for research projects being undertaken, on a collaborative basis, by researchers from 13 third-level institutions across the island of Ireland. This funding is vital to the future development and growth of the food industry and primary agricultural production which are at present providing a leading example of the success of Irish exports.

### **Agri-Food Industry**

21. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect budget 2012 will have on active farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38946/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export

One of the most significant new measures introduced in Budget 2012 is the new stock relief incentive to encourage farm partnerships. For registered farm partnerships, the current rate of 25% stock relief will increase to 50%, and, for certain young trained farmers entering such partnerships, a rate of 100% stock relief will be available. This new incentive will run until December 2015. I believe that this measure will encourage active farmers to look at new ways of collaborating to improve quality and output.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

I am supporting farm partnerships because I believe that it will bring more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

Encouraging farm partnerships will also support the dairy herd expansion required over the coming years, enabling Irish farmers to avail of the opportunity presented by the abolition of EU milk quotas in March 2015. Another measure that will benefit active farmers is the reduction in the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, with immediate effect. In addition, half the rate (1%) will be applicable on transfers to close relatives until the end of 2014.

This change will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market — currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually — and ensure that land transfers to more active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

I am confident that this measure will give younger, progressive, commercial farmers a greater opportunity to purchase land and thereby increase their farm size, which will make the farm more competitive. Budget 2012 has also restructured the retirement relief available on *Capital Gains Tax* in order to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and to encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors. As of 1st January 2014, for those farmers aged 66 and over, an upper limit of €3m will be introduced on family transfers, compared to an unlimited amount currently. On non-family transfers, the current upper limit of €750,000 will be reduced to €500,000. Applying the new limits from 1st January 2014 allows farmers already aged 66 and over to plan the orderly transfer of assets in advance of that date.

It is important to remember that these new measures do not mean that a farmer has to cease farming altogether beyond the age of 66, but it allows them to plan for a phased gradual transfer of assets to the next generation.

We are restructuring retirement relief in order to encourage farmers around the normal retirement age, who have successors, to transfer their land and holdings to young, innovative, ambitious, prospective farmers. This restructuring will also encourage farmers with no successors to sell some of their land before normal retirement age. This measure will encourage an improvement in the age profile of farmers, and should ensure that farmland is put to more productive use.

### **Beef Industry**

22. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect the changes outlined in budget 2012 will have on beef farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38940/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There were a number of changes in the recent budget which will have an impact on beef farmers and which also will support the Food Harvest 2020 objectives, contributing to jobs and growth in the sector. While it was of course necessary to reduce public expenditure overall I have been able to continue with important measures for suckler farmers, for those in disadvantaged areas and to introduce a new Beef Technology Adoption Programme.

The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme will continue to be fully funded from national funds. In particular, despite the financial constraints faced, I will continue to provide the necessary funding to meet all payments due in 2012 at the current rates.

For farmers benefitting under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, there will be no changes in either the rates or the maximum eligible areas qualifying for payment despite the fact that expenditure will be reduced by some €30 million in 2012. This lower financial limit will be achieved by the introduction of targeted reform in the Disadvantaged Areas Payments, which will be achieved through changes to the stocking density minimum requirements, retention period and other elements of the scheme. The changes being introduced will focus the level of funding available on active farmers, who are making a valuable contribution to the rural economy.

I have allocated €5m towards the establishment of a Beef Technology Adoption Programme which will build on the work done to date under the Better Farm Programme. The roll-out of the Beef Discussion Groups will give beef farmers access to a range of additional skills to increase productivity. This programme was a key recommendation of the Beef 2020 Activation Group.

The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. As the tax measures announced have been designed specifically to encourage farming as a career for young people and to incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level, I feel confident that they will be of great benefit to active farmers, including those in the beef sector.

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food sector are as follows:

- a stock relief incentive to encourage Farm Partnerships;
- reduction in the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, so as to stimulate land sales and land transfers;
- restructuring of Capital Gains Tax retirement relief so as to encourage inter-generational transfer.

I am satisfied that these measures will help to address, in a strategic way, the issues relating to land mobility and consolidation and will help to bring new blood into farming including beef farming.

### **Departmental Funding**

23. **Deputy Aodhán Ó Ríordáin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he intends to investigate the current funding criteria for the horse and greyhound industry, taking into account that under the Horse and Greyhound Act 2001, the horse and greyhound fund received €57 million this year and the Irish Sports Council received €25.6 million for 2011; if he will reassess this situation in the interest of equity; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39223/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under Section 12 of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act, 2001(No. 20 of 2001), the horse and greyhound racing industries receive financial support from the State through the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (the Fund). State funding provided through the Fund is pivotal to the survival of the horse and greyhound racing industries.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

The funding provided to both Horse Racing Ireland and Bord na gCon supports these two very important industries and helps to sustain the important role of horse and greyhound breeding and training enterprises in the development of the rural economy. There are a total of 26 horse racing tracks and 17 greyhound racing tracks spread right across the country, owners and breeders are similarly distributed throughout the country. These industries generate very substantial economic activity and make a vital contribution to the rural economy, including farm incomes, and also to the social and cultural fabric of the nation. These are industries in which we as a nation excel.

The funding mechanism, which was established under the Horse and Greyhound Racing Act 2001 Act, has proven not to be satisfactory insofar as it has required an increasing level of Exchequer funding, over the years, due to successive cuts in betting duty coupled with an increasing amount of betting activity migrating to tax free platforms. It is against this background that the Government recently decided to proceed with legislation to amend the Betting Act 1931. This will provide for the extension of the betting duty regime to remote betting. It is the Government's intention that this legislation will be introduced in the first quarter of 2012.

I announced earlier in the week that 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. In taking this action I am acutely aware of the huge effort and commitment given by so many in bringing the industry to where it is today. But now we need to build on this and provide the framework that will facilitate all of us, concerned with the well being of the horse industry, to achieve further progress. I believe that the funding of the sector has to be placed on a more secure footing and I will be including this aspect in the review process.

The horse and greyhound industries are indigenous Irish industries supporting 21,000 jobs across the country, generating approximately €1.4bn in economic output in the economy annually. These industries produce a very good return on the State's investment and are a significant net contributor to the exchequer. They tick all the boxes in terms of employment, foreign direct investment and they are the type of export-orientated industries we need.

I believe the amount provided for in the estimates for the Fund in 2012 is appropriate given the current constraints on the public finances. Issues relating to the funding of the Irish Sports Council are a matter for my colleague the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport.

### **Agri-Food Industry**

24. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to progress the recommendations of Food Harvest 2020; the effects he believes the budget 2012 announcements will have on these targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38927/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As I mentioned earlier in my reply to Parliamentary Question No. 8, it was my intention that, broadly speaking, the measures announced in Budget 2012 would encourage farming activity, incentivise greater productivity at farm level and so assist the achievement of the growth targets mentioned in Food Harvest 2020.

In relation to Food Harvest 2020, I am personally driving progress on the FH2020 report, and through the efforts of the High Level Implementation Committee (HLIC) , considerable

progress has been made in the first year of its implementation. In July, I published ‘*Milestones for Success*’ which set out the level of action which had been taken on the 215 recommendations in FH2020. It also itemised 54 actions already taken over the past year by my Department and relevant State Agencies on Acting Smart, Thinking Green and Achieving Growth; the key themes of FH2020.

I am continuing to drive implementation of FH2020 through active engagement with state bodies, industry and farm organisations at HLIC meetings and personal interaction with these key stakeholders. In addition, I have set myself and the agencies working with me on this critically important project, a series of 40 tasks to be completed by end July 2012. To make sure that these plans remain on track, the HLIC and myself have agreed quarterly targets which will help monitor progress and I will assess the progress on the September-December 2011 targets at the next HLIC meeting scheduled for end January 2012. Another monitoring mechanism was the decision to set interim milestones for 2013 and 2105 and all parties are committed to meeting these milestones.

25. **Deputy Dara Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the role that agriculture and the agri-food sector can play in Ireland’s economic recovery with particular regard to the Food Harvest 2020 report produced by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38952/11]

44. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way the agri-food sector can contribute to the country’s economic revival; the effect that changes made in budget 2012 may have on this revival; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38950/11]

59. **Deputy Seán Kyne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the role that the agri-food sector can play in Ireland’s economic recovery; the effect he believes the announcements in budget 2012 will have on the agri-food sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38949/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 25, 44 and 59 together.

The agri-food sector is contributing to the country’s economic recovery through its significant role in adding value to the economy and its contribution to the export led recovery. CSO data shows that Ireland’s agri-food exports increased by 11% in 2010, reaching almost €8 billion. This sector is continuing to improve in 2011 with current figures showing a 12% improvement in the first six months of 2011 vis a vis the same period in 2010 and final year projections are of the order of €8.9 billion.

The agri-food sector plays a particularly strong role in encouraging domestic expenditure. Analysis shows that more than 70% of its expenditure is on Irish goods and services. This, allied to its lower level of profit repatriation, means that its contribution to the Irish economy is significantly greater than that of other manufacturing industries.

The Deputy should also be aware of the embedded nature of this sector which according to the Census of Agricultural Production has

- An annual turnover of €22billion, which is 20% of industries turnover
- Accounts for 18% of Ireland’s total industrial output and
- Provides an outlet for produce from Ireland’s 128,000 farms and is the main employment for circa 135,000 people

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

To ensure the continued development of the sector, I am personally leading the implementation of *Food Harvest 2020* which sets out the industry's strategic vision for the next decade and which contains over 200 recommendations designed to assist the industry achieve its key growth targets. Fuller details on plans to progress this report are available in my answer to Parliamentary Question 38927/11 of today's date.

It is my view, broadly speaking, that the measures announced in Budget 2012 would encourage farming activity, incentivise greater productivity at farm level and so assist the achievement of the growth targets mentioned in *Food Harvest 2020*.

### Departmental Expenditure

26. **Deputy Barry Cowen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money he has spent on external public relations broken down by area such as photography, publications and so on since March 2011 to date. [39795/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department does not employ external public relations companies and has not for 2011. Public relations advice, where required is provided by my Department's Press Office. It is not possible to provide costs for this service, as the work is carried out as part of the standard duties of the staff involved.

Table 1

Nature of Service Provided	Payment €
Photography	27,548
Advertising*	269,451
Printing	2,924
Total	299,923

\*The vast bulk of the Departments advertising is carried out in the print media. This figure, which has reduced by 42% compared to 2010, includes the publication of statutory notices that are required to comply with various National & EU legislative requirements. Other media such as television & radio are rarely used. Internet media has not been used to date.

*Question No. 27 withdrawn.*

### Fishing Industry Development

28. **Deputy Willie O'Dea** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures he has undertaken to review and reform the management of herring fisheries in Ireland to date. [39828/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Earlier this year I asked the fishing industry and other interested parties to make proposals on the future management arrangements for all Irish herring fisheries. In response to my notification of the review, a number of proposals were received from industry, many offering conflicting views, particularly in regard to the need to ring fence the fisheries. Taking account of the views expressed I am currently examining a number of options for new management arrangements. I plan to make these proposals available to Industry representatives for views shortly, before making a final decision on the management arrangements for the 2012 herring fisheries. Revised arrange-

ments, if any, will be on the basis that they deliver a proper and effective management regime for the stock.

### State Bodies

29. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which Coillte is responsible to him; the interaction he has had with Coillte since taking office; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38959/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Coillte Teoranta was established as a private commercial company under the Forestry Act, 1988. In accordance with that Act, my consent is required by the company for certain actions. For some of those actions, the approval of the Minister for Finance, or now, following the enactment of the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act 2011, the approval of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, is also required. Coillte, as a state body, is also subject to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. This Code, which was updated in 2009, sets out the governance framework agreed by the Government for the internal management, and the internal and external reporting relationships, of commercial and non-commercial state bodies. The Code specifies *inter alia* the reports that the Chairperson and the Company must provide to me, and my Department, on a range of issues.

In relation to my interaction with Coillte since taking office, I have met with the Chairman, the Chief Executive and other representatives of the company on a number of occasions since March and there is ongoing contact and correspondence between officials in my Department and Coillte as and when required.

### Agri-Food Industry

30. **Deputy Heather Humphreys** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the initiatives he is undertaking to open new markets for Irish food abroad; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38956/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am of the belief that it is always beneficial to have a wide range of outlets available for our high quality agricultural produce. To this end my Department engages with Bord Bia and the Department of Foreign Affairs, in consultation with the industry, to secure access to more third country outlets.

In relation to meat, we reached agreements in 2011 with the authorities in Turkey, Egypt and Singapore which allow for the export of beef. My Department also hosted visits by official delegations from the Philippines (beef access), Australia (pork access), China (pork and beef access) and Korea (pork access) as part of our efforts to gain access for Irish meats to these rapidly growing markets. There are ongoing discussions at EU level with the Russian Federation which, it is hoped, will allow for the export of sheepmeat from EU counties (including Ireland), in the future, and we have been pressing at EU level for an adjustment in the US TSE rule which would permit Irish and EU beef and sheepmeat to be exported to the US. Longer term targets for Irish meat access include China for beef and lamb, and Japan for beef. Other targeted markets include access for Irish beef and lamb to the North African and Middle East regions. My Department is engaging actively with the authorities in these countries in order to secure access for these products. There is a strong demand for meat globally. My Department remains focused, in consultation with the industry, on ensuring that Irish exporters are able to take full advantage of the opportunities that arise. At present 20% of all Irish pork

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is exported outside of the EU and most Irish exports of beef and lamb go direct to other EU countries.

On the dairy side, Ireland already has access to dairy markets worldwide. Nonetheless I am working with industry to raise the profile of the Irish dairy sector, and the Irish agri food sector generally in emerging markets. In this regard I visited Algeria in September to meet my counterpart, Minister Rachid Benaissa and to open a new Irish Dairy Board Office and Packing Centre in what is already a significant, but expanding market for Irish dairy products, and I am confident that my continuing work in this area will ultimately pay dividends for the dairy and other sectors.

Once my Department has obtained access to markets for any agri food products, the extent to which those markets are exploited by Irish agri food businesses is determined by the usual commercial considerations, including demand, supply and price. My Department and I remain committed to working with industry, through Bord Bia and with the assistance of the international network of Irish Embassies, to raise the profile of Ireland and the Irish agri food sector, and to build the kind of confidence in our production and control systems that forms the foundation of successful international trade, so that Irish agri food businesses can continue to develop a strong international profile and increase exports in traditional and emerging markets.

In terms of the scoping and development of new markets, Bord Bia implements a comprehensive market development programme to acquire new customers for Irish food and drink companies in priority markets. Through a network of 10 overseas offices, Bord Bia undertakes in excess of a thousand buyer presentations/meetings per year. In addition the Bord Bia Marketing Fellowship with 26 experienced graduates undertaking 106 commercial assignments in 12 overseas markets from the US to South Korea delivers increased business and market insight for about 80 exporting companies. In February of next year, Bord Bia's Marketplace International 2012 will provide a business development platform for 177 Irish food and drink companies to meet with over 300 international buyers and about 100 Irish buyers.

### **Fisheries Protection**

31. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the response he has received from the European Commission in relation to the recently published discard atlas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38943/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** On 8 November, I launched an Irish “discard” atlas, which is a detailed compendium of discards by the Irish Fleet on a stock by stock and area by area basis. The Atlas, compiled and produced by the Marine Institute and Bord Iascaigh Mhara with the support of Irish Industry, outlines a range of potential measures to help reduce discarding. I sent a copy of the Atlas to Commissioner Damanaki.

This is the first publication of its kind and places Ireland firmly to the fore in the debate on eliminating discards. The atlas will inform the process to achieve real change and a significant reduction in discarding within the new Common Fisheries Policy, identifies where action needs to be taken, and the potential measures that could be adopted.

The information provided in the Atlas is based on information that is collected by and available to all Member States. I asked Commissioner Damanaki, in the interests of tackling the discards problem appropriately, to encourage other Member States to make this type of

information available in a similar format to inform the current discussions on this critical element of the new CFP.

Commissioner Damanaki has responded and has identified the Atlas as an excellent initiative in finding an effective solution to the wasteful practice of discarding. She advised that she sees the Atlas as a positive step and considers that it would be useful for other Member States to have such information collated. She also welcomes the inclusion of a number of potential measures in the publication to reduce discarding and expresses her commitment to working to eliminate discards under the Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy.

I will continue to work both nationally and in the context of the reform of the CFP to pursue actions that will ensure that the shared objective of all to address the discards problem is giving priority.

### **Common Agricultural Policy**

32. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to consult with the stakeholders in the farming industry here in relation to the negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38944/11]

42. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38931/11]

48. **Deputy Pat Deering** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his priorities in the negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38932/11]

55. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps which he is taking to construct an alliance at member state level to support Ireland's case for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39014/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 32, 42, 48 and 55 together.

I would refer colleagues to the statement I made to this House in October last following the launch of the CAP reform proposals. This set out in detail my views on the package and my priorities in the negotiations. To summarise the position, my priorities in these negotiations are:

- To ensure that the negotiations on the next EU budget framework deliver a well-resourced CAP to support sustainable food production in the EU.
- To retain Ireland's funding both for direct payments and for rural development in any redistribution of CAP funds between Member States;
- To obtain flexibility for Member States in relation to payment models and transition arrangements for distribution of single payment funds to farmers;
- To ensure that rural development policy includes appropriate targeted measures to support competitiveness and sustainability; and finally,
- To keep CAP processes as simple and as effective as possible and to minimise unnecessary bureaucracy for the farmer and costs for the State.

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Turning to the details, first of all on overall funding, the parallel proposal on the multiannual financial framework for the next EU budget, which was presented by the Commission last June, maintains, at least in nominal terms, the current level of CAP funding. This is a reasonable starting point in the negotiations and compares favourably with the pressure for severe cuts to the CAP from certain elements of the Commission and a good number of Member States earlier this year.

As regards the distribution of CAP funds between Member States, the proposal to use a pragmatic basis to redistribute Pillar 1 Direct Income supports between Member States is broadly positive. But I continue to believe that it would be best to use this approach for the distribution of pillar 1 and pillar 2 funds combined. Realistically we cannot agree to an allocation of pillar 1 funds until we see exactly what is proposed for pillar 2.

Another serious concern relates to distribution of Direct Payments within Member States. I have a major problem with the proposal to impose uniform national or regional payment rates. This would cause large transfers in Ireland from the more productive farms to more marginal and lower productivity holdings. I believe that it will also cause difficulties in other Member States. I will be looking for the maximum flexibility for Member States to design the payment model that suits their own conditions, provided of course that this does not interfere with competition. This is a key point for me. The transition process proposed by the Commission is also much too abrupt and front loaded. Any transition process to a new payment model, whatever that model may be, should be gradual and back-loaded to avoid sudden adjustments and to give farmers time to adjust.

I have related concerns about the proposal to assign 30% of the Direct Payment to a greening component. I am not opposed to greening of the CAP. Indeed Ireland actively promotes sustainable and carbon efficient agricultural production. However, I have issues with the Commission proposal. It will hasten the movement to flat rates of payment, double administration effort adding to bureaucracy and there are also issues with the individual greening criteria proposed. We need to look at less bureaucratic and simpler means of further greening the CAP, building on what we have already achieved through cross compliance and GAEC. There is a huge variation in agro-ecological conditions and farming systems throughout the EU. In these circumstances it does not seem realistic to impose the same three criteria in all cases. Flexibility for Member States in the form of a menu approach would be more realistic and would allow member states to adapt the green payment to their own conditions and to their own level of environmental ambition — subject to some minimum default requirements.

The proposal to use 2014 as a reference year for establishing new entitlements has generated much comment. I continue to have concerns about the effects this may have on the land market between now and then. My office has outlined these concerns in some detail to the Commission. This is an issue that will need to be clarified and sorted out in the detailed discussions to come.

On a positive note, I am very pleased at the inclusion of the provision on payments to young farmers in pillar 1. It is very important that we support our young farmers and encourage structural change through both the first and second pillars of the CAP. There is also a proposed scheme for small scale farmers who, as an alternative to tiered direct payments, may opt for lump sum payments of between €500 and €1,000. At first sight this seems more geared to the subsistence type holdings found in some of the southern Member States than to the size of holdings we would consider small in Irish terms. For that reason, I am not sure whether there is much of interest for us in this proposal but we will consider it in consultation with the farming organisations and other stakeholders. There are further options for Member States to use part of their national ceilings to support areas of natural handicap and for coupled payments. Over-

all I believe there is merit in having a series of flexible and voluntary options available to Member States to gear their payments best to their own farming conditions.

I would take issue with the way the Commission is proposing to define an active farmer. I believe this proposed definition may give rise to unnecessary bureaucracy and I will be seeking in the negotiations to have some changes made. The key point in my view is to give Member States sufficient room to define an active farmer in a way suitable to their own conditions. As to the progressive capping foreseen of large payments, the reality is that capping would have very little impact in Ireland. Most of our farms are small family farms and would not come close to the capping threshold proposed.

Turning to Rural Development, I welcome the continuation of the three current objectives and the abolition of axis balance requirement in pillar 2. But I have concerns about the very cumbersome process proposed for co-ordination of priorities and spending between the various EU funds; I will be seeking for it to be streamlined and simplified.

There are some interesting new options in the menu of measures proposed. These include new measures for farm and business development that provide start up aid for young farmers, small farms and non-agricultural activities. The latter provide considerable scope as they are directed at farmers, farm households and SMEs and Micro Enterprises. The new options to facilitate cooperative projects and to address risk management may also be of interest. Producer groups also feature in the menu of measures available. Support for LEADER activities will also be a part of our next programme. We will examine all of these options carefully. Of course, my over-arching priority is to maintain support for on-farm investment, including appropriate support for afforestation, to assist the restructuring necessary to deliver sustainable intensification of food production and a more competitive primary food production system.

As to market supports, I am pleased that the Commission has proposed retention of intervention at safety-net level and private storage aid, although I have some concerns at the additional discretion proposed to be given to the Commission to activate these measures. The important issue now is to ensure that there are adequate funds available and accessible for these measures.

I also strongly support the proposal to abolish sugar quotas from 2015. There is clearly a problem with the supply of sugar across the EU and I firmly believe that we need to move away from supply limiting measures at the earliest possible opportunity. We need to address the realities of the market and ensure there is security of supply for the food industry and consumers.

These proposals will be subject to detailed examination and discussion in the negotiations that will now take place. In that connection, since I took up office earlier this year I have made it a priority to build up alliances with my counterparts in like-minded Member States in order to garner support for my position on the proposed reform of the CAP. I have had formal bilateral meetings with my German, French, UK, Spanish, Estonian and Danish Ministerial colleagues. I have also taken the opportunity to meet with my Ministerial colleagues from the other Member States and the EU Commission at the EU Council of Agriculture Ministers meetings held each month in Brussels or Luxemburg and also at the Informal Ministerial Councils held in Hungary and Poland. Last month I addressed a meeting of the Agricultural Committee of the European Parliament. Over the coming months I plan to intensify these contacts. I have meetings scheduled tomorrow and Friday in Brussels with my Danish and Finnish colleagues. Early in the new year I will meet again with MEPS and I will host a visit to Ireland by the Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development. As negotiations develop, I will continue to interact with my Ministerial colleagues and with the Commission

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and European Parliament. My intention is to maintain and develop alliances with like-minded Member States to secure the best possible outcome for Ireland.

Of course, my consultations are not confined to my EU counterparts. An initial consultation process was launched with stakeholders by my Department in July 2009 to obtain views on what EU agriculture policies would serve Ireland and the EU best in the years to come. In 2010, a Consultative Committee on the CAP was set up by my Department comprising all the major farming and agriculture related representative organisations as well as a number of academics. The Committee have met on several occasions, most recently in November, and also participated in the Stakeholder event organised by my Department during the visit of Commissioner Ciolos last year. The most recent meeting provided an opportunity for all the stakeholder organisations to give their initial reactions to the formal Commission proposals. My officials and I will continue to consult with farming organisations and stakeholders as the negotiations progress.

### **Alternative Energy Projects**

33. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the way in which he is supporting agricultural based renewable energy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38960/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** As the Deputy is aware, energy policy, including renewable energy policy, is a matter in the first instance for my colleague the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, Pat Rabbitte, T.D. Officials from my Department work closely with their counterparts in Minister Rabbitte's Department and also with other Agencies and Bodies such as the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Teagasc in developing renewable energy policy in the Agriculture Sector.

The Bioenergy Scheme, which has been in place since 2007, has provided grant-aid of up to 50% of establishment costs of the energy crops willow and miscanthus. Up to the end of 2011, over 3,000 hectares of energy crops have been established under the Bioenergy Scheme. On Monday 5th December 2011, as part of the announcement of the expenditure estimates for my Department in 2012, I announced the re-opening of the Bioenergy Scheme for 2012. The Scheme in 2012 has the potential to support the establishment of a further 1,400 hectares of energy crops in 2012.

My Department has also provided funding for research under the Stimulus fund 2007-2013 to three projects related to anaerobic digestion. These are:

(a) Developing grass for sustainable renewable energy generation and value added products — led by Dr Padraig O'Kiely (Teagasc Grange) and in collaboration with QUB and UCC.

(b) Energy generation option for pig manure and sustainable disposal of residue — led by Dr Peadar Lawlor (Teagasc Moorepark) and in collaboration with NUIG and AFBI Northern Ireland.

(c) Evaluating Irish grassland as a source for bioenergy: Environmental Impacts and long term sustainability — led by Dr. Tomara Hochstrasser (UCD) and in collaboration with Teagasc Oakpark and AFBI Northern Ireland.

A Scheme of Investment Aid for Demonstration of On-Farm Waste Processing Facilities was introduced by my Department in June 2006 under the aegis of the 2000-2006 National Develop-

ment Plan, with funding of €4m as provided for in that Plan. In 2007, grant-aid was approved under the Scheme for the development of ten on-farm anaerobic digestion facilities. The grant-aid is payable only on completion of the work concerned and one grant of €400,000 has been drawn down to-date.

The Deputy may also be aware of the recent decision by DG Competition to grant State Aid clearance for proposed Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariffs (REFIT) for Biomass Technologies. I am confident that the introduction of these tariffs will help to underpin the further development of renewable energy initiatives in the Agriculture Sector.

### Departmental Reforms

34. **Deputy Nicky McFadden** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the measures being taken by him in regard to reform and cost saving measures to ensure cost savings and efficiencies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38954/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has been engaged in an ongoing programme of reorganisation and structural reform at all levels. In the context of the 2012 Budget negotiations, my priorities have been to continue the process and to achieve further efficiencies and improved service delivery both within the Department and in the State bodies under its remit. I am determined to ensure that all schemes and services are delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible and the Comprehensive Expenditure Review, which was completed earlier in the year, was a rigorous exercise involving a thorough review and analysis of all elements of expenditure.

In addition to managing reduced funding for programmes in 2012, there will be a further reduction of €12m in the Administrative Budget for the Department. This saving will be implemented through a combination of reduced staffing levels, changes in work practices and the manner in which schemes are administered, reductions in disease levels resulting from more intensive and targeted controls, the advanced use of information technology and a programme of internal reviews of business units, including a root and branch review of the local office network, which has led to improved business processes and greater operational efficiency.

The programme of reorganisation and reform, both in my Department and agencies, has yielded and will deliver the following savings:

- a 25% reduction in Department staffing levels from 4,800 in 2005 to less than 3,600 currently,
- a 22% reduction, or about €68m, in the Administrative Budget for the Department in 2012 by comparison with 2008;
- reductions in funding and staffing levels for State bodies,
- the Local Office Re-organisation Programme will reduce the number of local offices from 58 to 16, when fully completed in 2012;
- expansion of the shared services programme for agencies and other Government Departments.

I intend to keep the situation under close scrutiny to ensure the further improvements are introduced and that value for money is provided in the administration of the Department.

### Beef Industry

35. **Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the

[Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy.]

Marine his views on the potential of Ireland's beef industry; the support he is providing to them with regard to the Food Harvest 2020 targets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38941/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Beef production is the predominant activity on Irish farms with more than 100,000 holdings involved in supplying the raw material to an industry that employs almost 8,000 people and exported product worth more than €1.5 billion in 2010. The prospects for 2011 are positive with the value of beef exports expected to grow by 9% to upwards of €1.7 billion for the year.

The Food Harvest 2020 report offers a vision for the long-term development of all the main food industry sectors. In relation to the beef sector specifically, an industry-led Activation Group reported earlier this year.

The report suggests that there is market demand to support growth in the suckler and dairy herds. Maximising beef output potential from the national herd is contingent on a number of factors, not least on the price of beef on EU and international markets. In light of current and future market developments, it is essential that a co-ordinated approach is taken by stakeholders to improve efficiency at farm and processing level, to breed better animals, maintain high standards of quality and food safety and maximise the market potential of Ireland's unique natural advantages.

Already we are seeing results, for example, in the areas of innovation and collaboration. Bord Bia has secured accreditation for its beef carbon footprint model. This is now part of the Beef and Lamb Quality Assurance Scheme making it the first such scheme to include environmental criteria. I see this as an important practical step towards the goal of creating an umbrella Brand Ireland identity as recommended in the 2020 strategy. On the production side, Teagasc is working with the processing industry on research projects investigating dairy beef production and on optimal young bull production and my Department is continuing to make a substantial financial contribution to the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation to support its efforts to improve breed quality.

In 2012 my Department will continue to operate the Suckler Cow Welfare scheme which has been allocated €25 million of national funds and is an important measure in the continuing development of high quality animals in the national herd. Also I have secured funding of €5 million for beef discussion groups. These discussion groups, the establishment of which was called for by the industry led Activation group, will allow farmers in the livestock and beef sectors to follow best practice in the implementation of the latest development in cattle breeding and grassland management.

#### *International Trade*

Insofar as our international trade in beef is concerned, I have been extremely active in developing relationships in new and expanding markets in order to build the kind of confidence in Irish production and control systems that provide a platform for long-term trading relationships in the future. As part of that effort, I hosted a visit from the Chinese Vice-Minister for Agriculture earlier this year, and signed a mutual co-operation agreement in the agri-food sector. In addition, my Department has engaged with a range of third countries, including Australia, the Philippines, South Korea, China, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria and others, with a view to opening new markets and expanding the presence of Irish beef in existing markets. And of course Bord Bia continues, through its marketing and promotional activities, and through its quality assurance schemes, to consolidate the position of the Irish agri-food on the domestic market and to expand its presence in EU and third country markets.

### Common Agricultural Policy

36. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reforms being discussed under the Common Agricultural Policy negotiations that will affect farmers in the west of Ireland who work on less favourable land; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38934/11]

57. **Deputy Colm Keaveney** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on the issue on Common Agricultural Policy reform measures and their implications for designated disadvantaged areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38933/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 36 and 57 together.

Firstly I would like to emphasise that it is my intention in the ongoing negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy to ensure that the reform delivers the environment in which Irish agriculture and food production can develop and prosper based on viable family farms in all parts of Ireland.

The EU Commission proposals, published on 12 October 2011, contain texts of seven draft Regulations covering the three main aspects of the CAP (direct income supports, market supports and rural development) the financing, control and inspection arrangements and transitional arrangements for 2013.

Provision is made in the Direct Payments proposal for Member States to allocate up to 5% of National Envelope to farmers situated in Areas of Natural Constraints. These are areas that we know as disadvantaged or less favoured areas. I welcome the flexibility provided by this option in the proposals. We will have to consider, in association with all of the stakeholders, whether to take up this option.

The Rural Development proposal contains the Commission's latest proposals for the delineation of Less Favoured Areas (now renamed areas of natural constraint). I am pleased that the Commission has finally accepted "soil moisture balance" as one of the bio-physical criteria to be used to determine inclusion in such areas. This was a point pressed repeatedly by Ireland with a view to ensuring that proper account was taken of the cool damp climate in Ireland and its effect of trafficability of the soil. I still have some issues with the latest Commission proposals notably concerning the percentage of land that must be affected by one of the bio-physical criteria to qualify for inclusion. I will be taking this matter up with the Commission in the course of the negotiations.

### Agri-Food Industry

37. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the current projections for Irish agri-exports in view of the fact that his annual report showed them to have increased 11% from 2009; the effect the recent budget announcements will have on exports; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38929/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The projections for 2011 in relation to Irish agri-food exports have remained good all year, although there was a decrease in some sub-sectors in the third quarter. According to the Irish Exporters Association we can expect exports for 2011 to be in the region of 12% higher in 2011 than they were in 2010. It is estimated that food and drink exports will total €8.9bn in 2011. If these figures are borne out in the final results in January it will be another excellent result for the sector.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

The Food Harvest 2020 strategy outlines the plans for increased output by the sector over the coming decade. Most of Ireland's food production is exported and therefore the changes introduced in budget 2012 will also impact on our exports. The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export.

### **Animal Diseases**

38. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the evidence there is to show that badgers spread TB; the research that has been carried out in relation to same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39054/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** There is considerable evidence that badgers are responsible for the spread of bovine TB and that their removal results in a reduction in the incidence of the disease in cattle. I would refer the Deputy to a paper entitled *Mycobacterium bovis Infection in the Eurasian Badger (Meles Meles): the Disease, Pathogenesis, Epidemiology and Control* which was published in Science Direct earlier this year. This paper summarises the evidence on the role of badgers in the spread of TB in cattle both in Ireland and the UK and concludes that “the ability to eradicate badgers is severely constrained while infection continues to be spread from badgers”.

In Ireland, the first major research project took place in East Offaly between 1989 and 1995. Badgers were removed from an area of 528 square kilometres and the change in the incidence of TB was compared with data from a reference area surrounding the removal area. The risk of herd breakdowns in the removal area was significantly reduced, the risk of a TB breakdown in a herd being 14 times higher in the control area compared with the removal area. The next significant study was conducted from 1997 to 2002 in four different areas of the country. This study, known as the Four Area Project, involved the intensive and proactive removal of badgers in four “removal” areas and “reactive” culling of badgers in matched reference areas. The published results of this project demonstrated that there was a significant reduction in TB levels in cattle following the removal of badgers. In particular, the total number of herd restrictions in the removal areas for the study period was almost 60% lower than in the pre study period. In addition, in County Laois, targeted badger removal between 1989 and 2005 was shown to have a significant beneficial impact on the risk of future breakdowns (Olea-Popelka et al 2009).

In view of this research, the Bovine TB eradication programme implemented by my Department contains a comprehensive wildlife strategy in order to limit the spread of TB from badgers to cattle. My Department is satisfied that this strategy has contributed to a reduction in the incidence of TB over the past number of years and, accordingly, to a significant reduction in the cost of the programme to the taxpayer. Herd incidence has fallen from 7.5% in 2000 to 4.6% last year and reactor numbers will be under 20,000 this year, the lowest recorded since

the commencement of the programme in the 1950s. The enhancement of the badger culling strategy has been the only significant change in my Department's approach to TB eradication over the past 10 years.

As I have indicated previously, it is my intention is to replace culling with a vaccination programme as soon as on-going research demonstrates that this is a practicable proposition.

### **Agriculture Sector**

39. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect that budget 2012 will have on young farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38938/11]

47. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect that budget 2012 will have on those looking to get involved in farming, particularly young farmers; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38939/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 39 and 47 together.

The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food sector are as follows:

#### *Incentive for Farm Partnerships*

One of the most significant new measures introduced in Budget 2012 is the new stock relief incentive to encourage farm partnerships. For registered farm partnerships, the current rate of 25% stock relief will increase to 50%, and, for certain young trained farmers entering such partnerships, a rate of 100% stock relief will be available. This new incentive will run until December 2015.

I am supporting farm partnerships because I believe that collaboration through partnership can improve farm structures generally, facilitating farms to operate more efficiently, increasing scale on farms, and bringing more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

I am confident that providing an additional incentive to farm partnership formation will encourage farmers to consider more closely the benefits of farm partnerships to their farming business and in providing a better work-life balance.

Encouraging farm partnerships will also support the dairy herd expansion required over the coming years, enabling Irish farmers to avail of the opportunity presented by the abolition of EU milk quotas in March 2015.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

### *Stamp duty reduction*

I am particularly pleased that Budget 2012 reduces the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, with immediate effect. In addition, half the rate (1%) will be applicable on transfers to close relatives until the end of 2014.

This change will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market — currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually — and ensure that land transfers to more active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

I am confident that this measure will give younger, progressive, commercial farmers a greater opportunity to purchase land and thereby increase their farm size, which will make the farm more competitive.

### *Capital Gains Tax retirement relief*

Budget 2012 has restructured the retirement relief available on Capital Gains Tax in order to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and to encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors. As of 1st January 2014, for those farmers aged 66 and over, an upper limit of €3m will be introduced on family transfers, compared to an unlimited amount currently. On non-family transfers, the current upper limit of €750,000 will be reduced to €500,000. Applying the new limits from 1st January 2014 allows farmers already aged 66 and over to plan the orderly transfer of assets in advance of that date.

It is important to remember that these new measures do not mean that a farmer has to cease farming altogether beyond the age of 66, but it allows them to plan for a phased gradual transfer of assets to the next generation.

We are restructuring retirement relief in order to encourage farmers around the normal retirement age, who have successors, to transfer their land and holdings to young, innovative, ambitious, prospective farmers. This restructuring will also encourage farmers with no successors to sell some of their land before normal retirement age. This measure will encourage an improvement in the age profile of farmers, and should ensure that farmland is put to more productive use.

## **Milk Quota**

40. **Deputy Áine Collins** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views that Ireland could be over quota in the new 2011-2012 milk quota; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38935/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am of course concerned that Ireland could be over quota in the 2011/2012 milk quota year. Favourable market and weather conditions during the 2010/2011 milk quota year contributed to a dramatic increase in milk production, which resulted in a remarkable turnaround from a position where the country was 10 per cent under quota at the end of the 2009/2010 milk quota year. These favourable conditions have continued through the current quota year, and although supplies have begun to fall back in recent weeks, estimated delivery figures for the period up to the end of November show that the country is 0.41 per cent over quota.

In such circumstances, it is appropriate to again remind all dairy farmers of the need to carefully plan their production activities and to pay close attention to the limitations imposed

by the quota regime if they are to avoid potentially very damaging super levy fines. This will be particularly important as the sector moves into the spring calving period in early 2012 and milk production resumes in earnest. Even allowing for a further increase of one per cent in the national quota since 1 April 2011, a repeat of the delivery pattern seen in spring 2011 could put the country in serious danger of going over quota. It is therefore incumbent upon every milk producer to continue to exercise the necessary caution and to seek advice from, for example, Teagasc on the most sensible approach to be taken in managing their enterprises as they enter a crucial phase of the preparations for quota abolition in 2015.

For my part, I intend to continue my efforts to raise the issue of the soft landing at every opportunity with Member State colleagues and with the Commission. However, the latter has resisted attempts to revisit this matter, and there is, in any event, no guarantee that a majority of Member States will support calls for a more flexible milk quota regime. Therefore Irish dairy farmers must continue to operate on the assumption that no further changes will be made to the quota arrangements agreed in the context of the CAP Health Check.

### **Disadvantaged Areas Scheme**

41. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the steps he is taking to support agricultural development in less favoured areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39015/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme 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 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. The Disadvantaged Areas Scheme, as implemented in Ireland, compares very favourably with the aid paid to farmers in other Member States both from the point of view of the rate of aid payable and the number of farmers covered. In fact, less than 50% of all farmers situated in Less Favoured Areas across the EU do not benefit from aid under this Scheme.

While it was necessary to reduce the total funding for the Scheme as part of the recent budgetary process, I am pleased that there will be no change in either the rates of aid payable or the total maximum areas payable under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme.

I am introducing targeted reform in the Disadvantaged Areas Payments, which will be achieved through reform of the stocking density, retention period and other elements of the scheme. The changes being introduced will favour active farmers, who are farming exclusively in Less Favoured Areas and are subject to clearance by the European Commission.

The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme is also an important measure for many farmers situated in Less Favoured Areas. This fully nationally funded Scheme will continue in place and I have provided the necessary funding to meet all payments due in 2012 at the current rates of €40 per cow. Over the next few days, my Department will pay over €12.3 million to 21,000 farmers, the vast majority of which are situated in Less Favoured Areas.

*Question No. 42 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Agri-Food Industry**

43. **Deputy Peadar Tóibín** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine in view

[Deputy Peadar Tóibín.]

of the role of the agri-food sector as a major employer and exporter, if he will support the development of an all Ireland approach to developing jobs in this sector. [35943/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In the context of my engagement at North/South Ministerial Council I have made it clear that the implementation of the all-island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy is a necessary prerequisite to greater co-operation on the development of the agri-food sector. Progress is being made in this respect.

The primary responsibility for the fostering of jobs on an all island basis lies with my colleague the Minister for Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation, Richard Bruton TD in the context of the North South Ministerial Council and the North South Body Intertrade Ireland which comes under his auspices. This is the business development body, whose mission is to promote North-South trade by building business capability, jobs and competitiveness.

*Question No. 44 answered with Question No. 25.*

### **Fishing Industry Development**

45. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effect that budget 2012 will have on the potential of the Irish fishing industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38958/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Under Budget 2012 €10 million has been allocated for development of the seafood industry and €6 million for the Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme. This compares to €10.6 million for seafood development and €10.1 million for the Fishery Harbours and Coastal Infrastructure Capital Development Programme in 2011. In the present economic situation and in view of the cutbacks being experienced elsewhere, this must be considered a vote of confidence by Government in the potential of the seafood industry to contribute to economic growth and job creation.

Following an Interim Evaluation of the EU co-funded Seafood Development Operational Programme during 2011, my Department and BIM are reviewing the content of that Programme and the investment priorities identified within it, to prioritise investment in those areas that can best contribute to growth and jobs and the targets identified in Food Harvest 2020. The revised Programme will be subject to approval by a Monitoring Committee of stakeholders and by the European Commission. I am satisfied that the funding available in 2012 will be sufficient to support the continued development of the seafood sector.

The Fishery Harbour and Coastal Infrastructure Development Capital Programme provides funding for works at the six State-owned Fishery Harbour Centres as well as other Local Authority owned harbours and landing places around the coast.

This programme enhances harbour infrastructure, provides much needed employment in coastal communities during the construction phase and establishes a platform to create and support sustained employment in the fishing, aquaculture and marine leisure sectors.

### **Forestry Sector**

46. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to reduce forestry premiums in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39057/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Government will provide almost €112 million in funding for the forestry programme in 2012. The total amount of funding for forestry is the amount announced in the 2012 Estimates augmented by a carryover of Departmental savings of €27 million from 2011. This allocation reflects the Government's continued commitment to a sector which is important both in creating and maintaining employment in rural areas, while also playing a significant climate change role.

The allocation will enable the State to pay for new planting at a level similar to this year of almost 7,000 hectares. In addition it will pay for annual premiums to existing forestry owners. Approximately 16,000 recipients, the majority of whom are farmers, will receive almost €75 million in premium payments in 2012. It is envisaged that the annual premium run will take place in April 2012. I am pleased to confirm that there will be no change in relation to the rate of payment of forestry premiums, which continue at current levels.

*Question No. 47 answered with Question No. 39.*

*Question No. 48 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Agri-Food Industry**

49. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason behind any changes made in budget 2012 including his key priorities for the agri-food sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38925/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's priorities for the agri-food industry and in particular the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food sector are as follows:

#### *Incentive for Farm Partnerships*

One of the most significant new measures introduced in Budget 2012 is the new stock relief incentive to encourage farm partnerships. For registered farm partnerships, the current rate of 25% stock relief will increase to 50%, and, for certain young trained farmers entering such partnerships, a rate of 100% stock relief will be available. This new incentive will run until December 2015.

I am supporting farm partnerships because I believe that collaboration through partnership can improve farm structures generally, facilitating farms to operate more efficiently, increasing scale on farms, and bringing more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

I am confident that providing an additional incentive to farm partnership formation will encourage farmers to consider more closely the benefits of farm partnerships to their farming business and in providing a better work-life balance.

Encouraging farm partnerships will also support the dairy herd expansion required over the coming years, enabling Irish farmers to avail of the opportunity presented by the abolition of EU milk quotas in March 2015.

#### *Stamp duty reduction*

I am particularly pleased that Budget 2012 reduces the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, with immediate effect. In addition, half the rate (1%) will be applicable on transfers to close relatives until the end of 2014.

This change will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market — currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually — and ensure that land transfers to more active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

I am confident that this measure will give younger, progressive, commercial farmers a greater opportunity to purchase land and thereby increase their farm size, which will make the farm more competitive.

#### *Capital Gains Tax retirement relief*

Budget 2012 has restructured the retirement relief available on Capital Gains Tax in order to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and to encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors. As of 1st January 2014, for those farmers aged 66 and over, an upper limit of €3m will be introduced on family transfers, compared to an unlimited amount currently. On non-family transfers, the current upper limit of €750,000 will be reduced to €500,000. Applying the new limits from 1st January 2014 allows farmers already aged 66 and over to plan the orderly transfer of assets in advance of that date.

It is important to remember that these new measures do not mean that a farmer has to cease farming altogether beyond the age of 66, but it allows them to plan for a phased gradual transfer of assets to the next generation.

We are restructuring retirement relief in order to encourage farmers around the normal retirement age, who have successors, to transfer their land and holdings to young, innovative, ambitious, prospective farmers. This restructuring will also encourage farmers with no successors to sell some of their land before normal retirement age. This measure will encourage an improvement in the age profile of farmers, and should ensure that farmland is put to more productive use.

#### *Food Harvest 2020 measures*

A range of measures which will support the Food Harvest 2020 objectives are also being implemented that will contribute to jobs and growth in the agri-food sector.

- The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme will continue to be fully funded from national funds. In particular, despite the financial constraints faced, I will continue to provide the necessary funding to meet all payments due in 2012 at the current rates.
- I have allocated €5m towards the establishment of a Beef Technology Adoption Programme which will build on the work done to date under the Better Farm Programme.

The roll-out of the Beef Discussion Groups will give beef farmers access to a range of additional skills to increase productivity. This programme was a key recommendation of the Beef 2020 Activation Group.

- I am re-opening the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) which had been suspended earlier in the year because of the uncertain budgetary situation. I am providing funding in 2012 to enable all of the schemes to re-open — Poultry and Pig Welfare, Dairy Equipment, Sheep Handling and Rainwater Harvesting Schemes, as well as the Bio-energy scheme. In addition to providing an incentive for farmers to invest in their enterprises and secure their futures, these schemes will make a worthwhile contribution to job creation and to the maintenance of existing jobs in rural areas.
- In forestry, I am anxious to deliver on the Government's commitment to afforestation and to support a sector which contributes to job creation and to the maintenance of jobs in rural areas and which has a vital climate change role. Overall Expenditure for Forestry will be higher than the published figures and will amount to €111.76 million when the published estimate of €84.86m is boosted by a further €27m by way of carry-over of savings from 2011. This increased forestry funding of €112 million will allow afforestation to continue at roughly 7,000 hectares per annum as well as providing for the building of forest roads. There is no change in relation to the rate of payment of forestry premia, which continue at current levels.

### **Fisheries Protection**

50. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans to challenge the proposals made by the European Commission which will adversely affect Ireland's fishing industry; if he will seek to stop the proposed ban on cod fishing in the Irish Sea at the Council's December meeting; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40017/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Scientific 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. I have consistently stated that wherever the available 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. But it is equally important to ensure the long term sustainability and health of the fishing resource, because without the stocks there would be no fishing industry.

The science on Irish Sea Cod shows that the stock is in a very poor state, though there are some positive signs with recruitment in 2009 above the recent average, the Commission has proposed a zero catch for Cod in 2012. A long term management plan for this stock has been in place since 2008 which if followed would reduce the TAC in 2012 by 25%. I will be supporting the 25% reduction in the Irish Sea Cod TAC at the December Council of Fisheries Mini-

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sters being held on December 15th and 16th in Brussels, where the levels of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and ultimately the quotas for Ireland in 2012 will be determined.

### State Agencies

51. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reforms that are being undertaken by agencies under his remit over the past year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38937/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Across the five non-commercial State Agencies that fall under the remit of my Department a wide range of initiatives are in progress aimed at improving organisational structures and securing greater levels of efficiency and cost effectiveness in programme delivery.

All of the agencies have reduced staff numbers in recent years and under the Employment Control Framework, further staff reductions will continue up to 2015. In addition, efficiencies in procurement arrangements, in project management, in the delivery of ICT services, in office rental costs, in on — line service delivery and in internal restructuring of business areas, have all contributed to lower running costs. There is a strong commitment to reform in each of the agencies and the delivery of these reforms is being monitored as part of the mechanisms for the review under the Public Service (Croke Park) Agreement 2010-2014.

### Fisheries Protection

52. **Deputy Mick Wallace** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his views that it is unreasonable to cut the total allowable catch by 25% in areas in which data from the International Council for the Exploration of the Seas are not available; his further views that these measures will adversely affect the Irish fishing industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40018/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Scientific 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. I have consistently stated that wherever the available 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. But it is equally important to ensure the long term sustainability and health of the fishing resource, because without the stocks there would be no fishing industry.

The science on Irish Sea Cod shows that the stock is in a very poor state, though there are some positive signs with recruitment in 2009 above the recent average, the Commission has proposed a zero catch for Cod in 2012. A long term management plan for this stock has been in place since 2008 which if followed would reduce the TAC in 2012 by 25%. I will be supporting the 25% reduction in the Irish Sea Cod TAC at the December Council of Fisheries Ministers being held on December 15th and 16th in Brussels, where the levels of Total Allowable Catch (TAC) and ultimately the quotas for Ireland in 2012 will be determined.

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. Our fishing fleet depends totally on having healthy and long term sustainable stocks to remain viable and productive. In order to balance all three pillars it will be necessary to take hard decisions on some stocks that will result in reduced fishing opportunities.

However, we need to use all sources of verifiable science when determining our decisions on fishing levels to ensure that the right balance is struck between 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.

### **Grant Payments**

53. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason there is a delay for farmers awaiting payments under the agri-environment options scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39055/11]

**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.

### **Sugar Industry**

54. **Deputy Dessie Ellis** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine his plans for the restoration of the beet industry in Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [39056/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** In 2006, a temporary scheme for the restructuring of the sugar industry, was introduced by the EU Commission with the aim of reducing EU sugar production in order to comply with WTO and other international obligations. The scheme provided an incentive for sugar processors to renounce sugar quota and dismantle the associated sugar processing plant and it provided compensation for affected stakeholders. Greencore, the sole Irish sugar processor and holder of the Irish sugar quota, decided to avail of this scheme and accordingly the company renounced the quota and dismantled the last remaining sugar factory at Mallow in compliance with the conditions of the scheme.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

There is no mechanism under the present EU Regulations which are in force until 30 September 2015 which would allow for the re-instatement of the sugar quota for the growing of sugar beet in Ireland for the production of sugar. I have strongly supported the abolition of sugar quotas from September 2015 as part of the CAP reform discussions in the Council of Ministers.

In this regard, I have also met with two separate groups who have conducted feasibility studies, over the past several months, into the possibility of establishing a sugar/bioethanol facility. At both meetings I stated that any venture to develop a combined sugar/bioethanol production facility would have to be a commercial proposition, financed in total by investors and interested parties and make sound economic sense in order to be viable.

*Question No. 55 answered with Question No. 32.*

### **Agri-Food Industry**

56. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the reason behind the changes made in budget 2012 including his main priorities for the agricultural sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38926/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food were designed to encourage collaboration between farmers and to facilitate the timely transfer of agriculture land to more active and younger farmers.

The new stock relief incentive for farm partnerships will improve farm structures generally, facilitating farms to operate more efficiently, increasing scale on farms, and bringing more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

I am confident that providing an additional incentive to farm partnership formation will encourage farmers to consider more closely the benefits of farm partnerships to their farming business and in providing a better work-life balance.

Encouraging farm partnerships will also support the dairy herd expansion required over the coming years, enabling Irish farmers to avail of the opportunity presented by the abolition of EU milk quotas in March 2015.

The reduction in stamp duty will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market — currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually — and ensure that land transfers to more

active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

I am confident that this measure will give younger, progressive, commercial farmers a greater opportunity to purchase land and thereby increase their farm size, which will make the farm more competitive.

The changes in Capital Gains Tax will incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors. It is important to remember that these new measures do not mean that a farmer has to cease farming altogether beyond the age of 66, but it allows them to plan for a phased gradual transfer of assets to the next generation.

We are restructuring retirement relief in order to encourage farmers around the normal retirement age, who have successors, to transfer their land and holdings to young, innovative, ambitious, prospective farmers. This restructuring will also encourage farmers with no successors to sell some of their land before normal retirement age. This measure will encourage an improvement in the age profile of farmers, and should ensure that farmland is put to more productive use.

All of the measures outlined above are designed to increase productivity and help the sector in attaining the challenging targets outlined in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy.

*Question No. 57 answered with Question No. 36.*

### **Common Fisheries Policy**

58. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will provide an update on the reform of the Common Fisheries Policy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38942/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The **Common Fisheries Policy** (CFP) is the fisheries policy of the European Union which was first put in place in 1983 and has been subject to reviews every 10 years, the most recent was in 2002 and the next reform is scheduled for adoption in the latter half of 2012.

The CFP is scheduled for adoption in the latter half of 2012. This is an ambitious target and there is a strong possibility that the adoption of the new policy will be delayed and fall into 2013 during the Irish Presidency of the EU.

A reformed CFP is a critical policy issue for Ireland as it will shape the strategic blueprint for the European fishing industry for the next decade. The CFP impacts on the social, economic and environmental pillars of the wider seafood industry and the proposals will hold both opportunities and risks for Ireland.

My overarching goal for the new CFP is for a sustainable, profitable and self reliant industry that protects and enhances the social and economic fabric of rural coastal communities dependent on the seafood sector, while balancing these objectives with the need to deliver a sustainable and fisheries landscape for future generations. I am pursuing initiatives that will deliver and sustain jobs in coastal communities rather than those that promote the concentration of wealth and delivery of excessive profits for a few big international businesses.

I broadly support the general thrust of the proposals put forward by the Commission in their proposal of 13th July on such key issues as enhanced conservation, rebuilding fish stocks, reducing discarding of fish, introducing more selective fishing gears to allow small fish and

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unwanted by catches to escape and the use of multi annual plans as a primary tool to rebuild and manage fish stocks.

However I have differing views on some key points from an Irish perspective. Subject to further negotiation on important details in respect of those issues I would expect that by the conclusion of the negotiations, I would hope to be in a position to support these important elements of the Reform proposals. Within the package there are specific issues that are of critical importance to Ireland, which I will address in more detail.

I have serious concerns about the implications of the Commissions intention to impose the mandatory introduction of individually transferable concessions (quotas). Under this system, fish quotas would be allocated as tradeable commodities to private individuals and companies for at least 15 years and those individuals would be permitted to sell on the quotas.

There is serious concern in Ireland that under the current set of proposals, which the Commission has published, there is a real risk that the economic benefit from our quotas will be increasingly lost to Ireland. Despite the Commissions assurances, at this point, I can see no safeguards that could be built into the proposals which would prevent this happening.

In relation to discards, I fully support the objectives on addressing the unacceptable and wasteful practice of discarding as set in this proposal. The Commission proposal involves the introduction of a blanket ban on discarding of fish which would be applied incrementally over the period 2014 to 2016.

Ireland has been to the forefront in the debate on discards and as recently as Tuesday the 8th November published an Irish “atlas of discards” which details the level of discards by the Irish fleet and proposes potential solutions.

I believe that we need radical action to bring an end to this wasteful practice which is as abhorrent to fishermen as it is to the general public. In my opinion, the Commission proposal for a ban is too simplistic and is more likely to result in the concealment of the practice than a change in the behaviour. I am absolutely committed to addressing the problem in a practical and progressive manner working directly with fishermen and scientists.

The retention of the Hague Preferences is a key issue for Ireland as it gives Irish Fishermen a safety net of additional quotas when stock levels go below a certain point. In the Commission proposal, the Hague Preferences are recognised in the same manner as here to fore. Ireland sought their full integration into the CFP to avoid the current situation where their application each year is a matter for decision by the EU Fisheries Council. I will continue to pursue this approach but I am fully aware that we may face opposition for their inclusion, in any form, from those Member States who lose quota when they are invoked

In terms of the process, there is a long road to take before the reform of the CFP is finalised, many Member States will have conflicting agendas on certain issues. Commissioner Damanaki has visited Ireland and I had a good opportunity to set out Ireland’s priorities and to give her a full understanding of the situation of the sector in Ireland and the likely impacts of her proposals, both positive and negative.

I have been actively building alliances with like minded colleagues in Europe. I met with my French Counterpart Minister Le Maire on the 30th September and issued a joint communiqué which included a commitment to work closely on sustainability measures including discards, regionalisation and importantly on our opposition to the proposals on ITQs as they currently stand.

I also met my British and Scottish counterparts at the November Fisheries Council where we had a broad discussion on fisheries related issues including the reform of the CFP.

In addition I am working very closely with the Irish industry to ensure an orchestrated and focussed message on Ireland's priorities for the reformed CFP is brought to as many fora as possible in Brussels.

I intend to continue this process and will take every opportunity to explain Ireland's priorities and seek support for our stance, in order to strengthen our negotiating position and deliver the best possible outcome for Ireland.

*Question No. 59 answered with Question No. 25.*

### **Agri-Food Industry**

60. **Deputy John Paul Phelan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the support that is being given to active farmers in vulnerable areas following budget 2012 announcements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38945/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department is always fully supportive of all active farmers, particularly those in vulnerable areas.

The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. As the tax measures announced have been designed specifically to encourage farming as a career for young people and to incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level, I feel confident that they will be of great benefit to active farmers, and potential farmers, in vulnerable areas.

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food sector are as follows:

- a stock relief incentive to encourage Farm Partnerships;
- reduction in the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, so as to stimulate land sales and land transfers;
- restructuring of Capital Gains Tax retirement relief so as to encourage inter-generational transfer.

### *Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme*

The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme will continue to be fully funded from national funds. In particular, despite the financial constraints faced, I will continue to provide the necessary funding to meet all payments due in 2012 at the current rates of €40 per cow.

### *Disadvantaged Areas*

There will be no changes in either the rates or the eligible areas qualifying for a disadvantaged area payment. I am introducing targeted reform in the Disadvantaged Areas Payments, which will be achieved through reform of the stocking density, retention period and other elements of the scheme. The changes being introduced will favour active farmers and are subject to clearance by the European Commission.

### *Beef discussion groups*

I have allocated €5m towards the establishment of a Beef Technology Adoption Programme which will build on the work done to date under the Better Farm Programme. The roll-out of the Beef Discussion Groups will give beef farmers access to a range of additional skills to increase productivity. This programme was a key recommendation of the Beef 2020 Activation Group.

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

### *Farm Partnerships*

In common with farmers all around the country, active farmers in vulnerable areas will be able to avail of the new stock relief incentive aimed at encouraging farm partnerships. Under this initiative, an enhanced 50% stock relief will be available for all registered farm partnerships, and a 100% stock relief will be available for certain young trained farmers forming such partnerships. I recently published a useful Reference Paper on farm partnerships on my Department's website, which highlighted the benefits that such arrangements can bring to farm families. The economic benefits include increased economies of scale, shared capital investment, removal of duplicate costs, and risk sharing. The partnership model encourages farmers to share best farming and business management practice, thereby increasing their skill set and providing opportunities to diversify into alternative enterprises. Collaborating and farming in partnership can also have social benefits through reducing isolation, improving the work-life balance and also facilitating succession planning. Farmers can avail of these benefits while also helping to secure the future of their family farms, including, and perhaps most particularly, in vulnerable areas.

61. **Deputy Tom Barry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the effects budget 2012 will have on the agri-food industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [38930/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The taxation measures announced in Budget 2012 reflect this Government's commitment to the agri-food industry and in particular to the expansion planned in the Food Harvest 2020 strategy. The measures announced have been designed specifically to:

- Encourage farming as a career for young people
- Incentivise farm partnerships and greater productivity at farm level
- Stimulate land sales and land transfers
- Facilitate new enterprise opportunities in farming
- Help agri-food businesses innovate and export.

The main measures in the Budget which will benefit the agri-food sector are as follows:

### *Incentive for Farm Partnerships*

One of the most significant new measures introduced in Budget 2012 is the new stock relief incentive to encourage farm partnerships. I am supporting farm partnerships because I believe that collaboration through partnership can improve farm structures generally, facilitating farms to operate more efficiently, increasing scale on farms, and bringing more innovative and energetic young prospective farmers into farming. More farming partnerships are required to increase productivity and meet the Food Harvest 2020 targets.

I am confident that providing an additional incentive to farm partnership formation will encourage farmers to consider more closely the benefits of farm partnerships to their farming business and in providing a better work-life balance.

Encouraging farm partnerships will also support the dairy herd expansion required over the coming years, enabling Irish farmers to avail of the opportunity presented by the abolition of EU milk quotas in March 2015.

### *Stamp duty reduction*

I am particularly pleased that Budget 2012 reduces the stamp duty rate on agricultural land from 6% to 2%, with immediate effect. In addition, half the rate (1%) will be applicable on transfers to close relatives until the end of 2014.

This change will substantially reduce the stamp duty payable on transfers of farm land by gift or by sale. It should stimulate a stagnant land market — currently only 0.5% of total agricultural land is offered for sale annually — and ensure that land transfers to more active producers. It will also promote inter-generational transfer, as the cost of lifetime transfer to transferees who do not qualify for the young trained farmer stamp duty relief has reduced considerably.

I am confident that this measure will give younger, progressive, commercial farmers a greater opportunity to purchase land and thereby increase their farm size, which will make the farm more competitive.

### *Capital Gains Tax retirement relief*

Budget 2012 has restructured the retirement relief available on Capital Gains Tax in order to incentivise the earlier transfer of farm assets to the next generation, and to encourage the sale of land by those farmers with no successors.

It is important to remember that these new measures do not mean that a farmer has to cease farming altogether beyond the age of 66, but it allows them to plan for a phased gradual transfer of assets to the next generation.

We are restructuring retirement relief in order to encourage farmers around the normal retirement age, who have successors, to transfer their land and holdings to young, innovative, ambitious, prospective farmers. This restructuring will also encourage farmers with no successors to sell some of their land before normal retirement age. This measure will encourage an improvement in the age profile of farmers, and should ensure that farmland is put to more productive use.

### *Food Harvest 2020 measures*

A range of measures which will support the Food Harvest 2020 objectives are also being implemented that will contribute to jobs and growth in the agri-food sector.

- The Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme will continue to be fully funded from national funds. In particular, despite the financial constraints faced, I will continue to provide the necessary funding to meet all payments due in 2012 at the current rates.
- I have allocated €5m towards the establishment of a Beef Technology Adoption Programme which will build on the work done to date under the Better Farm Programme. The roll-out of the Beef Discussion Groups will give beef farmers access to a range of additional skills to increase productivity. This programme was a key recommendation of the Beef 2020 Activation Group.
- I am re-opening the Targeted Agricultural Modernisation Schemes (TAMS) which had been suspended earlier in the year because of the uncertain budgetary situation. I am providing funding in 2012 to enable all of the schemes to re-open — Poultry and Pig Welfare, Dairy Equipment, Sheep Handling and Rainwater Harvesting Schemes, as well as the Bio-energy scheme. In addition to providing an incentive for farmers to invest in their enterprises and secure their futures, these schemes will make a worthwhile contribution to job creation and to the maintenance of existing jobs in rural areas.
- In forestry, I am anxious to deliver on the Government's commitment to afforestation and to support a sector which contributes to job creation and to the maintenance of

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

jobs in rural areas and which has a vital climate change role. Overall Expenditure for Forestry will be higher than the published figures and will amount to €111.76 million when the published estimate of €84.86m is boosted by a further €27m by way of carry-over of savings from 2011. This increased forestry funding of €112 million will allow afforestation to continue at roughly 7,000 hectares per annum as well as providing for the building of forest roads. There is no change in relation to the rate of payment of forestry premia, which continue at current levels.

### Departmental Expenditure

62. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40180/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is responsible for two Votes — Vote 28 (Foreign Affairs) and Vote 29 (International Cooperation). Details of payments made to public relations companies since 2006 are provided as follows. My Department commissions external public relation companies only where specialised knowledge and/or skills are not available within the Department. The commissioning of these contracts is in full compliance with national and EU procurement regulations concerning tendering requirements.

#### Vote 28 — Hiring of Public Relations companies 2006-date

Year	Organisation	Detail of project	Amount €
2008	The Communications Clinic	Action Plan under the Communicating Europe Initiative	€41,000
2009	The Communications Clinic	Action Plan under the Communicating Europe Initiative	€6,300

#### Vote 29 — Hiring of Public Relations companies 2006-date

Year	Organisation	Detail of project	Amount €
2006	Drury Communications	Advice on preparation of a public information strategy for the Government's aid programme.	€62,464
2007	Bannon & Bannon	Communications and strategic advice on Hunger Task Force information promotion	€5,082
2008	DHR Communications	Planning/ Management/coordination of Africa Day events	€34,485
2009	DHR Communications	Planning/Management/coordination of Africa Day events	€63,058
2010	DHR Communications	Planning/Management/coordination of Africa Day events	€56,023
2010	DHR Communications	Management of Simon Cumbers Media Fund	€31,363
2011	DHR Communications	Planning/Management/coordination of Africa Day events	€6,806
2011	DHR Communications	Management of Simon Cumbers Media Fund	€49,302

63. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40196/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** My Department is responsible for two votes — Votes 28 (Foreign Affairs) and 29 (International cooperation — Irish Aid). Advertising undertaken by my Department typically includes: advisory notices on public opening hours over holiday periods, changes in passport application procedures and fees, and public information notices relating to significant developments in the European Union (such as the Lisbon Treaty) or in regard to Ireland's Official Development Assistance programme, Irish Aid. While much of this material is now placed on the Department's website, a certain level of advertising continues to be necessary in order to reach all of our customers, particularly in relation to important passport and consular services. Details of advertising expenditure per year for both votes are included in the table below.

Year	Advertising	
	Vote 28	Vote 29
2006	286,078	17,042
2007	323,250	27,827
2008	388,746	26,994
2009	231,619	35,689
2010	160,245	58,021
2011 to date	129,093	16,437

In addition to this, the network of Irish diplomatic missions abroad occasionally incurs some limited expenditure on local advertising and public relations. This would include advertising of Embassy opening hours, changes to consular services, promotion of Irish cultural events, etc.

I am very conscious of the need to achieve value for money on such expenditure, and as with all expenditure appropriate financial controls and regulations are in place.

#### **Middle East Peace Process**

64. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade if he will note that a recent political humanitarian delegation to enter the Gaza Strip consisted of 100 delegates across the political spectrum from 40 countries; if he will further note that around 1.6 million persons are besieged in the Gaza Strip with insufficient supplies of medicine in the area and that, according to the World Health Organisation, the water supply is far below standard and is deteriorating; if he will recognise that the economy and health service of the Gaza Strip are unable to continue with the current export and import ban on goods and that the ordinary day-to-day lives of persons in the area are severely affected, with high incidences of psychological problems; if he will note the demise of the Gazan fishing industry since the restrictions imposed on their territorial waters; if he will further note that young persons in Gaza cannot leave the area for education or job opportunities; if he will further note the importance of the two main political parties of Gaza agreeing to have democratic elections in the spring of 2012 and the call on the international community to support those democratic aims and work towards ending the siege of Gaza; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40220/11]

**Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade (Deputy Eamon Gilmore):** I am aware that a delegation from the Council for European Palestinian Relations travelled to Gaza last

[Deputy Eamon Gilmore.]

month to highlight the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The Government's position on the blockade of Gaza is well-known. I regard the blockade as it is practised as completely unjust, counter-productive and contrary to international humanitarian law. Ireland has consistently sought, both nationally and at EU level, to maintain a focus on the need to bring the blockade to an end. I would hope to visit Gaza myself in the near future in order to see for myself the conditions currently obtaining on the ground. The slight relaxation in the blockade of Gaza last year, while welcome, has not gone nearly far enough or fast enough. While overall volumes transferred to Gaza have increased, they remain at only one-third of pre-blockade levels. There is a flourishing tunnel economy providing goods at elevated prices to replace goods not imported through Israel. This simply strengthens Hamas as it gives them a reliable source of funding and runs contrary to Israel's own interests. It also most heavily impacts on the poorest citizens in Gaza, who are unable to afford smuggled goods.

Of similar concern is the almost complete lack of provision for exports from Gaza, without which economic life and employment cannot recover, leaving more than half the population directly dependent on humanitarian aid. Exports at almost negligible levels are only permitted to Europe. Before 2007, 85% of goods exported from Gaza were destined for the West Bank and Israel. The security rationale employed by Israel to justify the blockade — preventing weapons entering Gaza — does not stand up to scrutiny concerning goods leaving Gaza for export. There can be no justifiable reason for denying Gaza access to its natural market of the West Bank and Israel.

The volume of construction materials being allowed into Gaza is entirely insufficient for the essential reconstruction needs of both people and infrastructure. Hamas and other groups of most concern to Israel are readily able to access building materials through the tunnel economy. The Israeli restrictions therefore impact principally on the UN and other international bodies, who can only use materials from authorised sources. I welcome the partial moves last month to enable the importation of construction material for ten factories under a supervision and control mechanism to ensure that the raw materials reach their intended destinations. I hope this mechanism is expanded to enable UNRWA and other international bodies import sufficient construction material for the reconstruction of schools and other essential infrastructure. These are key issues that I will continue to focus on in discussion bilaterally with the Israeli authorities, as well as in international fora.

Subsequent to the reconciliation agreement reached between Fatah and Hamas in May 2011, agreement has been provisionally reached on the holding of parliamentary elections next year while efforts continue to form a Palestinian government of national unity. Reconciliation amongst all Palestinian parties remains extremely important and desirable, in the context of achieving further progress towards the overall goal of a comprehensive negotiated peace settlement, based on the two-State solution, between Israel and the Palestinians. Ireland will continue to support strongly all efforts aimed at advancing Palestinian reconciliation as well, of course, at ending the unjust blockade and securing the opening of all crossing points into Gaza to all normal movement, in and out.

### **Pension Provisions**

65. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the extent to which private pension provision, particularly additional voluntary contributions, has been discouraged by the introduction of the pension fund levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[40231/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Pension industry sources have indicated to my Department that contributions to pension savings arrangements, generally, have fallen since the beginning of 2010. The economic downturn will clearly have impacted on the confidence and ability of individuals to invest in pension savings. I cannot say whether and to what extent individuals would be influenced in this regard by the pension fund levy. I would very much hope that individuals already saving for their retirement and those considering doing so would not be unduly influenced in a negative way by the levy. The levy is a charge for a temporary period on the significant assets of pension funds, much of which are represented by investments outside of Ireland. The Finance (No. 2) Act 2011 legislation which gives effect to the pension fund levy provisions makes clear that it is to apply for a four year period only.

The moneys raised from the pension fund levy are being used to pay for the tax reductions and the additional expenditure measures announced in the Jobs Initiative in May last. The various measures in the Initiative represented the first steps by the Government towards improving the competitiveness of important sectors of the economy and facilitating the return to work of people currently unemployed. The levy is a reasonable and targeted tax measure introduced to fund the various measures set out in the Jobs Initiative.

In my Budget speech last week, I acknowledged the significant contribution being made by the pensions sector towards resolving our current difficulties. I also made the point that I did not propose to move to standard rating tax relief on pension contributions. Such contributions, including additional voluntary contributions, remain tax-relieved at the individual's marginal rate of income tax, subject to limits. However, changes are still required to the incentive regime for pension saving in order to make the system sustainable and more equitable over the long term. I believe that the various stakeholders in the pensions sector share that view and my Department and the Revenue Commissioners will work with those stakeholders over the coming year to develop workable solutions to that end.

### **Tax Refunds**

66. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) in County Wexford is unable to claim a refund of tax paid now that they have finished work; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40039/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the person concerned had three different employments in 2011. However, no P45 was submitted in connection with one of these. In the absence of form P45 tax credits cannot be updated. The person concerned has been contacted and advised to submit form P45.

67. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Finance when the refund of income tax for 2008 will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40040/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the person concerned applied for PAYE reviews on 3rd August 2011 for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009. This resulted in refunds for the three years, which were issued on the 8th August. If the person concerned considers that there are additional refunds due, the person should contact Revenue at 1890 444425.

### **Financial Services Regulation**

68. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Finance if he received a report from the

[Deputy David Stanton.]

Financial Regulator in 2009 regarding an investigation into a company (details supplied); his plans to publish same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40064/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** My Department did not receive a report in 2009 regarding the firm mentioned by the Deputy and the Central Bank has confirmed that no such report was forwarded to the Department. I would like to advise the Deputy that, for confidentiality purposes, the Central Bank would not normally inform my Department about supervisory matters such as these which are within the sole remit of the Central Bank. The first report seen by my Department regarding an investigation into this company was the final report to the High Court, prepared by Court Appointed Inspectors and dated 19th October 2011. On 21 October 2011, the High Court ordered that the final report of the inspectors be published in redacted form on the website of the Central Bank.

### Tax Code

69. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Finance if he will reverse the VAT increases, in view of the fact that there are many persons who will be affected by this change; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40086/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The standard rate of VAT will be increased by 2 percentage points from 21% to 23% from 1 January 2011. This change is being introduced as part of a general package of revenue-raising measures to contribute to Exchequer funding and is in line with commitments made in the Programme for Government and in the EU/IMF Programme. The effect of the 2% increase in the standard rate is that the price of goods and services, which apply at this rate, will increase by 1.65%. This equates to an increase of 33c on a good costing €20, or €1.65 on a good costing €100.

It must be noted that the 2% standard VAT rate increase will have no impact on the goods and services subject to the other VAT rates in the Irish VAT structure. There will be no change to the price of most food, children's clothes and footwear and oral medicines, as these are subject to the zero rate of VAT. Domestic fuels, housing, labour intensive services and general repairs and maintenance apply at the 13.5% VAT rate which is not being increased. Furthermore, restaurant services, hotel and holiday accommodation, and various entertainment services will not be subject to a VAT increase as they continue to apply at the 9% rate.

### Departmental Expenditure

70. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40179/11]

72. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40195/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 70 and 72 together.

My Department has had no expenditure on any public relations companies from 2006 to date.

The table details spend on advertising in that same time period:—

Year	Advertising Expenditure €
2011 (to date)	28,944
2010	40,231

Year	Advertising Expenditure €
2009	76,776
2008	140,567
2007	276,582
2006	364,388

### National Asset Management Agency

71. **Deputy Peter Mathews** asked the Minister for Finance the status of land (details supplied) in the National Asset Management Agency; if this site will be put on the open market; if this site is being sold to a local authority; if NAMA or its agents sought offers for this site or are following up on offers or inquiries about this site; if NAMA has met any local groups regarding this site; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40187/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** NAMA informs me that it has met with one interest group and has also been contacted by a local authority regarding this property. This property is listed on the NAMA website as one of the properties subject to enforcement action. I understand from NAMA that the property has been offered for sale on the open market by a receiver, RSM Farrell Grant Sparks, appointed by NAMA. The receiver previously has had discussions with a number of interested parties and NAMA advise me that additional expressions of interest can be directed towards the receiver at namaproperties@rsmfsgs.ie .

NAMA advise me that the appointment of a sales agent by the receiver is imminent. The sales agent will seek purchase offers from interested parties. Any offers made will be submitted by the receiver to NAMA for the final decision as to which offer should be accepted.

*Question No. 72 answered with Question No. 70.*

73. **Deputy Gerry Adams** asked the Minister for Finance the annual salary, expenses or other entitlements of the chairman of the National Asset Management Agency; if the person is in receipt of any other pensions from the State or receives any payments from their membership of any other State boards. [40215/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The fee payable to Frank Daly in respect of his functions as Chairman of the NAMA Board is €150,000 for 2011, on the basis of his full time availability. I am informed by NAMA that expenses totalling €3,199 have been paid to him in the year 2010 and in the year 2011 to date. As a retired Chairman of the Revenue Commissioners, Mr Daly is also in receipt of an annual pension of €114,893.40 which takes account of a reduction of € 11,978.10 in respect of Public Service Pension Reduction.

Mr Daly receives no other payment from membership of State boards.

### Tax Reliefs

74. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of tax relief at source provided for each year since 2002; the expected cost of the scheme in 2012; the amount that would be saved if the average interest rate on qualifying mortgages was 0.5% less than projected; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40228/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the cost to the Exchequer of mortgage interest relief by way of tax relief at source (TRS) in each of the years 2002 to 2011 inclusive is as follows:

[Deputy Michael Noonan.]

Tax Year	Cost €m
2002	193
2003	221
2004	232
2005	279
2006	352
2007	543
2008	705
2009	486
2010	375
2011 (11 months)	335*

\*This figure is provisional and subject to revision.

A forecast of the expected cost of mortgage interest relief for the year 2012 is €420 million.

The reduced cost of tax relief that would arise if average interest on qualifying mortgages was 0.5% less than projected would depend on a variety of factors, including the numbers of mortgages affected, the rate of relief applying to those mortgages and the extent to which the lower relief would fall below the current ceilings. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the potential saving.

#### National Asset Management Agency

75. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on the possibility of selling the National Asset Management Agency in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40229/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** In his recently published NAMA Review, Mr Michael Geoghegan stated that “an eight year exit strategy for NAMA needs to be developed and hence NAMA needs to start thinking now as to what size it will be and what experience it will have by the years 2017-2019, so that a possible trade sale could be achieved”. The Deputy will be aware that I have asked Mr Geoghegan to chair an Advisory Group which I am establishing to advise me on NAMA’s strategy and its capacity to deliver on that strategy through property disposal and the ongoing management of its assets. Any decision that I may make regarding NAMA’s future will be informed by the advice of the Advisory Group.

#### Illicit Trade in Tobacco

76. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his estimate of the amount of revenue lost to the Exchequer annually through tobacco smuggling; the number of persons who were brought to court, convicted, imprisoned and fined for tobacco smuggling in 2010 and to date in 2011; the average fine for tobacco smuggling in each year; the extent to which the increased fines allowable for tobacco smuggling, as set out in the Finance Act 2010, have been utilised; his plans to introduce new measures, legislative or otherwise, to combat tobacco smuggling; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40233/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners, who are responsible for the collection of tobacco products tax, and for tackling the illicit trade in cigarettes and tobacco, that there is no internationally recognised method for precisely determining the amount of tax lost as a result of the illicit trade in cigarettes. However,

a survey commissioned by Revenue and the Office of Tobacco Control in 2009 estimated that 20% of cigarettes consumed in the State had not been taxed in this jurisdiction. The 20% figure was further broken down as 14% illicit product and 6% legally imported by passengers arriving into the State from other jurisdictions. Revenue and the Office of Tobacco Control commissioned a similar survey in the last quarter of 2010 and the results of this latest survey show a consistency with the 2009 figures, i.e. 20% of all cigarettes consumed in the State were not taxed in the State with 14% again classified as illegal product and 6% classified as legal non-Irish duty paid product. Based on an estimate of 14%, the loss to the exchequer from illicit cigarette consumption during 2010 would be in the region of €250m (excise duty + VAT). A further survey is currently underway.

In 2010, Revenue enforcement officers seized 178.3 million cigarettes and 3,342 kg of tobacco. There were ninety-seven convictions for cigarette smuggling secured in the courts with fifteen custodial sentences imposed of which ten were suspended. Total fines for cigarette smuggling amounted to €50,380, with an average fine of €593. A further forty-one convictions were secured for illegal selling of unstamped tobacco products with seven custodial sentences, of which four were suspended, and in addition two community service orders were imposed. Total fines for illegal selling amounted to €107,750, with an average fine of €2,912.

To date in 2011, a total of 98.05m cigarettes and 11,314kgs of tobacco have been seized. There have been ninety-three convictions for cigarette smuggling with thirty custodial sentences, of which nineteen were suspended and a further five community service orders, one of which is under appeal. Total fines for cigarette smuggling amounted to €128,550, with an average fine of €1,761. A further fifty-one convictions were secured for illegal selling of unstamped tobacco products, with twelve custodial sentences, of which seven were suspended. Total fines for illegal selling amounted to €107,850 with an average fine of €2,656.

With regard to the criminal sanctions available for prosecution of tobacco smuggling offences, the penalty on summary conviction for evasion of duty is €5,000 and/or a term of imprisonment not exceeding 12 months. The penalty on indictment is up to €126,970 and/or a term on imprisonment not exceeding 5 years, or, where the value of the product concerned is greater than €250,000, up to three times the value of the products. The monetary penalty of €126,970, which was sanctioned by the Oireachtas in the 2010 Finance Act, represents a significant increase on the previous monetary penalty of €12,695. Revenue reviews the relevant legislation on an annual basis in the context of Finance Act requirements and submits proposals to my Department as necessary.

As regards the penalty provisions of the 2010 Finance Act, I am advised that on account of the timeline involved in bringing cases to court stage on indictment, it is too early as yet to assess the impact of these penalties. The Deputy will also appreciate that the precise penalty imposed on conviction in any individual case is solely a matter for the Courts and I do not propose to make any comment in that regard.

The Commissioners inform me that they regard the tackling of the illicit tobacco trade as a high priority area. They have established a high level internal group, chaired at Commissioner level, to examine the risks related to tobacco products tax and to oversee and optimise the detection of contraband and counterfeit tobacco products. This group has promoted a number of initiatives aimed at counteracting the illicit trade in tobacco. These include improved profiling of passengers and freight to detect tobacco smuggling, the establishment of a tobacco hotline, co-ordinating national blitz-style operations, evaluation and acquisition of scanning and other detection technologies and learning from best international practice.

### Tax Yield

77. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the basis of his calculation of a full-year yield of €670 million arising from the 2% increase in the standard rate of VAT; if his calculation takes account of any expected changes in consumer behaviour arising from the increase; the assumed change in the volume of sales as a result of the rate increase; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40236/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I refer the Deputy to my response to his question on this topic on 24th November, 2011 (reference number 36891/11). The estimated additional yield from a 2% increase in the standard rate of VAT that I announced in my recent Budget speech is €560 million in 2012 or €670 million in a full year. These estimates were calculated by applying a direct increase of 2% to the expected yield from the 21% rate of VAT in 2011. They are “static” estimates in that they do not take into account any behavioural change on the part of taxpayers as a consequence of the rate change. However, the projection for personal consumption in 2012, upon which the Budget 2012 VAT forecast is primarily based, takes account of the rate change along with other factors affecting household spending (such as uncertainty and balance sheet rebuilding). The Budget 2012 forecast for VAT receipts, at €9,995 million, represents a €265 million or 2.7% increase on the estimated 2011 outturn.

### Tax Collection

78. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will provide details of the proposed change to a cumulative basis for the collection of the universal social charge; the basis of his estimation of a €50 million yield from the measures in a full year; the way this change will impact on individual taxpayers; and the circumstances in which a person will end up paying more universal social charge arising from the change. [40237/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that the Universal Social Charge (USC), as with the Income Levy before it, has operated on what is known as “a week-one” basis. The week-one basis allows for the collection of USC by employers on a weekly basis in a similar way to PRSI. This means that USC is deducted from each payment of weekly wages/salary, where the payment is greater than the exemption limit, at the rate of 2% up to €193, 4% between €194 and €308 and 7% from everything in excess of €309. The week-one basis was applied to the collection of the USC, to facilitate its speedy implementation. The week-one basis, however, is not ideally suited to the USC as the USC is a multi-rate tax that applies on a progressive basis to a person’s aggregate income for the year. The week one basis, in some cases can result in an underpayment of the USC. This happens, in particular, where a person has multiple employments or where wages/salary is paid unevenly throughout the year.

I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that they intend to introduce Regulations that will require USC to be operated by employers on a full cumulative basis similar to that used for PAYE income tax with effect for all payments of wages/salary made on or after 1 January 2012. The estimation of a €50m yield from the move to a cumulative basis for the collection of the USC is based on an analysis by the Revenue Commissioners of income data relating to employees and of the employment patterns of employees.

The change to a cumulative system will ensure that employees with multiple employments or who only work for short periods in the year or who are paid irregularly, pay the correct amount of USC on each pay day. For example, if a person had two employments, each below the new proposed exemption rate of €10,036, on a week-one basis each employment would be dealt with in isolation and the person would pay no USC whatever in the year. If the cumulative pay for the two employments exceeded €16,016 the person should be paying USC at the rate

of 7% on the portion of their earnings in excess of €16,016. A similar issue could arise where a person was in receipt of irregular payments throughout the year.

For taxpayers, putting the USC on a cumulative basis means that:

- People changing employment and people in multiple employments will pay the correct amount of USC consistently throughout the year.
- The possibility of underpayments or overpayments of USC will be minimised.
- There will be a reduction in the administrative burden on employers due to a reduction in the cost of managing payroll. It will remove the need to perform end of year reconciliations for the purpose of providing refunds to employees where overpayments arise.

### **Banking Sector Regulation**

79. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Finance if he will outline the statutory mechanisms and oversights which enable the State to compel financial institutions in which it has shareholdings to pass on ECB interest rate cuts; his views on whether the current statutory mechanisms are sufficient; if he intends to introduce reforms in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40242/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** Neither I, as Minister for Finance, nor the Central Bank, have a statutory role in the setting of interest rates charged or paid by financial institutions regulated by the Central Bank. Each institution determines the rate it charges its customers, depending on a number of factors, such as cost of funds and commercial considerations, competition in the market, risk pricing and the impact on deposit rates. 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 State as majority shareholder.

In his recent letter to the Taoiseach, the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank stated that the Central Bank was not requesting the power to have regulatory control over the setting of retail interest rates. He indicated that the experience of such controls in the past, and in other countries, did not encourage the Central Bank to believe that such a regime would be advantageous in net terms as the banking system recovers its normal functioning. Binding controls tend to reduce availability of credit and channel it to the most creditworthy customers, starving smaller and less secure customers from credit. This could have an adverse effect on sound competition in the market. The Deputy Governor mentioned also that, within its existing powers and through the use of suasion, the Central Bank will engage with specific lenders which appear to have standard variable rates set disproportionate to their cost of funds.

### **Tax Code**

80. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the universal social charge; if he will clarify the position regarding the examples given; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40281/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The position is that the Universal Social Charge (USC) does not apply to social welfare payments or payments of a similar nature made by any other state or territory. However, I should point out that occupational pensions are liable to the USC, if the payment is greater than the exemption limit, which from 1 January 2012 is €10,036 per annum. In this particular case the retired couple in question receives a higher proportion of their total income from occupational pension than the retired couple in

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the newspaper article and therefore pays more USC. In both cases the State Pensions are exempt from the USC.

81. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Finance the annual cost to the Exchequer of the VAT reductions announced earlier in the summer; if there was any monitoring to check that the VAT reductions were passed on; if such monitoring is still ongoing; if any action has been taken or is proposed against firms that reduced their charges for a few weeks following the VAT reduction and have since put their charges back up again; if the matter can be reported on; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40284/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** The Finance (No. 2) Act 2011 provided for a second reduced VAT rate, of 9%, on a temporary basis in respect of certain tourism-related services and goods for the period 1 July 2011 to end 2013. This measure was estimated to cost €120 million in 2011, €350 million in 2012 and in 2013, and €60 million in 2014. Businesses must account for VAT at the 9% rate on these specified goods and services provided by them on or after 1 July 2011. Where the goods and services are supplied to another VAT-registered business a VAT invoice must be issued, charging VAT at the new rate. However, where the supplies are to unregistered customers there is no obligation to show the VAT separately.

Businesses dealing with unregistered customers are not legally obliged to reduce their (VAT-inclusive) pricing to reflect the lower VAT rate, but would be expected to do so. However, in reducing the VAT burden on activities related to the tourism industry, the introduction of the 9% VAT rate is aimed at contributing towards boosting tourism and the creation of additional jobs in that sector. With this in mind, the VAT reduction will be kept under review and evaluated before end 2012 in order to determine its effectiveness in aiding the industry. If it is shown that the VAT reduction has little or no effect in aiding the industry then the measure is open to being reformed or abolished. In addition, checks on the correct operation of VAT, including the rates of VAT applied are integral parts of Revenue's audit and compliance programmes.

### **Banking Sector Regulation**

82. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance his views on a matter regarding Christmas bonus payments in respect of a person (details supplied). [40290/11]

83. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance the reason the lowest paid staff at EBS are not receiving their 13 month payment when management received same. [40334/11]

**Minister for Finance (Deputy Michael Noonan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 82 and 83 together.

I am advised by the institutions involved that the payments in question are considered bonus payments as per their description in the relevant contracts. On this basis, as the conditions governing the provision of State assistance to Allied Irish Banks (AIB) prohibit the payment or awarding of bonuses whatsoever, the bank took the view that it is not in a position to make such payments to employees of EBS (which since 1 July 2011 is a wholly owned subsidiary of AIB). I am informed by AIB that no such payments have been made to management since 1992 and no bonuses of any kind have been paid to this cadre of employee since 2008.

### **Third Level Sector**

84. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason a State body, UCD, is going to pay the wages of staff in the UCD restaurant who will be in the employment of a private company; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40350/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy will be aware, UCD is an autonomous institution and the Minister has no role in its day to day management.

However I understand from the HEA that the current UCD restaurant staff will continue to remain employees of UCD and UCD has no plans to change this arrangement. Management are currently in discussion with SIPTU and will abide by any dispute resolution procedures as set out in the Croke Park Agreement.

### School Staffing

85. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40020/11]

86. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40021/11]

87. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40022/11]

88. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40023/11]

89. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40024/11]

90. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40025/11]

91. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40026/11]

92. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40027/11]

93. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40028/11]

94. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40029/11]

95. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40030/11]

96. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40031/11]

97. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40032/11]

98. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40033/11]

99. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40034/11]

100. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40035/11]

101. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the effect of the decision to introduce phased adjustments to the staffing schedules in one, two, three and four teacher schools from 2012-2013 on a school (details supplied) in County Kildare. [40036/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 85 to 101, 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. It is important to emphasise that no small schools will be closed due to the changes that have been announced.

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. 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. 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. 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.

### **European Globalisation Fund**

102. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the total amount of money returned to or due to be returned to the European globalisation fund to date providing a breakdown of moneys returned by EGF application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40063/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** The total funding allocations for the following EGF programmes in support of eligible redundant workers in Ireland were as follows:

- Dell: €22.8m (of which the EGF maximum 65% contribution is €14.8m and the national co-funded element is almost €8.0m)
- Waterford Crystal: €3.96m (EGF €2.57m, national €1.39m)
- SR Technics: €11.46m (EGF €7.45m, national €4.01m)

An EGF Final Report and Statement of Eligible Expenditure are required to be submitted to the European Commission by the Irish authorities within 6 months of the end of the EGF implementation period. The first such report is for the Dell EGF programme and is due on 28 December 2011. It is only at that stage that final certified expenditure is notified to the European Commission and any unused funds identified where applicable.

The certification of final expenditure is ongoing and in this context, a number of claims from service providers are currently awaited or are being processed. As no EGF programme final report has yet been submitted to the EU, and no financial expenditure statements have yet been completed, any final EGF funding underspend has not yet been identified for these programmes. To date, on the basis of claims processed, my Department has paid out the following amounts on the three EGF programmes:

- Dell: €6.46m
- Waterford Crystal: €1.61m
- SR Technics: €1.30m

Whilst the final Dell programme expenditure certified is expected to double, it is clear at this stage that final expenditure will be significantly less than was originally expected could be used on that programme.

### **Physical Education Facilities**

103. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the grants available under any scheme for the purchasing of small items of equipment for outdoor activity with children who are involved in FÁS schemes or disadvantaged schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40065/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** My Department is committed to the provision, maintenance and modernisation of physical education and physical activity facilities in our schools for our children and young people. In a new school building or refurbishment/extension, PE facilities are included as an intrinsic part of the design. While my Department currently has no specific grant schemes in place to provide funding for the purchase of outdoor equipment, primary schools received €2,000 each in PE equipment grants in 2006, at a total cost of €6.5 million. A similar grant of €4,000 per school, at an overall cost of around €3 million, issued to post-primary schools in 2007. In 2010 grant aid in excess of €16m issued to both primary and post-primary schools to allow each school address its own specific PE and outdoor equipment needs. It is also open to primary schools to use their annual minor works grant to purchase items of furniture and/or equipment. Individual primary schools received a grant in the sum of €5,500 plus €18.50 per pupil for the current school year.

### Teaching Qualifications

104. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding teachers who are studying for masters (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40073/11]

115. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify the situation regarding entitlement to a salary allowance for teachers on the completion of a masters qualification; the eligibility for this allowance for students who have now completed the first year of their masters; if the proposed changes will exclude these from this entitlement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40168/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos.104 and 115 together.

The Government announced as part of Budget 2012 that, pending completion of the public service-wide review of allowances, changes to teacher qualification allowances were being made with immediate effect. These changes will affect both existing teachers and new appointees in future. This decision was taken due to the upward pressure on the cost of teacher allowances. Without any changes, the cost of qualification allowances are expected to result in an additional €150 million increase in the cost of teacher salaries by 2020. To put this in context, the other reductions in education expenditure announced in Budget 2012 amount to €76 million. Without immediate action, this upward pressure would have cancelled out the savings made elsewhere in the education system and would bring about even harsher adjustments to schools and services.

This measure does not affect allowances currently being paid to existing teachers. However, those teachers will not be paid any additional allowance if they acquire any further qualification. The position of teachers who, on 5 December 2011, were undertaking courses will be considered in the context of the public service-wide review of allowances announced in Budget 2012 which is to be led by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. Any teacher being employed for the first time in a recognised school will not be able to obtain an allowance at a level greater than that applying to those who hold an honours degree. This means that qualifications at Masters or Doctorate level will not be paid, and those who hold a H.Dip will not be permitted through any combination of allowances to exceed the level of allowance payable in respect of an honours degree. Where a teacher on first appointment is eligible for payment of an allowance below that equivalent to honours degree level he or she will, in common with existing teachers, not be paid any additional allowance should he or she acquire a further qualification. My Department will be publishing information on this matter for teachers and schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) within the next week.

### Special Educational Needs

105. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the reason an all girls' school will get four hours per week learning support, for each mainstream post compared to five hours per week for mixed schools and all boys' schools; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40074/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I wish to advise the Deputy that the revised arrangements, which will update schools' General Allocation Model (GAM) allocations, based on the number of class teaching posts in schools for the previous year, reflect existing arrangements whereby differing pupil teacher ratios applied under the GAM in relation to boys, girls and mixed schools in order to account for differentials of prevalence of learning difficulty between boys and girls. The rationale for the differing ratios is based on international literature on the incidence of disability as well as international and national surveys of literacy and numeracy which indicate that there is a greater incidence of disability/learning difficulty in boys than girls. The applicable ratios which had previously applied are set out in Circular SP ED 02/05, available on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

The NCSE Report on the Implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, of 2006, also examined a range of sources to establish prevalence rates, including national databases, local and international studies and expert estimates, which indicated significantly higher rates of Mild General Learning Difficulty and Specific Learning Disability prevailing in boys, in comparison to girls.

### Educational Disadvantage

106. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if the post of administrative principal in DEIS 2 schools will be retained following changes announced as part of budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40076/11]

107. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if DEIS 2 schools will be subject to mainstream staffing schedules as a result of changes announced in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40077/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions 106 and 107 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. 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. 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 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.

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Some phasing arrangements 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 2012/12, including any phasing arrangements that may apply. All Band 2 urban DEIS Schools will be subject to the mainstream staffing schedule from 2012/13 onwards. DEIS Urban Band 2 schools are currently entitled to the allocation of administrative principals on lower enrolment and staffing figures than apply in primary schools generally. From 2012/13 school year, the allocation of administrative principals will be enrolment based only. In DEIS Urban Band 2 schools, an enrolment of 145 pupils will facilitate the principal becoming an administrative principal, compared to 178 in other schools. Schools affected by the change to allocating administrative principals on enrolment basis only, will retain their administrative principal status until there is a change of principal in the school. When an administrative principal post needs to be filled in future, the allocation will be made on an enrolment basis only.

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.

### Special Educational Needs

108. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will clarify if it is the base school which needs the 15 hours to retain the full time special education needs resource post; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40078/11]

109. **Deputy Charlie McConalogue** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of full time learning support posts a school is entitled to if they have 28 allocation hours as a result of budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40079/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 108 and 109 together.

The Deputy will be aware that as part of the budget announcements the teacher allocation processes will be reformed to provide greater autonomy to schools and to facilitate and simplify the work involved in creating shared posts, and in carrying out redeployment and recruitment. As part of this process 1,600 primary schools throughout the country will be identified by the Department as base schools for about 2,450 full-time resource only posts to cater for allocations determined by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

A school's approved NCSE allocation for the current school year will be used as a basis for the distribution of these full-time resource posts (which comprise 25 hours of teaching time) throughout the school system. The teachers in these full-time permanent posts will undertake NCSE approved resource hours in the base schools or in neighbouring schools. Through his/her role in allocating resources the local SENO will have an oversight role in relation to the sharing arrangements between schools so that they operate as efficiently as possible and time loss due to travel between schools can be kept to a minimum. Schools that are unable to have their NCSE approved resource hours met from this network of full-time resource posts will be allocated mainly part-time temporary posts. My Department will be notifying schools in January of the new staffing arrangements for 2012/13 school year.

### European Globalisation Fund

110. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he or anyone acting on behalf of his Department has written to or made contact with the 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 and in whose name an application was made to the European globalisation fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40109/11]

111. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if he will provide a county by county breakdown of the location of the 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 in whose name an application to the European globalisation fund has been made; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40111/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Ciarán Cannon):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 110 and 111 together.

The Deputy is referring to an application for funds under the European Globalisation Fund made by the previous government for the purposes of helping construction workers made redundant between July 2009 and March 2010. A breakdown by county of former employment location of the redundant workers included in the EGF applications for the NACE 41 Construction of Buildings, NACE 43 Specialised Construction Activities and NACE 71 Architectural Services construction sub-sectors is set out as follows. My Department has not notified any of the identified redundant workers to date. However, it is intended that letters notifying all persons who are eligible for EGF co-financed assistance of a number of new supports being made available to them will issue very shortly.

Employment County	No. persons
Carlow	217
Cavan	169
Clare	152
Cork	1,268
Donegal	162
Dublin	2,661
Galway	430
Kerry	220
Kildare	429
Kilkenny	303
Laois	121
Leitrim	41
Limerick	369
Longford	43
Louth	163
Mayo	195
Meath	417
Monaghan	73
Offaly	65
Roscommon	77
Sligo	75

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Employment County	No. persons
Tipperary	271
Waterford	336
Westmeath	135
Wexford	353
Wicklow	179
Outside Ireland	1

### Vocational Education Committees

112. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the number of legal cases taken against County Cork Vocational Education Committee, VEC, in each of the years since 2000 relating to employment legislation; the number of these cases in which findings were made against County Cork VEC in each year; the legal costs and penalties in each of these cases for each year to the County Cork VEC; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40115/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will appreciate that the information requested by him is not held by my Department, as such cases are a matter for County Cork VEC. My officials have contacted the VEC and have ascertained that it would require an inordinate amount of administrative time to compile the information sought.

113. **Deputy Noel Harrington** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if his attention has been drawn to the steps that County Cork Vocational Education Committee has taken following a court case (details supplied) to prevent any further occurrences of this practice; if he is satisfied that this practice has now been discontinued; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40116/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** I understand that the outcome of the case referred to is currently the subject of a judicial review application before the High Court. It would therefore be inappropriate for me to comment on the matter at this time.

### School Accommodation

114. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 89 of 20 April 2011, the location in Dublin 15 that it is envisaged to locate the gaelscoil in 2012. [40164/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** As the Deputy is aware, approval has been given for the opening of a new gaelscoil under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta in Dublin 15 in September 2012. The new school will serve the Mulhuddart Area. Arrangements for accommodation for this school are currently being advanced by my Department.

*Question No. 115 answered with Question No. 104.*

### Departmental Expenditure

116. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40177/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The information requested is not currently available. My Department's officials will collate the relevant material and I will forward a final response to the Deputy as soon as possible.

117. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40193/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** My Department incurs expenditure on public advertisements in connection with a wide range of educational programmes and schemes including, staff appointments in the education sector; invitations to attend local hearings; invitations to forward submissions on education-related schemes/projects; invitations to tender for school building projects. The amount of money (to the nearest thousand euro) spent by my Department on advertising for each of the years 2006 to 2011 (to date) is as follows: 2011 — €95,000 (to end November); 2010 — €105,000; 2009 — €77,000; 2008 — €340,000; 2007 — €816,000; 2006 — €800,000.

### Higher Education Grants

118. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Education and Skills if a person (details supplied) who hopes to commence a four year degree course next October and previously did a two year diploma in DIT-VEC, 2004 to 2006, still qualifies for full or partial free fees or full maintenance grants; if the person has an entitlement to all services and grants which are available to a mature student; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40224/11]

**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 would qualify for a student grant. However, to satisfy the terms and conditions of the student grant scheme in relation to progression, a student must be moving from year to year within a course having successfully completed the previous year or be transferring from one course to another where the award for the subsequent course is of a higher level than the previous course.

The objective of this policy is to help as many students as possible in obtaining one qualification at each level of study thereby increasing their employment prospects. Ultimately, a student must apply to his/her grant awarding authority to have their eligibility for a grant assessed.

Under my Department's Free Fees Schemes tuition fees are not paid in respect of a student pursuing a second undergraduate course. However, where a student already holds a Level 6 or Level 7 qualification and is now progressing to a Level 8 course without necessarily having received an exemption from the normal duration of the course they may be deemed eligible for free fees. The actual determination of a student's eligibility for free fees is a matter for the third level institution to which a student wishes to attend.

### Schools Building Projects

119. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an extension to a primary school (details supplied) in County Cork; and when construction work is expected to commence. [40282/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** The Deputy will be aware from my previous response to him in September that this project is at an advanced stage of the tender process. The project's Design Team is currently addressing a number of technical issues that have arisen in relation to access to the site. These issues need to be resolved before the project can progress to construction.

120. **Deputy Martin Heydon** asked the Minister for Education and Skills the progress being made and the proposed timeline for a decision on refurbishment works and an extension for a school (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40348/11]

**Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Ruairí Quinn):** A major building project for the school referred to by the Deputy was included in the School Buildings Work Programme for 2011 announced last January and the process of appointing a Design Team will commence shortly.

The current position of all projects on the school building programme, including this project may be viewed on my Department's website at *www.education.ie*. Details in relation to projects are updated regularly during the year.

### Garda Stations

121. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of money spent on refurbishment of Loughlinn Garda station, County Roscommon; and his future plans for this station. [40103/11]

124. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the full expenditure to date on a project (details supplied); and if he will outline in a tabular basis showing construction, design costs and any other cost. [40119/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 121 and 124 together.

Prior to the decision being taken by Government in December 2011 that Loughglynn Garda Station is to be closed, the Commissioners of Public Works had awarded contracts for maintenance works, consisting primarily of asbestos removal and the replacement of windows, in September 2011.

The expenditure to date is as follows:

Classification of works	Cost	VAT	Total
Fascia, soffit repair, window replacement and consequential internal repairs.	€19,800.00	€2,673.00	€22,473.00
Minor electrical works associated with above works	€2,046.00	€276.21	€2,322.21

On completion of the electrical works and the asbestos removal works further expenditure of €37,750 approx., is expected.

No decision has yet been taken as to the future of this property when vacated by An Garda Síochána. I have asked my Office to set out on a case by case basis the potential uses for this and other Garda properties. I have an open mind as to their future use.

### Public Private Partnerships

122. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform his views

on the future of public private partnerships and the role that they will play in the building of roads, schools and Government projects in the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40274/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** It is my view that Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) can continue to play a valuable role in delivering public infrastructure alongside more traditional procurement. PPP procurement represents the most suitable method for securing additional private financing for capital investment as there is a degree of familiarity with the PPP process, and we have already put in place the legislative, guidance and institutional framework. Assuming that a project itself makes sense, what the State wants from PPPs is efficiency, speedy delivery and most importantly value for money.

The PPP model has provided roads, schools and water services on a value for money basis and that are delivered on time. While access to PPP funding is difficult to secure in the current economic environment it remains an option to complement Exchequer funding when circumstances allow. Such proposals would of course have to be on the right terms for the tax payer.

I understand that a preferred bidder has been selected for Schools bundle 3 and a further two schools bundles are being prepared which were announced as part of the Jobs Initiative. In addition as outlined in the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework which I published on 10 November, the National Roads Authority is seeking to progress a number of roads projects as PPPs, the most advanced of which are the N11/Newlands Cross Interchange and the N17 Gort/Tuam.

### Departmental Contracts

123. **Deputy Eric Byrne** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the policy of the Office of Public Works in respect of ensuring that all contractors awarded projects under its remit have discharged all obligations to employees and former employees when a decision of an industrial relations forum, that is, the EAT, LRC, Labour Court, awards compensation under statutory employment law, or when it is brought to its attention of a failure to do so, the OPW's procedures for ensuring those awards are discharged in full. [40041/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** In engaging contractors, the Office of Public Works (OPW) complies with the procedures and requirements of the Department of Finance Capital Works Management Framework, the system within which all public sector bodies operate.

Following the award of a contract, OPW is required to ensure that the Conditions of Contract are fully observed. The provisions of Par 5.3.3 of the standard Capital Works Management Framework contract documentation are of particular reference to the issue raised by the Deputy. The discharge of any invoices presented would be contingent on the Contractors' ongoing compliance with these requirements.

*Question No. 124 answered with Question No. 121*

### Flood Relief

125. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the projects that were discussed during his recent visit to County Mayo; and if a specific project (details supplied) was discussed. [40155/11]

126. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the progress on a project (details supplied) in County Mayo; and if he will outline the delays blocking progress of same. [40156/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brian Hayes):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 125 and 126 together.

During my recent visit to County Mayo I met a deputation to discuss the flooding problem at Roundfort / Hollymount. As outlined in my response to Question number 102 on 6th December, 2011, the position in relation to that scheme is that the Office of Public Works are continuing to refine the proposals in order to address the concerns of the National Parks and Wildlife Service regarding potential impacts of the works on water levels in turloughs in the area.

No discussions took place during my visit regarding the proposed flood relief scheme for Crossmolina. The position in relation to that scheme is that the OPW has carried out a preliminary examination of potential mitigation options. Consultants will be commissioned in the Spring to develop these options and to carry out a cost benefit analysis with a view to putting detailed proposals on public exhibition in Autumn 2012.

As indicated in my announcement last Friday, the allocation for flood risk management and mitigation in the Government's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Framework 2012-2016 will enable the OPW to continue to progress both of these schemes.

### **Departmental Staff**

127. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the cost or estimate of the cost of increments paid to staff for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in his Department to date in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40166/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** In the timeframe allowed, it is not possible to provide the information required by the Deputy. However, the information will be forwarded directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

128. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40184/11]

129. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40200/11]

**Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (Deputy Brendan Howlin):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 128 and 129 together.

Since its establishment in July 2011 my Department has had no expenditure on public relations companies. It has spent €13,525 on advertising, in relation to entry into the 2012 State Directory.

The Deputy should note, that expenditure from 2006 to July 2011 for my Department is covered by material provided by the Department of Finance, given that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was not officially established until last July.

### **Information and Communications Technology**

130. **Deputy Dan Neville** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation regarding a draft statutory instrument which he published in June 2011 for consultation regarding the practical solution of seeking Internet service providers to act reasonably to preclude customers from copyright theft, illegal downloading, when he intends signing same. [40038/11]

132. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the outcome of the consultation on the draft statutory instrument requiring Internet service providers to exclude customers committing digital copyright theft; if there is a timescale for the signing of the statutory instrument; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40170/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Sean Sherlock):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 130 and 132 together.

The public consultation process referred to attracted more than 50 submissions from interested parties on this subject. Several of these submissions contained legal arguments in regard to the issue as well as comments in respect of the draft statutory instrument which was published as part of the consultation process. These comments were forwarded by my Department to the Office of the Attorney General for consideration.

I consider that there is further work to be done on the issue between my Department and the Office of the Attorney General.

It is an issue on which there is interaction between rights holders, the internet service providers (ISPS) and the end users, of whom there are millions.

We must ensure that we get the balance right and that the legislation is correct in this area. I have been holding discussions with a number of the stakeholders, in this regard, and I hope to be in a position to finalise this matter by the middle of January 2012.

### Work Permits

131. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the position regarding a work permit in respect of a person (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40161/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** My Department processes applications in respect of the different types of employment permits and all applications are processed in line with the Employment Permits Act 2006. I wish to advise the Deputy that this Work Permit application was refused on the 26th July 2011 on the grounds that it is current Government policy to issue new employment permits only in respect of:

- highly skilled, highly paid positions or;
- non-EEA nationals who are already legally resident in the State on valid employment permits or;
- positions requiring specialist or scarce skills, expertise or qualifications which cannot be filled otherwise.

Furthermore, new Work Permit applications can only be considered where it is established that the position has been advertised with FAS/EURES for a period of 8 weeks and for at least six days in both local and national newspapers. In addition, it appeared from the information supplied that the proposed employee's immigration permission in the State precluded them from entering fulltime employment.

The applicant was notified of this decision in writing and of their right to appeal within 21 days. As no appeal was received in the Employment Permits Section within this timeframe the fees in this case were refunded to the applicant.

In these circumstances, therefore, this application cannot be re-visited.

*Question No. 132 answered with Question No. 130.*

### Departmental Expenditure

133. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40182/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The total spend of my Department and the Offices of my Department on Public Relations companies for each year since 2006 is as follows:—

Year	Public Relations Costs
2006	€142,997
2007	€296,216
2008	€147,900
2009	€20,303
2010	€29,011
YTD 2011	€18,226

The expenditure levels for the period 2006 to 2008 are higher than those recorded in subsequent years, due to a number of distinct promotional campaigns that were undertaken relating to the National Minimum Wage; the ICT Audits Programme for Small Business and broadcast media services for Employment Information Services being offered by NERA (National Employment Rights Authority).

134. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40198/11]

**Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (Deputy Richard Bruton):** The total spend of my Department and the Offices of my Department on public advertisements in national and local media for each year since 2006 is as follows:—

Year	Advertising Costs
2006	€723,192
2007	€760,895
2008	€457,926
2009	€255,446
2010	€113,035
YTD 2011	€131,610

These figures include the cost of all public advertisements undertaken in print media, broadcast media and internet media.

The expenditure levels for 2006 and 2007 are higher than those recorded in subsequent years, due in part to the fact that the ODCA and the Interim NCA Board advertising spends are included in these totals. They are not included in subsequent years, as the NCA was established on a separate statutory footing from 01 May 2007; and from then had a separate advertising budget. In addition, NERA (National Employment Rights Authority) also undertook a significant broadcast media campaign in 2007, to raise public awareness of its Employment Information Services.

### Pension Provisions

135. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will clarify the matter of qualified adult allowance payments to a person on contributory State pension; if the person qualifies for QAA irrespective of income; if the person's spouse's personal income is the only relevant means testing considered and is the spouse assessed with any portion of the spouse's private or total income. [40059/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Entitlement to state pension (contributory) is based on the number of contributions paid by the recipient over the duration of his/her working life. It entitles the recipient to a personal rate of pension (i.e. the amount payable to a single person with no dependants) regardless of any other means or income that they have.

An increase may also be paid in respect of a dependent adult, provided the dependent adult satisfies a means test. A full increase for a qualified adult (IQA) is payable where the dependent spouse's income is less than €100 per week — income from employment, self-employment, savings, investments and capital is taken into account. A reduced IQA is payable when the dependent spouse's income is between €100 and €310 per week.

The income of the pensioner who paid PRSI and qualifies for the state pension is not taken into account in the assessment for an IQA. Where capital is held jointly by a couple, half of the value is assessed as means for the IQA.

### Social Welfare Benefits

136. **Deputy Joe Higgins** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of mortgage interest supplement; and the criteria for awarding same. [40081/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** There are currently over 18,900 households benefiting from the mortgage interest supplement scheme for which €77.2m has been allocated for 2011.

A person may be entitled to a supplement towards the amount of mortgage *interest* payable in respect of his or her residence provided that:

- The loan agreement was entered into at a time when, in the opinion of the Department, the person was in a position to meet the repayments.
- The residence in respect of which the loan is payable, is not offered for sale
- He or she is habitually resident in the State

The Department must be satisfied in all cases that:

- The amount of the mortgage interest payable by the claimant does not exceed such amount as the Department considers reasonable to meet his or her residential and other needs.
- It is reasonable to award a supplement having regard to the amount of any arrears outstanding on the loan.

Budget 2012 announced changes to the mortgage interest supplement scheme. The minimum contribution that all households are required to pay has been increased by €6 to €30 per week for a single person. The minimum contribution payable for all couples categories will be increased by a further €5, to €35 per week.

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Receipt of mortgage interest supplement will also be deferred for 12 months while the person engages with the Mortgage Arrears Resolution Process. This approach is consistent with the recommendations of the Mortgage Arrears and Personal Debt Group and the Inter-Departmental Working Group on Mortgage Arrears.

### **Social Welfare Appeals**

137. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will request the social welfare appeals office to reschedule, as speedily as possible, a date for oral hearing in respect of the disability allowance appeal of a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan. [40083/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an oral hearing was scheduled for the person concerned on 3rd October 2011. The appellant notified the Social Welfare Appeal that he had a hospital appointment on the same day and the Oral Hearing was duly cancelled. The case has been re-listed for an oral hearing and will be re-scheduled at the earliest available date.

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.

138. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if and when a decision will issue in respect of an appeal for disability allowance in the case of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40085/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that the disability allowance claim of the person concerned was disallowed following an assessment by a Medical Assessor who expressed the opinion that he was medically unsuitable for the allowance. An appeal was registered on 23rd November 2011 and in accordance with the statutory procedures the relevant department papers and the comments of the Social Welfare services on the matter raised in the appeal have been sought. In that context, an assessment by another Medical Assessor will be carried out.

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**

139. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40121/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I confirm that the department has received three separate applications for carer's allowance from the person concerned in respect of three care recipients, including the person mentioned above.

Her file has been referred to an investigative officer of the Department who has been asked to report and confirm whether all conditions for receipt of carer's allowance are satisfied in respect of the applicant and the three care recipients.

On completion of the necessary investigations relating to all aspects of her claims a decision will be made and she will be notified directly of the outcome.

### Employment Support Services

140. **Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of community employment and job initiative schemes currently operational in County Kildare; the number of participants in each scheme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40123/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Community employment (CE) 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. Places are allocated regionally to reflect the underlying level of unemployment.

Current information on community employment and job initiative (JI) schemes operational in County Kildare and the numbers of participants and supervisors engaged is set out in the tables below. 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.

TABLE 1 — Details of Community Employment Placements in Co. Kildare

Sponsor	Contract Duration		Participants	Supervisors
	Start	Finish		
Cill Dara Ar Aghaidh Teo	14.11.2011	09.11.2012	18	1
Oval And Round Ltd	28.02.2011	24.02.2012	26	2
Athy Community Council	03.10.2011	28.09.2012	22	1
Cuan Mhuire Teoranta	05.12.2011	30.11.2012	22	2
Carbury CE Scheme Ltd	27.06.2011	22.06.2012	14	1
Castledermot CE Ltd	05.12.2011	30.11.2012	14	1
St. John Of God	07.11.2011	02.11.2012	13	1
Celbridge Community Centre Ltd	05.12.2011	30.11.2012	22	1
Irish Wheelchair Assoc D.3	28.03.2011	23.03.2012	24	1
Curragh Area CE Project Ltd	22.08.2011	17.08.2012	18	1
Balyna Rural Enterprise Development Ltd	11.04.2011	06.04.2012	18	1
Broad/Clogh/Johnstownbridge CE	28.11.2011	23.11.2012	15	1
North Kildare Leisure Club Ltd	04.04.2011	30.03.2012	26	1
Kilcullen Area CE Ltd.	20.06.2011	15.06.2012	20	1
Kilmead Community Development Group Ltd.	24.01.2011	20.01.2012	18	1

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Sponsor	Contract Duration		Participants	Supervisors
	Start	Finish		
Nurney/Kildangan CE Project Ltd	14.11.2011	09.11.2012	21	1
Kildare Town Sports CE Co Ltd	13.06.2011	08.06.2012	15	1
Allen Area CEP Ltd	21.03.2011	16.03.2012	30	1
The Leixlip Amenities Group Ltd	28.03.2011	23.03.2012	20	1
Kildare Centre For Unemployed Ltd	24.10.2011	19.10.2012	16	1
Leixlip Ballyoulster Utd	21.11.2011	16.11.2012	22	1
Lullymore Heritage Park CE	17.10.2011	12.10.2012	20	1
Maynooth Community Council	27.12.2010	23.12.2011	12	1
Maynooth Environmental Group Ltd	05.12.2011	30.11.2012	15	1
Monasterevin Parish CEP Ltd	28.11.2011	23.11.2012	27	2
Kildare Youth Services Ltd	14.03.2011	09.03.2012	19	2
Rathmore Area CE Ltd	18.04.2011	13.04.2012	15	1
Kildare Cent For The Unemployed Ltd	17.01.2011	13.01.2012	34	2
Ballymany Area Project Ltd	06.06.2011	01.06.2012	24	1
Kare CE Project	31.10.2011	26.10.2012	16	1
Prosperous Area CE Project Ltd	04.07.2011	29.06.2012	18	1
Rathangan CE Group Ltd	07.03.2011	02.03.2012	15	1
Total			629	37

TABLE 2 — Details of Job Initiative in Co. Kildare

Sponsor	Start	Finish	Participants	Supervisors
Athy Community Council	01.08.2011	27.07.2012	17	1
Total			17	1

### Departmental Staff

141. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Social Protection the cost or estimate of the cost of increments paid to staff for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in her Department to date in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40167/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The majority of civil servants commence their employment in the civil service on a pay scale that provides for annual increments up to a maximum point when they are regarded as having the full capacity for their role. The annual increment is normally paid on the anniversary of appointment provided performance, which includes attendance and punctuality during the year, is satisfactory.

There is currently a total of 6,042 staff serving in my Department. The estimated cost to the payroll to provide for the payment of increments to eligible staff for the periods requested is set out in the following table.

Year	2010	2011	2012
Number of increments	2,176	2,368	2,585
Estimated value of increments	€1,490,890	€1,400,000	€1,200,000

The estimate for 2012 is in respect of Department of Social Protection staff only and does not take account of the Community Welfare Service staff that transferred into my Department on 1 October 2011. The additional estimate for the provision of increments to these staff is being prepared. The estimate for the provision of increments to the officers transferring from FÁS on 1st January 2012 cannot be included as the personal details of the officers concerned are not yet available to my Department.

### Departmental Expenditure

142. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount of money spent by her on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40185/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The Department's press office generally deals with all media queries and public relations matters. No money has been spent by my Department on public relations companies since 2006.

143. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount of money spent by her on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40201/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** Advertising for the Department falls under two categories:

- Routine newspaper/magazine advertisements to advise the public of office closures, relocations or recruitment.
- General advertising to raise awareness of schemes and services including campaigns on radio, television and in the print media.

The amount of money spent by my Department on advertising in national and local media is as follows:

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011(to date)
Total Expenditure	997,000	1,413,000	1,147,000	182,000	155,000	94,000

In 2006, awareness campaigns were held in respect of Family Income Supplement, Carers Benefit and Respite Care Grant. In 2007, the awareness campaigns related to the introduction of the All Ireland Free Travel scheme, the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme and the new Half Rate Carer's scheme and in 2008, advertising costs incurred were in respect of a campaign on the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance scheme, on inviting submissions and input from the public in relation to the Green Paper on Pensions and the development of the Carer's Strategy and Customer Action Plan and Charter.

There has been no major advertising awareness campaigns undertaken since 2008 and the costs incurred from 2009 to date related to routine advertising.

There were no costs incurred by my Department on advertising with international media during this period.

### Social Welfare Benefits

144. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of appli-

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cations for jobseeker’s allowance that have been made by self-employed persons in the years 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011; the rate of successful applications; the reason for refusal of payment of jobseeker’s allowance; the number of applications which are withdrawn or not proceeded with; the reason for same; and if she will make a statement on the matter.  
[40204/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** I have attached a table which sets out the total number of Jobseekers’ Allowance claims from self-employed persons that were processed by my Department during 2009, 2010 and to date 2011. The table also shows the number of claims awarded as a percentage of the total number of claims awarded, disallowed or withdrawn in each of the years.

A separate table indicates the number of claims disallowed in each of the years specified, and reasons for disallowance. Where an application is withdrawn or not preceded with there is no requirement on the applicant to provide a reason for their reason to withdraw their claim. Accordingly, the information sought by the Deputy in that regard is not available.

	2009	2010	2011 (to 30/11/11)
Awarded Applications	5,966	5,482	4,428
Disallowed Applications	449	373	310
Withdrawn Applications	596	560	513
Total	7,011	6,415	5,251
Percentage of processed claims awarded	85.1%	85.5%	84.3%

Year	Number Disallowed	Disallowance Reason
2009	361	Applicants Means exceed the scheme’s maximum criteria
	61	Applicant failed to disclose their means to the Department
	13	Not Habitually Resident
	14	Other
2010	305	Applicants Means exceed the scheme’s maximum criteria
	37	Applicant failed to disclose their means to the Department
	17	Not Habitually Resident
	14	Other
2011	247	Applicants Means exceed the scheme’s maximum criteria
	36	Applicant failed to disclose their means to the Department
	10	Not Habitually Resident
	17	Other

**Social Welfare Appeals**

145. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a disability allowance appeal in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Cork.  
[40205/11]

**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 22nd

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 8th December 2011 and the appeal will be assigned, in due course, to an Appeals Officer 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. 146 withdrawn.*

147. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Longford has been refused a carer's allowance, despite the medical aspect of the appeal being approved; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40218/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** The person concerned was refused on two separate issues, firstly on the grounds 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 on grounds 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 and 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 of the person concerned 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 facts not already presented at the time of appeal.

148. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision on an appeal for a carer's allowance will be granted in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Laois; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40221/11]

**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.

### **Redundancy Payments**

149. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 143 of 2 November 2011, when a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny will receive their redundancy payment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40263/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** A redundancy lump sum claim in respect of the person concerned was received on 26 May 2011. Redundancy lump sums claims received at the start of May 2011 are currently being processed.

### Community Employment Schemes

150. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will respond to correspondence (details supplied) regarding cuts to community employment schemes; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40335/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** 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 the Department's expenditure. As a result Budget 2012 contained a reduction in the Community Employment (CE) materials and training grants from €1,500 to €500 per participant per annum. The implementation of the cut to the CE materials and training grant will result in an annual saving of €27.5 million and represents a cut of 7.5% in the total 2011 CE budget of €360 million.

Despite this change 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.

My Department 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 improve substantially individuals' chances of securing employment. Forfas published its "Review of Labour Market Programmes" last year which showed that CE participant's 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 and this requirement will inform considerations in this area.

### Social Welfare Code

151. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will respond to correspondence (details supplied) regarding family income supplement payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40337/11]

**Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Joan Burton):** From January 2012, income from carer's allowance and carer's benefit payments will be included in the income assessment for Family Income Supplement (FIS). This measure brings the treatment of carer's allowance and carer's benefit, for the FIS income assessment, into line with how other primary social welfare payments are assessed.

### Social Welfare Appeals

152. **Deputy Brendan Ryan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if she will expedite an appeal for invalidity pension with a view to a successful outcome in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Dublin taking into account both the applicants health condition and the advice received from their local office which recommended the application for invalidity pension; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40349/11]

**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.

### Departmental Expenditure

153. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40173/11]

154. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40189/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 153 and 154 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department, as currently configured, was established on 2 June 2011 and therefore the available information is being provided from that date. The total amount spent by my Department on public relations companies from 2 June 2011 to 13 December 2011 is €162,301 and this expenditure was incurred in relation to *Imagine Ireland*, Culture Ireland's year-long programme of events in America during 2011.

With regard to advertising, I am advised that my Department spent €226,873 on advertising for official purposes during the same period.

### Áras Shorcha Uí Ghuairim

155. D'fhiafraigh **Éamon Ó Cuív** den Aire Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil i gceist aige deontas a íoc le hAcadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge in 2012 i leith Áras Shorcha Uí Ghuairim; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [40260/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Dinny McGinley):** Tá allúntas de €1m á chur ar fáil ag mo Roinnse d'Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge don bhliain acadúil 2011/2012. Cuimsítear san allúntas seo na hionaid Ghaeltachta ar fad atá faoi scáth an Acadaimh. Is faoin Acadamh atá sé an t-allúntas seo a bhainistiú agus a úsáid ar an mbealach is éifeachtaí agus is éifeachtúla i gcomhréir lena gcuid pleananna do na hionaid atá acu sa Ghaeltacht.

### Grant Payments

156. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht if he will provide information regarding grants (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40279/11]

**Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (Deputy Jimmy Deenihan):** The Deputy will appreciate that it is not possible to provide the information requested within the confines of a details supplied question. I am arranging for the information to be provided directly to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### Semi-State Bodies

157. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the progress he has made on restructuring State companies and strengthening regulatory arrangements; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40067/11]

158. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the timeframe he is considering for the proposed sale of each State asset; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40068/11]

159. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if core transmission assets in gas and electricity will be considered as part of the disposal of State assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40069/11]

160. **Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the State assets he will be discussing with the troika as part of the programme of disposal of State assets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40070/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 157 to 160, inclusive, together.

The EU/IMF Programme for Ireland contains a commitment that the Government will outline methods to raise funds through disposals of State owned assets.

The Government is continuing its discussions with the Troika of EU, IMF and ECB on the scope for utilising proceeds from any future disposal of non-strategic assets to invest in economic renewal, in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government. A full evaluation of the optimum approach, to be taken to the sale of a minority stake in ESB, as has been decided by the Government, is being progressed by a group co-chaired by my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A separate inter Departmental Group is evaluating the approaches to developing a programme of disposal of non-strategic State assets. The reports of both groups which have been finalised will inform further consideration by the Government of its approach to all the issues inherent in divestment of State assets.

In accordance also with the EU/IMF Programme an independent assessment (being undertaken by the International Energy Agency) of the efficiency of the gas and electricity sectors will inform considerations as to any necessary strengthening of the energy regulatory regime in the coming months. The gas and electricity transmissions networks are key strategic State assets and their retention in at least majority State control is a critical determinant of any decisions in relation to possible further disposals of State assets.

### **Public Service Contracts**

161. **Deputy Sandra McLellan** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason the ESB was given sole contract of electric vehicle charging points; if under EU legislation the contract should have been sent out to tender; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40084/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** There is no contract between my Department and the ESB for the installation of Electric Vehicle charge points.

The ESB, as the single operator of the electricity distribution system, is responsible for implementing the public Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure across Ireland.

I understand that, to date, the installation of charge points on public sites has been undertaken by contractors working on behalf of the ESB. I also understand that from time to time the ESB hold tendering competitions whereby interested parties may apply to be registered on a 'tender list'. The ESB then signs framework agreements to last for a fixed period with successful candidates. Over the period of the framework agreement, contractors on the list will be engaged to undertake work on projects such as installation of charge points.

### Departmental Expenditure

162. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40175/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** In the time available, it has not been possible to identify and assemble the information requested.

My Department is in the process of identifying and assembling the information and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

163. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40191/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** In the time available, it has not been possible to identify and assemble the information requested.

My Department is in the process of identifying and assembling the information and I will revert to the Deputy as soon as possible.

### Energy Conservation

164. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason grants under the better energy homes scheme were cut from 8 December 2011; his views that these reductions are inconsistent with supporting employment in the energy retrofitting area, the urgent need to tackle fuel poverty and reduce the nation's dependency on imported fossil fuels; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40230/11]

165. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of applicants on waiting lists for the home energy saving scheme and the warmer homes scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40232/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 165 together.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) administers Better Energy on behalf of my Department. As announced in the context of the Budget, the Government has committed funding of €76 million on the Better Energy Programme next year. While the overall allocation represents a decrease, it will support substantial economic activity in 2012 supporting at least 4,500 jobs and generating anticipated energy savings of 340 GWh. The Budget allocation inevitably reflects the need to make reductions across the public capital programme but the continued level of support endorses the positive economic impact of the programme. I anticipate that all the resources made available in 2012 will be drawn down and that the scheme will continue to support a significant level of employment.

Better Energy: Homes programme has overseen the upgrade of over 100,000 homes since commencement in May 2009. There is no waiting list for the Better Energy: Homes scheme. One of the aims of the programme is to develop a mature market for wall insulation. In recent months, there has been a significant and growing level of applications for both internal and external wall insulation, which points to the development of a mature market. In response, and to obviate against dead weight, grant levels have been adjusted. It is worth noting that there have been minor changes to the most popular measures, so for the majority of applicants there will be little or no impact.

[Deputy Pat Rabbitte.]

The Programme for Government commits to a withdrawal of grant aid for Better Energy Homes and a transition to a Pay-As-You-Save scheme by 2014.

Improving the energy efficiency of our homes, business and public sector will realise significant financial savings, while also reducing Ireland's dependence upon imported fossil fuels. The present and forthcoming National Energy Efficiency Action Plans are designed to realise significant emissions reductions, where energy efficiency has a pivotal role to play.

Better Energy: Warmer Homes aims to provide energy efficiency improvements to low-income homes unable to afford the cost of implementing such measures. To date, efficiency improvements have been made in over 75,000 homes. There are currently 8,546 homes nationwide on the Better Energy: Warmer Homes waiting list. SEAI is working to ensure work is completed on homes on the waiting list as soon as is practicable.

I published the Affordable Energy Strategy on 27 November 2011, which sets out 48 time bound actions across Government designed to protect households in energy poverty, a copy of which was circulated to all Deputies last week.

Better Energy: Homes scheme	Previous Support Levels €	Current Support Levels €
Roof Insulation	200	200
External wall insulation		
Apartment (any) OR Mid-terrace House	4,000	1,800
Semi-detached OR End of terrace		2,700
Detached House		3,600
Internal Wall Dry-Lining		
Apartment (any) OR Mid-terrace House	2,000	900
Semi-detached OR End of Terrace		1,350
Detached House		1,800
Cavity Wall Insulation	320	250
High Efficiency Gas or Oil fired Boiler with Heating Controls Upgrade	560	560
Heating Controls Upgrade	400	400
BER After Upgrade Works (Only one BER grant per home)	80	50
Solar Thermal	800	800

### Electricity Generation

166. **Deputy Brendan Griffin** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he will introduce the new REFIT tariff on renewable energy, which was announced by the previous Government in May 2010 but was never put into practice; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40259/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** My Department has recently received State Aid clearance from the European Commission in respect of the REFIT (Renewable Energy Feed in Tariff) for electricity from biomass technologies. Government approval for the scheme has now been obtained and I expect the scheme to open very shortly for applications.

### Telecommunications Services

167. **Deputy Michael Healy-Rae** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural

Resources if he will respond to correspondence (details supplied) regarding next generation broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40336/11]

**Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Pat Rabbitte):** The provision of electronic communications services, including broadband, is, in the first instance, a matter for private sector service providers operating in Ireland's fully liberalised telecommunications market, regulated by the independent regulator, the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg).

Under the NewERA proposals in the Programme for Government, there is a commitment to co-invest with the private sector and commercial Semi State sector to provide Next Generation Broadband customer access to every home and business in the State. The Next Generation Broadband Taskforce which I convened earlier this year has an important role to play in this regard. It comprises the CEOs of all of the major telecommunications companies operating in the Irish market, as well as CEOs of some other companies that provide broadband services. The purpose of the Taskforce is to discuss and report on policy issues and proposals in relation to the provision of high speed broadband across Ireland. I expect that the Taskforce will help to identify how best to deliver wider customer access to high-speed broadband generally and thereby assist in delivering on the commitment in the Programme for Government.

The Taskforce will conclude its deliberations shortly. It is my intention to consider the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the report of the Taskforce and to move quickly thereafter to put in place the optimal policy environment for the delivery of high speed broadband.

### Community Development

168. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the grants that are available for organisations under any scheme for the purchasing of small items of equipment for outdoor activity with children who are from disadvantaged areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40066/11]

174. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the funding sources which may be available to develop a playground in an area (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40203/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 168 and 174 together.

Funding of €427m is available under the Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2007-2013 for allocation to qualifying projects up to the end of 2013. One of the objectives of the RDP is to identify and provide appropriate amenity and leisure facilities to local communities in rural areas not otherwise available to them. Accordingly, it may be possible to obtain funding for projects of the nature referred to in the questions under the RDP. There are 35 Local Action Groups contracted, on my Department's behalf, to deliver the RDP throughout the country and these groups are the principal decision-makers in relation to the allocation of project funding. The contact details of these groups can be found on my Department's website [www.environ.ie](http://www.environ.ie).

Funding has also been allocated for the RAPID leverage schemes, under which my Department co-funds with other Departments and agencies a range of small-scale local projects, including playgrounds. My Department is currently paying down outstanding commitments under these schemes and is not in a position to consider new applications at the present time.

### Waste Management

169. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he has considered proposals to assist in the regulation of the scrap metal industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40107/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** Regulation of the scrap metal industry is not a matter within my Department's remit. The regulation of waste activities is, of course, relevant to the industry. Such activities require authorisation in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996; the terms of such authorisations are primarily derived from requirements of EU Directives on waste and specific waste streams such as end of life vehicles or electronic waste. Depending on the authorisation required, these activities are controlled either by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or by local authorities as competent authorities nominated by the State to implement such legislation. The purpose of these controls is to regulate the collection, recovery or disposal of waste in order to protect the environment.

Enforcement of waste legislation is a matter either for the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE) in relation to waste licences or for local authorities in relation to waste permits. The OEE operates an Enforcement Network to foster co-operation between the various public service bodies involved in the enforcement of environmental legislation, so that a higher and more consistent standard of enforcement is achieved throughout the country.

My Department is aware of the growing issue of metal theft and is represented at the Stakeholder Forum on Metal Theft that has been set up by An Garda Síochána. Local authority enforcement staff are cooperating with the Gardaí and the enhancement of that cooperation was discussed at the Forum meeting on the 7 December, 2011.

The Gardaí are making good progress in leading the work of the Metal Theft Forum and my Department and local authorities will continue to support the Forum's work. In that regard, I have asked my Department to examine waste licensing and permitting legislation to ensure all necessary provisions, particularly those relating to traceability, are in place to avoid situations that might be exploited by criminal elements — this examination is on-going. However, if the Forum is to achieve its aims in reducing and preventing metal theft, wider support will also be required from other relevant parties in order to ensure that the broader range of issues involved are successfully addressed.

### Private Rented Accommodation

170. **Deputy Robert Dowds** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he will make funding available to the Private Residential Tenancies Board in order that it can follow through on its decision to evict a tenant at an address (details supplied). [40114/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I have no function in the operational matters of the Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB), an independent statutory body established under the Residential Tenancies Act 2004. The body has operated on a self-financing basis since 2010 and I have no plans to restore Exchequer funding to it.

### Local Authority Expenditure

171. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the cost or estimate of the cost of incremental payments to local authority person-

nel; the number of increments due for 2010, 2011 and 2012 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40165/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The information requested is not available in my Department as day to day operational matters, including the calculation of the appropriate pay rates payable to individual local authority staff members, across the 34 local authorities, are a matter for each individual local authority.

### Departmental Expenditure

172. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40178/11]

173. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40194/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 172 and 173 together.

The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

*Question No. 174 answered with Question No. 168.*

### Library Projects

175. **Deputy Ciara Conway** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government further to an announcement of €240,000 for Waterford as part of the Capital Programme for Libraries in July, the status of funding for Waterford; if this allocation of money has been delayed or stopped; the reasons for same; if the allocation will be re-instated in full; the date on which this will happen; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40211/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** On the 19 July 2011, I announced a Public Library Capital Programme which included provision for the supply of a mobile library to Co. Waterford. The allocation for the Co. Waterford mobile library was €190,000 with an additional €50,000 for bookstock as this mobile was a new service. The mobile could not be procured on time by the end of 2011.

This project can be reconsidered in 2012.

### Animal Welfare

176. **Deputy Brendan Smith** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when the Dog Breeding Establishment Act was passed by the Oireachtas; when was it signed into law by the President; the reasons for the delay in the implementation of same; when it is his intention to implement the sections dealing with puppy farms; if he will provide a definitive date for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40225/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010 passed all stages in the Seanad on 14 July 2010 and was signed by the President on 21 July 2010.

Alongside the Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010, separate legislation on the related issue of greyhound welfare — the Welfare of Greyhounds Act 2011 — which is the responsi-

[Deputy Phil Hogan.]

bility of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine, was signed by the President on 16 November, 2011. This legislation will provide for the welfare of greyhounds and the regulation of greyhound breeding establishments.

The provisions of both these pieces of legislation are complementary and accordingly, it is the intention that they be implemented in tandem. This will give wide ranging protection to all dogs in the State by registering and controlling all breeding establishments. I intend to sign the commencement order for the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, 2010 shortly and my Department is in ongoing contact with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine regarding the Welfare of Greyhounds Act 2011 in order to co-ordinate the commencement of both Acts.

### **Local Government Review Group**

177. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied with progress made on the implementation of the independent local government efficiency review group. [40234/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The Local Government Efficiency Implementation Group was established in April 2010 and had its first meeting on 10 June 2011. The Group has met on six occasions to date and its overall work programme is progressing.

In this context, the Group has recently completed an interim report, which I have asked the group to develop further. I understand the group is engaging with the County and City Managers' Association in this regard.

### **Community Development**

178. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government when he intends to make necessary funding for projects in the new RAPID towns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40285/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The matter of progressing the projects in the new RAPID towns to contract stage will be kept under active review in the light of availability of funding in 2012.

### **Public Service Staff**

179. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government if he is satisfied that frontline services are being prioritised during the ongoing job losses, embargo in the 34 premier local authorities; the way he is achieving the prioritisation of frontline services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40340/11]

**Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government (Deputy Phil Hogan):** The moratorium on recruitment and promotion in the public service was introduced in March 2009 following a Government decision to implement savings measures across the wider public service, as a response to the financial crisis facing the State.

The terms of the moratorium are explicit and provide that no public service post, however arising, may be filled by recruitment, promotion, or payment of an allowance for the performance of duties at a higher grade. When vacancies arise public bodies must reallocate or reorganise work or staff accordingly. Any exceptions to this principle, which will arise in very limited circumstances only, require prior sanction.

My Department received a delegated sanction from the Department of Finance in August 2009 for implementation of this general moratorium on the filling of public sector posts across all local authorities. This is on condition that the overall staffing levels in the sector are reduced in line with the Employment Control Framework.

Under section 159 of the Local Government Act 2001, each County and City Manager is responsible for staffing and organisational arrangements necessary for carrying out the functions of the local authorities for which he or she is responsible. In this regard, it is a matter for County and City Managers, in the first instance, to ensure that the reduction in staff numbers is managed so that the appropriate service level is maintained.

My Department works very closely with local authorities to ensure that critical posts are filled while overall numbers are reduced. All staffing sanction requests are examined on a case by case basis having due regard to the continued delivery of key services and the need further to reduce overall staffing levels and expenditure in the local authority sector.

Local authorities have been early movers in terms of staff reductions with over 6,900 whole time equivalent staff leaving the sector since June 2008. The reduction of staff in local authorities is a net figure as given the nature of the front line services provided such as fire and emergency services, road and water services, beach supervision in summer months and other temporary seasonal services, some sanctions for exceptions to the moratorium need to be, and are, regularly approved. In this regard my Department has processed some 2,378 such requests since 2009.

In considering sanction requests public safety, maintaining key front line services and economic issues are given precedence as is the requirement to avoid increases in overall staffing levels. Contract posts are favoured as they allow flexibility in this most challenging period for Ireland's economy. In the very exceptional situation that a post is to be filled permanently all redeployment options must be fully exhausted before recruitment can be permitted.

### **Registration of Title**

180. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if his attention has been drawn to the many situations arising from the Property Registration Authority which is basing its registry maps on OSI topographic mapping and as a result in several situations where the boundaries under this system do not correspond with the natural boundaries on the ground which have been used by persons throughout the country as their rightful legal boundaries and which have been incorporated in all their previous land registration title deeds and documentation and that there is now enormous costs on large numbers of persons to regularise their boundaries in view of the fact they are now to be based on OSI site topographical mapping; if he will re-examine the situation with a view to coming forward with an approach to resolve these problems that are emerging throughout the country; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40019/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I wish to inform the Deputy that under the Registration of Deeds and Title Act 2006, the Property Registration Authority (PRA) was established as and from 4 November 2006. The PRA replaces the Registrar of Deeds and Titles as the registering authority in relation to property registration in Ireland and, subject to the above Act, is independent in the performance of its functions. I am not therefore responsible to the Dáil for this matter. However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made with the Authority.

I am informed by the Authority that since its foundation in 1892 the Land Registry map has been based on the national mapping agency, Ordnance Survey Ireland (OSI) topographic maps.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

The Authority is legally obliged under Rules 9 and 174 of the Land Registration Rules 1972 to utilise OSI data revised to date.

The boundary system that operates in Ireland is known as the general or non-conclusive boundary system and the Deputy might wish to refer to section 174(2)(a) Land Registration Rules 1972-2009 accordingly.

The non-conclusive provision dispenses with the need to determine the exact location of title boundaries when defining the extent of registered properties and the ownership of the physical features which mark the limits of a property is left undetermined.

I have been assured by the Authority that the problem referred to by the Deputy, if it exists at all, is not of the order stated. The adoption of revised Ordnance Survey topographic detail is not a new phenomenon. The Land Registry has continually updated its map base to comply with its statutory requirements, has extensive experience in this regard and has developed precise guidelines along the way.

I would also like to refer the Deputy to my response to Question 353 of 2 November 2011 which may help him to understand the background to the issues which he has raised.

### **Court Accommodation**

181. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the names and locations of any new courts venues proposed; the details of any contracts he has signed; and the rates of payment for these venues. [40061/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Under the provisions of the Courts Service Act 1998, management of the courts is the responsibility of the Courts Service. The Act provides that the Service is independent in the performance of its functions, which includes the provision and management of accommodation.

However, in order to be of assistance to the Deputy, I have had enquiries made and the Courts Service has informed me that they have no plans to provide any new court venues in 2012. I am informed the Courts Service has recently made an arrangement on a three month trial basis to hear court sittings in rented accommodation in Killaloe, Co Clare to replace previous rented accommodation in a hotel which went into receivership

### **Garda Stations**

182. **Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality in view of the proposed closure of Dalkey Garda station, Dublin, if he or the Garda Commissioner will give a commitment that the same number of gardaí will be deployed to the sub-district of Dun Laoghaire sub-division thus ensuring there is no net loss of gardaí to the district and that the residents in the district can continue to enjoy the same level of policing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40071/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In making his recommendations on the closure of the Garda stations, the Garda Commissioner concluded that Garda resources could be better deployed and 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. Specifically in relation

to Dalkey Garda Station, I have been informed by the Commissioner that Garda personnel allocated to Dalkey Garda station will remain within the Dun Laoghaire District.

### **Crime Prevention**

183. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has considered proposals that would deal with theft of scrap metal to assist the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40107/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Regulation of the scrap metal industry is not a matter within my Department's remit. The regulation of waste activities is, of course, relevant to the industry. Such activities require authorisation in accordance with the Waste Management Act 1996; the terms of such authorisations are primarily derived from requirements of EU Directives on waste and specific waste streams such as end of life vehicles or electronic waste.

Depending on the authorisation required, these activities are controlled either by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or by local authorities as competent authorities nominated by the State to implement such legislation. The purpose of these controls is to regulate the collection, recovery or disposal of waste in order to protect the environment.

Enforcement of waste legislation is a matter either for the EPA's Office of Environmental Enforcement (OEE) in relation to waste licences or for local authorities in relation to waste permits. The OEE operates an Enforcement Network to foster co-operation between the various public service bodies involved in the enforcement of environmental legislation, so that a higher and more consistent standard of enforcement is achieved throughout the country.

My Department is aware of the growing issue of metal theft and is represented at the Stakeholder Forum on Metal Theft that has been set up by An Garda Síochána. Local authority enforcement staff are cooperating with the Gardaí and the enhancement of that cooperation was discussed at the Forum meeting on the 7 December, 2011.

The Gardaí are making good progress in leading the work of the Metal Theft Forum and my Department and local authorities will continue to support the Forum's work. In that regard, I have asked my Department to examine waste licensing and permitting legislation to ensure all necessary provisions, particularly those relating to traceability, are in place to avoid situations that might be exploited by criminal elements — this examination is on-going. However, if the Forum is to achieve its aims in reducing and preventing metal theft, wider support will also be required from other relevant parties in order to ensure that the broader range of issues involved are successfully addressed.

### **Garda Operations**

184. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will report on Garda operation freewheel; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of successful convictions secured to date; the number of gardaí involved; the cost of this operation to date; if this operation is still ongoing; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40117/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Freewheel commenced in 2010 and has focused on offences contrary to sections 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of the Criminal Law Sexual Offences Act 1993. It is an ongoing, multi-phase investigation, devised in response to both identified crime trends and specific complaints of brothel and street-based prostitution from residents and the business community in

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an area adjacent to Limerick city centre. It focuses on the identification and prosecution of offenders, identifying any possible links to human trafficking and other criminal enterprises, and increasing awareness amongst those involved in prostitution, particularly women, of the availability of services to enable them to exit prostitution.

To date, 31 warrants obtained on foot of section 10 of the Act have been executed, 126 persons have been arrested and 87 charges preferred for offences contrary to sections 2, 8 or 11 of the Act. A total of 42 convictions have been recorded, resulting in fines being imposed in 41 cases (ranging from €100 to €600) and a suspended term of imprisonment imposed in the remaining case. The provisions of the Probation Act were applied in three cases. A total of 27 charges remain before the courts. Investigation files have been submitted to the Law Officers in respect of a number of other persons, with investigation files being prepared in respect of others.

As part of the initiative, two searches were conducted under warrant, during which two minors were found in brothels where they were working as prostitutes. Both were placed in the care of the Health Service Executive.

No specialist unit was established for or specifically tasked with this initiative. Uniform and plain-clothes personnel from Limerick city centre Garda stations were assigned to the initiative from operational tours of duty. Costs associated with the initiative are met from the Limerick Divisional Budget. The costs could not be made available without a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources.

### Judicial Appointments

185. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of vacancies in the District Court, Circuit Court, High Court and Supreme Court; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40118/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** There are seven judicial vacancies at present; four in the Circuit Court and three in the District Court. The current procedures are set out in the Courts and Court Officers Act, 1995. In accordance with the provisions of section 16(2) of that Act, I have requested the Judicial Appointments Advisory Board to furnish me with the names of those persons it considers suitable for the current vacancies together with the name of each person who has informed the Board of his/her wish to be considered for appointment.

Following receipt of the Board's recommendations, the Government will nominate as soon as possible persons for appointment by the President.

### Departmental Staff

186. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide the salary details of the persons (details supplied); and the amount of money each has claimed in expenses during each of the past five years. [40125/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The information sought by the Deputy is set out in the following table. It should be noted that in some cases there were changes in the post holders over the five year period in question.

Position	Year	Salary applicable to the incumbent as at year end
Secretary General	2007	€241,414

Position	Year	Salary applicable to the incumbent as at year end
	2008	€228,271*
	2009	€228,271*
	2010	€214,187*
	2011	€190,000
		* inclusive of voluntary surrender of salary
Director General Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service	2007	€168,992
	2008	€177,547
	2009	€177,547
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191 plus €10,000 allowance
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191 plus €10,000 allowance
Assistant Secretary Civil Law Reform, Courts Policy	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191
Assistant Secretary Crime, Security & NI, Mutual Assistance and Extradition	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191
Assistant Secretary Criminal Law Reform, Prisons & Probation Policy	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191
Assistant Secretary EU/International Matters	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
Assistant Secretary An Garda Síochána	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191
Assistant Secretary Corporate Affairs (including HR, IT and Internal Audit)	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€134,523 — €153,885 (PPC scale)
Director General Irish Prison Service	2007	€171,002
	2008	€179,659
	2009	€179,659
	2010	€169,958
	2011	€166,898

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Position	Year	Salary applicable to the incumbent as at year end
Assistant Secretary Reception & Integration Agency	2007	€118,791 — €136,034
	2008	€131,748 — €150,712
	2009	€131,748 — €150,712
	2010	€127,796 — €146,191
	2011	€127,796 — €146,191
Director Irish Youth Justice Service	2007	€ 88,261 — €108,856 plus €12,000 allowance
	2008	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €20,608 allowance
	2009	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €20,608 allowance
	2010	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €19,577.60 allowance
	2011	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €19,577.60 allowance
Executive Director COSC	2007	€ 88,261 — €108,856 plus €12,000 allowance
	2008	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €12,608 allowance
	2009	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €12,300 allowance
	2010	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €11,977.60 allowance
	2011	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €11,977.60 allowance
Director Anti-Human Trafficking	2007	€ 88,261 — €108,856
	2008	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €7,000 allowance
	2009	€ 92,730 — €114,366 plus €7,000 allowance
	2010	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €6,650 allowance
	2011	€ 85,957- €105,429 plus €6,650 allowance

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to expenses paid to above post-holders is currently being compiled and will be forwarded as soon as it is available.

### Visa Applications

187. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if the transferring of processing of visa applications for certain states has moved to the Department office in Abu Dhabi; the number of staff employed by this office; the cost of running this office; the locations and running costs of all overseas offices employed by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40126/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Visa Office, Abu Dhabi which is based in the Irish Embassy in Abu Dhabi, is run by staff of my Department on secondment to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It handles all aspects of visa applications, of all types, for visa required nationals (including appeals) legally resident in the United Arab Emirates. The office also deals with visa applications from the following countries:

- Algeria
- Bahrain
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Libya

- Morocco
- Qatar
- Oman
- Sudan (decision to be taken in relation to South Sudan)
- Syria
- Tunisia
- Egypt (except certain types of application handled under delegated sanction by Cairo embassy staff)
- Saudi Arabia (except certain types of application handled under delegated sanction by Riyadh embassy staff)

It is intended that the processing in Abu Dhabi of visa applications from the following countries will come on stream in the future:

- Pakistan
- Iran
- Afghanistan
- Iraq
- Yemen

A decision on the date for the commencement of visa operations in Abu Dhabi in relation to these countries will be made taking into account all relevant factors. The Deputy will be aware that the operating environment in some of the countries concerned in recent times has been challenging.

Visa processing duties, including making decisions on whether or not to grant a visa, are carried out by four Irish civil servants, one at Higher Executive Officer level and three at Executive Officer level. Four locally-recruited staff perform a range of administrative duties and assist with making operational enquiries in support of the visa application process. These locally-recruited staff do not have power of decision in relation to visa applications.

In addition to I.N.I.S. HQ in Dublin, there are currently five overseas Visa Offices in operation run by staff members of my Department on the same basis as that already outlined for the Abu Dhabi office. These are in Abuja, Beijing, London, Moscow and New Delhi. The number of cases processed by these offices is approximately 46,500 per annum. In addition, the staff in all Visa Offices perform important functions of engagement with local businesses and tourist bodies and work closely with Embassy staff in promoting Ireland as a business and tourism destination. This include promotion activities in connection with the Irish Short-Stay Visa Waiver Programme which allows holders of UK visas from sixteen designated countries to visit Ireland without the need for an Irish visa. The operation of Visa Offices overseas allows for both a better, speedier service to applicants and for more effective combatting of fraudulent or dubious applications through the development of local knowledge and use of locally recruited staff.

The costs associated with the running of these offices, together with the fee income generated, is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

### Lawful Interception

188. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide details of any briefings he has had from his Department on the issue of lawful interception; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40127/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** By way of general information, the lawful interception of telecommunications and postal packets is governed by the Interception of Postal Packets and Telecommunications Messages (Regulation) Act, 1993.

It is not the practice and would be contrary to the effectiveness of lawful interception to comment on matters pertaining to the operation of this legislation.

### Garda Vetting of Personnel

189. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the average length of time applicants wait for Garda vetting applications to be processed. [40128/11]

190. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of staff employed by Garda vetting services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40129/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 189 and 190 together.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the average processing time for Garda vetting applications at the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) at present is 5 weeks. This is a significant improvement on the average processing time of 12 weeks at the end of last year. All organisations registered for Garda Vetting are aware of the processing time frames for the receipt of Garda vetting and have been advised to factor this into their recruitment and selection process. This processing time can, nevertheless, be affected by seasonal fluctuations or the necessity to seek further information on particular applications which may result in the processing time exceeding the present average of 5 weeks.

I am further informed by the Garda Authorities that in order to observe equity and fairness in respect of applicants for Garda vetting, the general processing procedures are such that applications are processed in chronological order, from the date of receipt at the Vetting Unit. At present there are a total of 100 personnel assigned to the GCVU. Of this 100, 5 are members of An Garda Síochána and 75 are full-time Garda civilian personnel. In addition, 20 civilian personnel have been employed on a temporary basis to help reduce the backlog and bring down processing times.

### Northern Ireland Issues

191. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of times he has met his Northern counterpart with the Garda Commissioner and the Police Service of Northern Ireland chief constable since being appointed to office; and if he will give details of the matters discussed. [40130/11]

192. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the work programme of the working group that consists of senior officials of his Department and the Northern Ireland Office, and representatives of various criminal justice agencies North and South; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40131/11]

193. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on the cross-Border policing strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40132/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 191 to 193, inclusive, together.

I meet regularly with my Northern Ireland counterpart, Minister of Justice, David Ford, and we have developed a close working relationship. One of my first actions as Minister was to travel to Belfast to meet with Minister Ford. The Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI accompanied us at that meeting and shared a frank assessment of the threat posed by the small number of criminal terrorists who continue to operate in both jurisdictions. I met again with Minister Ford, the Garda Commissioner and the Chief Constable of the PSNI during the Cross-Border Organised Crime Conference which was held late last month when we focused on common issues of concern and actions being taken to counter the cross-Border activities of organised criminal gangs.

I also meet regularly with Minister Ford under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters. This agreement provides for structured co-operation between my Department and the Northern Ireland Department of Justice, and the related criminal justice agencies North and South. There are a number of working groups bringing forward initiatives in this framework which cover a range of criminal justice areas including youth justice, support for victims, forensic science, registered offenders, public protection and criminal justice and social diversity. On 25 November last, I met with Minister Ford in this context and we received an update on the good progress that has been made to date by the various working groups and the ongoing work in building co-operation.

Our meeting took place after we had opened the second annual joint seminar of the probation services of both jurisdictions. The seminar considered a number of shared initiatives aimed at better engagement with offenders and reducing offending, including cross-agency work in managing female offenders and research-sharing with regard to the impact of drugs and alcohol misuse on offending. This seminar is just one practical example of criminal justice organisations coming together to prioritise cross-Border work and share best practices with the aim of enhancing the safety of communities throughout Ireland.

I have stated in this House on previous occasions that co-operation between An Garda Síochána and the PSNI remains at the highest level on all aspects of policing activity. The joint Cross-Border Policing Strategy is an excellent example of the close co-operation between the two police forces. It aims to improve public safety throughout Ireland by disrupting criminal activity in both jurisdictions and enhancing the policing capability of both police services. The Cross-Border Policing Strategy indicates the scope of this co-operation and the determination of both police forces to use the tools available to ensure that those who seek to exploit the Border for criminal ends will not succeed.

The joint strategy covers a range of policing areas, including cross-border investigations and operations; intelligence-sharing and security; communications and information technology; training and emergency planning. The implementation of the Cross-Border Policing Strategy is, of course, the responsibility of the Commissioner and the Chief Constable and their respective forces. The high quality and the closeness of the operational co-operation between the two forces at all levels has been instrumental in preventing attacks by paramilitaries and saving lives, and it continues to make an essential contribution to combating criminality on this island.

### **Garda Transport**

194. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide

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details of the office holder fleet of cars, including the names of holders of these cars, and their costs. [40133/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Office Holder fleet consists of a number of vehicles comprising mainly Audi, BMW, Lexus and Mercedes cars. Office Holder cars are currently placed at the disposal of the President, An Taoiseach, An Tánaiste, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, the Chief Justice and the Director of Public Prosecutions. I am advised by the Garda authorities that the estimated cost of providing the relevant transport in 2011 will be approximately €1.3 million.

### **Garda Disciplinary Proceedings**

195. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has completed a review of the discipline regulations within An Garda Síochána; the date on which he will introduce new regulations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40134/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** A review of the Garda Síochána (Discipline) Regulations 2007 is underway. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in 2012 and new regulations introduced thereafter.

### **Garda Recruitment**

196. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he has completed a review of the admission and appointment regulations for entry to An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40135/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** A review of the Garda Síochána (Admission & Appointments) Regulations 1988 — 2005 is underway. It is anticipated that the review will be completed in 2012 and new regulations introduced thereafter.

### **Garda Deployment**

197. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on An Garda Síochána civilianisation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40136/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** There are currently over 2,000 full-time-equivalent civilian support staff in the Garda Síochána. These staff provide vital support services in a wide range of areas, such as human resources, training & development, IT and telecommunications, finance and procurement, internal audit, research and analysis, accommodation and fleet management, scene-of-crime support and medical services. In doing so, they release highly trained Gardaí from administrative tasks to operational policing.

While the current number of civilian support staff is an increase on previous years, the level of civilian support staff in the Garda Síochána is still lower than in comparable police forces. This is reflected in the 2009 Garda Inspectorate report on Resource Allocation, which called for the numbers of Gardaí available for operational duty to be maximised through a structured programme of civilianisation.

We will continue to maximise the number of civilian support staff in An Garda Síochána consistent with overall policy on numbers in the public service and taking into account the scope for the appropriate redeployment of staff from elsewhere in the public service as part of the reform process under the Croke Park Agreement.

### Proposed Legislation

198. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the plans to consolidate legislation on corruption; if he has completed an examination of the different protection and reporting mechanisms under An Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40137/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The heads of a new Bill to reform and consolidate the Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 to 2010 are currently being developed with a view to being brought to Government for approval and publication in the first half of 2012. The systems for reporting corruption and protecting those who report corruption are being examined as part of the process of developing the new legislation.

### Criminal Prosecutions

199. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons charged with directing the activities of a criminal organisation since the introduction of anti-gangland legislation; the number of persons charged with participation offences; the number of persons convicted of these offences; the number of files currently with the Director of Public Prosecutions; and the number of persons arrested under this legislation. [40138/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am advised by the Garda authorities that in the period since the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 was enacted on 23 July 2009 up to 30 November 2011, the legislation has been used on 160 occasions where arrests have been made relating to organised crime activity. To date, eight individuals have been charged under the provisions. Two persons have been charged under Section 71A of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 as inserted by section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 (directing a criminal organisation). Six persons have been charged under Section 72 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 as inserted by section 6 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 (participating etc in organised crime).

I am further informed by the Garda authorities that the arrests referred to earlier have also resulted in other charges being preferred for a range of other offences including firearms offences, offences relating to the sale and supply of drugs and drug trafficking, violent disorder and demanding money with menaces. These charges are pending the submission of comprehensive Investigation Files to the Law Officers. To date, there has been no person convicted before the Courts for the offences provided by way of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 in relation to organised criminal activity.

I have requested the information sought by the Deputy in relation to the number of files currently with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and will revert to the Deputy in due course. The Deputy will be aware that I have indicated my intention to the House to keep under review the question of whether any further improvements could be made to the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009, along with other pieces of legislation introduced in recent years tackling organised crime, which would render them more effective.

### Departmental Reports

200. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he will publish the report, Responding to Child Sexual Abuse, by the Garda Inspectorate. [40139/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Garda Síochána Inspectorate has carried out a review of the Garda arrangements for dealing with allegations of sexual abuse

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of children and has submitted a report with recommendations. Subsequent to the publication of the report into the Diocese of Cloyne, the Inspectorate was requested to review its report in the light of the findings of the Cloyne report. It has completed that review and submitted an addendum to the report.

My Department has sought the views of An Garda Síochána and others on the report and addendum. I intend to bring the report and addendum and a comprehensive response to the report's recommendations to the attention of the Government in January and to lay the report and addendum before the Houses of the Oireachtas, together with a response to the recommendations contained in the report, at as early a date as possible thereafter.

### Departmental Contracts

201. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money paid to a company (detail supplied) since the beginning of its contract with his Department. [40140/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** In November, 2009 a contract was concluded for the provision of an outsourced safety camera network to An Garda Síochána, as excessive or inappropriate speeding is a major factor in road traffic collisions and fatalities. The objective of the safety camera network is to reduce the number of speed related collisions and so save lives and prevent serious injury, not to generate revenue.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that €13.3 million has been paid to the service provider to date. Fixed charges paid by speeding drivers as a result of detections by the cameras contribute to offsetting the operating costs.

### Departmental Reviews

202. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the work of the expert group examining the Criminal Assets Bureau and reviewing the proceeds of crime legislation; and the date on which its paper will be published. [40141/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** An Expert Group, established under the auspices of my Department, is currently reviewing the Proceeds of Crime legislation with a view to identifying possible improvements which would serve to strengthen the operation of the Criminal Assets Bureau. The Expert Group is engaged in a comprehensive review of the operation of the legislation with particular regard to the experience of the Bureau to date. A number of matters are being reviewed by the Group including decreasing the amount of time which must elapse before criminal assets which have been frozen become the property of the State; increasing the powers of receivers over properties so as to immediately deprive criminals of the use of those properties; short term seizure of assets believed to be the proceeds of crime pending determination by the courts; and further improving measures supporting international cooperation.

I expect the Group to have completed its review early in 2012. When that work concludes it is my intention to make available, in due course, the outcome of that review and to bring forward my proposals in the normal way. It is not possible at this stage to provide the Deputy with a particular date for when the outcome of the Group's work will be made available.

### Organised Crime

203. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on his proposals regarding organised crime developments at EU level. [40142/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Combating serious and organised crime continues to be a key priority of the European Union in the development of an area of freedom, security and justice. The Stockholm Programme — An Open and Secure Europe Serving and Protecting Citizens, is the key strategic document setting out guidelines for legislative and operational planning within the area of freedom, security and justice for the period 2010-2014. Ireland welcomed the Stockholm Programme at the time of its adoption and continues to support the implementation of this five year work programme for the Justice and Home Affairs area.

I am fully supportive of the strategy that the European Union has adopted in the Stockholm Programme and of the practical measures for international cooperation arising from that Programme which provide real and added value to the Community in tackling international serious and organised crime. For example, at the June Council this year my European colleagues and I adopted Conclusions on setting the European Union's priorities for the fight against organised crime between 2011 and 2013. These Conclusions have facilitated further work on the creation and implementation of the first EU policy cycle for organised and serious international crime for the period 2011 to 2013. The policy cycle will allow the Union to focus on those threats and challenges that need specific attention and to develop an approach to tackle and monitor these threats and challenges.

There is, of course, a larger body of work to be progressed in tackling organised crime at the European Union level and this is reflected in the various work programmes and action plans of the EU institutions which outline initiatives to be developed over the coming years. One such initiative which has been given my particular support, and which I have advanced with my European colleagues, is in the area of targeting the proceeds of crime. I have promoted a European wide regime for the confiscation of proceeds of crime, based on the model currently operated by the Criminal Assets Bureau. I am strongly of the view that such a regime would strengthen cooperation across the Union and provide for a more effective European response to the proceeds of crime.

Arising from the work of the European Commission and discussions that have been ongoing at EU level, I hope to see proposals emerge in the near future which will further facilitate productive discussions on such an initiative.

### **Drug Trafficking**

204. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on Ireland's participation in the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre — Narcotics; and the amount of funding allocated by the State to this body. [40144/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre, Narcotics (MAOC(N)) was established pursuant to an international agreement concluded on 30 September 2007 between Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Portugal, France and the United Kingdom. The purpose of the Centre, which is based in Lisbon, is to facilitate cooperation in the suppression of illicit drug trafficking across the Atlantic towards Europe and the West African seaboard, with the possibility of extending its operations, *inter alia*, into the Western Mediterranean basin.

The Centre's work is primarily focused on intelligence exchange and cooperation between the Parties leading to the interdiction of large maritime and aviation drug shipments. Ireland continues to actively support the work of MAOC(N) through Ireland's representation at the Centre by liaison officers from An Garda Síochána and the Revenue Commissioners (Customs

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Service). In addition, the Executive Board of the Centre, of which Ireland currently holds the chair, is comprised of a representative from each of the Parties.

I am further informed that regular high level meetings of senior management from the enforcement agencies are held at MAOC(N) and that the ongoing close cooperation of all agencies involved has led to a very effective and efficient strategy in combating drug trafficking on a global scale. An Garda Síochána, in collaboration with the Revenue Customs Service, continues to foster a close working relationship with the enforcement agencies involved.

The Centre is co-funded through the European Union ISEC funding Programme 'Prevention of and Fight against Crime'. The Parties provide a financial contribution as partner organisations in the EU funding project and any additional costs are borne equally by the Parties. Since the establishment of MAOC(N), Ireland has made a financial contribution totalling €64,080.64 to the project. This funding includes the projected costs up to September 2012.

### **Departmental Funding**

205. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the construction of the new forensic science laboratory; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40145/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The construction of a new forensic science laboratory was to be funded from the Vote of the Office of Public Works. As the Deputy is no doubt aware, the appalling financial legacy inherited from the previous Government has placed significant restrictions on available funding. The demands on the capital envelope available to the Office of Public Works have required them to prioritise urgent public projects such as flood defences. Hence, the funding is not available to proceed with the construction of a new forensic science laboratory at this stage.

My Department is now examining what alternative options may be available in this regard and how the needs of the forensic science laboratory might best be met having regard to the obligation of my Department to contribute to the overall reduction in public expenditure that must be achieved in the public interest in order to enable our State to regain its economic sovereignty.

### **White Paper on Crime**

206. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the date on which he will publish a White Paper on crime. [40146/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I can inform the Deputy that work on the development of a White Paper on Crime is at an advanced stage and is expected to be completed in 2012.

### **Criminal Law Reform**

207. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of persons employed by the Criminal Law Reform Division; and if he will provide details of their current work programme. [40147/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Criminal Law Reform Division comprises 20 staff consisting of 1 Assistant Secretary General, 6 Principal Officers, 9 Assistant Principal Officers, 1 Administrative Officer, 1 Higher Executive Officer and 2 Clerical Officers.

The primary focus of the Division is the completion to the greatest extent possible of the programme of criminal law reform contained in the Government's legislative programme. A table detailing the criminal law items in the current legislative work programme is set out below for the Deputy's information.

In addition to the production of primary legislation and any resulting secondary legislation necessary, the Division contributes to policy development at EU and other international fora. Criminal Law Reform Division has responsibility for a range of EU and international commitments and the work of the Division includes giving effect to legislative requirements arising within that context. The programme of work also provides for the transposition of EU legislative instruments under the Area of Freedom and Security and the conclusion of a range of bilateral/multilateral mutual assistance and extradition agreements.

The Division keeps the criminal law under continuous review as a matter of course, taking into consideration contributions from a range of relevant stakeholders such as the Attorney General's Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions and in particular, the Consultation Papers and Reports produced by the Law Reform Commission.

Bills on Dáil and Seanad Order Paper

Title	Present Status
Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) Bill 2010	Presented to Dáil on 19 July 2010 and completed all stages in the Seanad on 9 December 2011. Awaiting President's signature.
European Arrest Warrant (Extension) and Extradition (Amendment) Bill 2011	Presented to Dáil on 10 August 2011. Awaiting Second Stage.

Section A: Bills expected to be published during the Autumn Session

Title	Purpose
Criminal Justice (Withholding Information on Crimes against Children and Vulnerable Adults) Bill	To create a criminal offence of withholding information relating to the commission of a serious offence, including a sexual offence, against a person under 18 years or an intellectually disabled person.
National Vetting Bureau Bill	To establish the National Vetting Bureau and to provide for vetting of applicants for certain employment and to provide for related matters.

Section B: Bills in respect of which Heads have been agreed and texts are being drafted

Title	Purpose
Europol Bill	To give effect to Council Decision 2009/371/JHA establishing Europol and to repeal and replace the Europol Act 1997 and the Europol (Amendment) Act 2006.
Spent Convictions Bill	To provide that in the case of convicted persons whose sentence is below a specific threshold, they may, under certain circumstances, withhold details of the conviction.
Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) (Amendment) Bill	To give effect to a number of EU Framework Decisions.
Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence and DNA Database System) Bill	To provide for the establishment of a DNA database and related matters.

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Title	Purpose
Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill	To provide for a range of amendments to earlier legislation.
Criminal Justice (Cybercrime) Bill	To enable ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime and transposition of the EU Framework Decision on attacks against Information Systems.

## Section C: Bills in respect of which Heads have yet to be approved by Government.

Title	Purpose
Inspection of Places of Detention Bill	To give legislative effect to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, strengthen Prisons Inspectorate, put Council of Europe inspection regime on a statutory footing and address matters relating to Prison Visiting Committees.
Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill	To implement recommendations in the Joint Oireachtas Committee Second Interim Report on the Constitutional Amendment on Children and protect vulnerable persons against sexual exploitation and abuse.
Probation Service Bill	To provide a modern statement of the law governing the role and use of the Probation Services in the Criminal Justice System and to give effect to the EU Framework Decision (2008/947/JHA).
Bail Bill	To consolidate and amend the bail laws.
Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Bill	To provide for amendments to the Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010.
Criminal Records Information System Bill	To provide for the exchange of criminal records information with other EU member states and other designated states.
Criminal Justice Corruption (Consolidation) Bill	To consolidate all of the legislation currently cited as the Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889 — 2010 in a single statute.
Criminal Justice (Fines) (Amendment) Bill	To provide for attachment of earnings and social welfare payments as an alternative to imprisonment for people who refuse to pay fines.
Criminal Justice (Proceeds of Crime) Bill	To strengthen the powers of CAB in relation to forfeiting the proceeds of crime.
Official Secrets Act (Amendment) Bill	To amend the Official Secrets Act to reflect the Programme for Government commitments.
Criminal Justice (Victims Rights) Bill	To strengthen the rights of victims of crime and their families and to give effect to a proposed EU Directive.
Criminal Procedure Bill	To provide for the reform of pre-trial processes.
Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Bill	To implement EU Trafficking Directive. Transposition deadline is 6 April, 2013.

**Victims Charter**

208. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to ensure the criminal justice agencies are implementing the victims charter. [40148/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The present version of the Victims Charter was published in July 2010. I want to see the Victims Charter implemented in full by all bodies covered by the Charter so that the experience of the victim of crime when engaging with the criminal justice system is improved.

A key prerequisite for implementing the Charter is that the public in general and victims in particular are aware of their rights under the Charter. To this end, the Charter has been certified as written in Plain English, and has been translated into Irish and six other languages. These translations as well as an array of booklets produced by the criminal justice agencies and others have been assembled on the website of the Victims of Crime Office. Almost 15,000 hard copies of the Victims Charter in English have been circulated to criminal justice agencies, organisations supporting victims of crime and others.

Monitoring of their own performance by the criminal justice agencies in relation to commitments contained in the Victims Charter is necessary to secure implementation of the Charter. I have instructed my officials to review progress to date in this regard in a series of meetings with the criminal justice agencies early in the new year.

I understand that the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime, an independent body funded by my Department, convened a day long Victims of Crime Consultative Forum, in September 2010, devoted entirely to the implementation of the Victims Charter. Its title was “Making the new Victims Charter work”. There were robust discussions between organisations representing victims’ interests and the five main criminal justice agencies which made presentations at this Forum.

I am informed that An Garda Síochána has held three National Victims Support Fora at Garda Headquarters at which victims organisations were advised of improvements in Garda services to victims. The Courts Service also holds regional user group meetings, including meetings with victims of crime.

### Mental Health Review Board

209. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of cases that the Mental Health (Criminal Law) Review Board have reviewed in each of the past five years. [40149/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I can inform the Deputy that the Mental Health (Criminal Law) Review Board was established on 27th September 2006. The Board held its first review into the detention of a patient in the Central Mental Hospital on 14th December 2006. The Board is required to ensure that the detention of a patient is reviewed at intervals of such length not being more than 6 months as it considers appropriate but some patients may be reviewed at lesser intervals as a review can be triggered not only at the behest of the Board but also at the request of the Minister for Justice and Equality, at the request of the patient or at the request of the Clinical Director of the Central Mental Hospital.

The number of cases reviewed by the Board in each of the past five years is set out in the Table. The Deputy may also wish to note that the Board’s Annual Reports are published each year and are available on my Department’s website at [www.justice.ie](http://www.justice.ie).

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Number of patients reviewed	1	69	71	82	94
Number of review hearings	1	133	150	167	205

### Joint Policing Committees

210. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality if he will provide an update on the ongoing review of joint policing committee guidelines. [40150/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The functions and powers of Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) are set out in the Garda Síochána Act 2005, which provides for a Committee in each local authority area. The Act provides that JPCs operate under guidelines issued by the Minister for Justice and Equality after consultation with the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. The current guidelines were issued in September, 2008.

The Programme for Government makes a commitment to build on existing community policing partnerships and forums to enhance trust between local communities and their Gardaí. I am aware that some JPCs are working better than others, depending on the local authority. Work, involving my Department and the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, is well advanced on preparations to contact all JPC members in the coming weeks seeking their views on how the JPCs are operating and the extent to which their activities are constructive and beneficial to the community and the Gardaí. It is intended that a document will then be prepared, taking into account the views expressed, on the basis of which consultations will take place with the local authorities and JPCs on how the operation of the Committees might be improved, with a view to updating the guidelines. It is envisaged that this process will be substantially complete in the early part of next year.

My Department has also been engaged in a major consultative exercise leading to the production of a White Paper on crime. One of the issues addressed in this exercise has been the role of the JPCs. The White Paper will set out a policy framework for future strategies to combat and prevent crime. The intention is that this process will lead ultimately to a national anti-crime strategy, in which the JPCs will have a role to play.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

211. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to review the operation of the provisions for combating anti-social behaviour in the Criminal Justice Act 2006. [40151/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Criminal Justice Act 2006 sets out an incremental procedure for addressing anti-social behaviour by adults and children. For adults they provide for a behaviour warning and a civil order. For children, they range from a behaviour warning from a member of An Garda Síochána, to a good behaviour contract involving the child and his or her parents or guardian, to referral to the Garda Juvenile Diversion Programme and to the making of a behaviour order by the Children Court. Applications to the courts for civil orders and behaviour orders are considered only as the last stage in a process. If the offending anti-social behaviour has been addressed at an earlier stage in the process, it is not necessary to apply to the courts for an order.

The legislation and its operation are kept under review by my Department, in consultation with the Garda authorities and other relevant Departments.

### Control of Firearms

212. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of firearms certificates held by persons here to hold large calibre handguns; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40152/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** Under the Firearms Acts, and associated regulations, handguns are currently classified as either ‘Restricted’ or ‘Non-Restricted’. ‘Restricted’ Handguns are defined as all of those above .22“calibre and also includes those of 0.22” calibre which hold more than five rounds.

I understand that the total number of Restricted Firearm Certificates issued for Restricted Handguns since 1st August 2009 to 12th December, 2011, is 443.

213. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his plans to introduce regulations for target shooting ranges. [40153/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I can inform the Deputy that I signed the necessary Regulations, the Firearms (Authorisation of Rifle or Pistol Shooting Ranges) Regulations 2011, into law on 30 November, 2011. My Department’s Firearms Ranges Inspector has been working collaboratively with the range owners throughout the country and expects to be in a position to certify some ranges before the end of the year.

214. **Deputy Jonathan O’Brien** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of firearms reported as stolen in each of the past five years. [40154/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The following table shows the number of firearms recorded as stolen on PULSE for each year from 2007 — 2011 (valid to 12th December 2011).

Year	Number stolen
2011	205
2010	249
2009	350
2008	298
2007	349

Figures provided are operational and liable to change.

### Garda Investigations

215. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the position regarding Garda investigations into allegations regarding events at Anglo Irish Bank; when a decision is expected to be made by the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40157/11]

**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

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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.

### **Crime Prevention**

216. **Deputy Dara Calleary** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the number of occasions on which the provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill 2011 have been used by the Garda since its inception. [40158/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** 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 An 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. The Act also provides for the suspension of detentions in respect of complex investigations.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that An Garda Síochána continues to develop and implement operations and strategies aimed at targeting, dismantling and disrupting criminal networks, utilising advanced analytical and intelligence methodology. Multiple approaches, including the use of the proceeds of crime legislation, money laundering legislation and the powers of the Criminal Assets Bureau, are utilised to ensure the activities of individuals and groups involved in criminal enterprise are effectively targeted. Members of An Garda Síochána continue to utilise the provisions of all relevant legislation, including the Criminal Justice Act 2011.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the precise number of occasions the provisions have been used is not readily available and would necessitate a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources to collate.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

217. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40183/11]

218. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40199/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 217 and 218 together.

I wish to inform the Deputy that my Department does not, as a matter of policy, incur expenditure of this nature. However, expenditure does arise from time to time on public information notices such as, for example, the dangers of fireworks, illegal drug dealing or the bringing into force of new legislation and other statutory notices.

### **Private Rented Accommodation**

219. **Deputy Patrick O'Donovan** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality, further to Parliamentary Question No. 369 of 29 November 2011 and Parliamentary Question No. 31 of 7 December 2011, if in a situation in which a property management company has gone into liquidation and the housing estate has not been taken in charge by the local authority, he will confirm that the legal responsibility for the ongoing maintenance and carrying out of repairs lies with the liquidator. [40214/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Deputy will appreciate that I am not in a position as Minister for Justice and Equality to give legal advice in relation to the functions and responsibilities of liquidators under the Companies Acts. However, I can indicate the following by way of general information in relation to the functions of owners' management companies.

[Deputy Alan Shatter.]

One of the principal objectives of the Multi-Unit Developments Act 2011 is to ensure the transfer of common areas of multi-unit developments from developers to the owners' management companies concerned. Section 4 of the Act, which deals with partially completed developments, and section 5, which deals with substantially completed developments, provide that transfer of the relevant parts of the common areas must have been completed within 6 months of the coming into operation of the Act, i.e. before 1 October 2011.

Section 24 of the Act 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 the parties concerned 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. Such an order may include an order directing the developer to complete the development or an order transferring control of an owners' management company from a developer to the apartment owners where the Circuit Court is satisfied the developer has unreasonably refused to effect such a transfer.

### **Garda Investigations**

220. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the reason An Garda Síochána is unable to reach a comprehensive assessment of the causes of a fire on the property of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40216/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I am informed by the Garda authorities that local Garda management is aware of the incident referred to by the Deputy. The incident was the subject of a Garda investigation which found no evidence to suggest there were any suspicious circumstances. The person referred to was so informed.

### **Asylum Applications**

221. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding the courts. [40294/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The Deputy should be aware that it is not the practice to comment on individual asylum applications where a final decision has not been made. As I understand it, the delay in having the case of the person concerned concluded has arisen from the legal challenges taken, in the High Court and in the Supreme Court, by the person concerned against determinations or decisions taken in her case. However, given that a final decision has not yet been taken in this case, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on the case at this time.

On a more general level, I am entirely satisfied that the State has very comprehensive mechanisms, both legislative and administrative, in place for the determination of asylum applications. Where an individual asylum applicant is not satisfied with a determination or decision taken in relation to their case, they have recourse to the High Court to challenge such a determination or decision through the medium of judicial review. Equally, where an individual is not satisfied with a decision of the High Court in their case, they have, subject to certain criteria being satisfied, recourse to the Supreme Court. As the Deputy will be aware, under our Constitution the Courts are independent in the exercise of their functions.

Against the above background, I am satisfied that any issue raised by the person concerned has been given an appropriate hearing at both administrative and judicial level.

### Public Service Remuneration

222. **Deputy Alan Farrell** asked the Minister for Justice and Equality the monetary value or estimated monetary value of increments for public sector staff in his Department in 2010, 2011 and those due in 2012 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40338/11]

**Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The monetary value of increments paid to staff in my Department in 2010 and 2011 is in the region of €1,072,000 and €840,000 respectively. The estimated monetary value of increments due in 2012 is in the region of €817,000.

### Departmental Expenditure

223. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Defence in view of budget 2012, if he will confirm the total amount of his grant-in-aid allocation to the Irish Red Cross for 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40162/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The total grant from my Department to the Irish Red Cross Society for 2012 will be €869,000. This consists of a grant of €739,000 towards the salary and administration costs of running the headquarters of the Irish Society and the Government's annual contribution of €130,000 to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The decision to reduce the grant from its current level of €951,000 has been taken solely as a consequence of the need to make cuts right across the Defence Vote.

224. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Defence the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40176/11]

225. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Defence the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40192/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 224 and 225 together.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to the amount spent by my Department on public relations companies and on advertising for each year since 2006 is set out in tabular format.

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.

Year	Expenditure on Public Relations Companies	Expenditure on Advertising
2006	Nil	€180,738
2007	€253,300	€158,711
2008	€1,847,673	€129,511
2009	Nil	€70,362
2010	Nil	€47,585
2011 to date	Nil	€66,880
Total	€2,100,973	€653,787

### Defence Forces Reserve

226. **Deputy Robert Troy** asked the Minister for Defence when he intends opening up recruitment to the Defence Forces Reserve; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40283/11]

**Minister for Defence (Deputy Alan Shatter):** The number of personnel that can be recruited to the Army Reserve and the Naval Service Reserve depends 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 man-days 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 yet been determined. Officials from my Department are due to meet 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.

### Genetically Modified Organisms

227. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if there are any research trials at present being conducted by Teagasc involving the cultivation of genetically modified crops; if so, the details of this research; the details of any such research trails undertaken in the past; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40291/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Research trials are not being conducted by Teagasc involving the conventional cultivation of genetically modified crops. Teagasc is, however, carrying out a contained use (in glasshouse) trial on a GM blight resistant potato as part of its research remit. During the period 1997 to 2000, field trials were carried out at a number of centres around the country to assess crop tolerance following treatment of genetically modified sugar beet with glyphosate.

### Horticulture Sector

228. **Deputy Catherine Murphy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if he will detail the grants awarded to date under the terms of the fourth round of the scheme of investment aid for the development of the commercial horticulture sector; if this funding will be broken down by successful applicants and amounts awarded; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40357/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Through the Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of the Commercial Horticulture Sector, my Department assists in the development of the horticulture sector, including beekeeping, by grant aiding capital investments in specialised plant and equipment as well as emerging technologies specific to commercial horticulture production. The main objectives of the scheme are to improve the quality of products, facilitate environmentally friendly practices and promote diversification of on-farm activities in response to market demand. Apart from improving the quality of products, investments under the scheme have also significantly extended the

growing season for Irish produce. Under this scheme, aid at a rate of 40%, or a maximum rate of 50% in the case of young farmers, is payable on the accepted cost, (excluding VAT), of capital investments approved and completed to the satisfaction of the Department.

The Scheme of Investment Aid for the Development of Commercial Horticulture is a competitive grant aid scheme, so funding is only provided for the very best projects which will achieve the scheme objectives. The scheme is primarily aimed at those engaging in commercial horticultural production and/or beekeeping. Non-production investments, which are directly associated with primary production, may also be considered. The closing date for the Fourth Round of the scheme was Friday, 18 February 2011 and 157 projects were approved. The grant aid covers all areas of the horticultural industry and will assist in funding investments of approximately €10.2 million in 2011. Up to last Monday, 12 December 2011, the Department has authorised payment of €1.8million to 87 applicants from the funds available under this round of the scheme. We are continuing to process the remaining claims and further payments will be issued as soon as they have been checked and approved for payment. The Department is precluded from providing details of the specific grants awarded, on an individual basis, as the information is regarded as being commercially sensitive and of a personal nature. I am pleased to note that, in the recent Budget, €3.25 million was allocated to the scheme for 2012 and applications under the Fifth Round of 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.

### Fishing Industry Development

229. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which fish catches are landed and processed to the highest possible extent and value as a proportion of the total catch in Irish waters; the extent to which Irish trawlers or others are involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40042/11]

230. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total tonnage of fish landed at Irish ports in each of the past five years to date in 2011; the extent to which such landings were processed to higher value or exported otherwise; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40043/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 229 and 230 together.

The seas around Ireland (ICES Sub Areas VII and VI) contain some of the most productive and biologically sensitive areas in EU waters. Most of the fisheries resource within the area comes under the remit of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). The 2011 fishing opportunities (Total Allowable Catches, TACs) for the international fleets that operate in the waters around Ireland were 937,924 tonnes of fish, with an estimated landed value of €1.04 billion. This economic value is based on 2009 average prices and represent a conservative estimate. Ireland's share of these fishing opportunities represents 21% by tonnage and 17% by value. These values do not include the valuable inshore fisheries (e.g. lobster, whelk) which are not managed using internationally agreed TACs but do come within the remit of the CFP. The following table sets out details of landings supplied by the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority in Irish ports and the share of landings by Irish vessels:

Year	Total Landings(Tonnes)	Irish Vessel Landings(Tonnes)	% of Landings by Irish Vessels
2010	245,956	164,616	67

[Deputy Simon Coveney.]

Year	Total Landings(Tonnes)	Irish Vessel Landings(Tonnes)	% of Landings by Irish Vessels
2009	222,327	157,791	71
2008	222,678	149,214	67
2007	198,478	155,001	78
2006	271,872	N/A	N/A

Approximately 70% of fish landings into Irish ports are exported and the balance goes to the domestic market. In 2010, value added exports accounted for 42% (€159 million) of the total value of Irish seafood exports and bulk exports were valued at €219 million. The level of value adding varies by product group and market requirements. Food Harvest 2020 recognises the potential of the Irish processing sector to contribute to national income and job creation. It recommends that the share of catch being processed by Irish companies should be progressively increased, adding value in Ireland. I am committed to continuing the path set out in Food Harvest 2020 for the development of the seafood sector in Ireland. Food Harvest 2020 recognised that the processing sector was fragmented, lacking in scale, uncompetitive in terms of production costs, too focused on export of commodity products and constrained by inconsistent supply of raw material. BIM, with Enterprise Ireland and Údarás na Gaeltachta, is working to address each of these issues.

Grant aid support under the Seafood Processing Business Investment Scheme was provided in 2011 to improve competitiveness and help the companies concerned develop export markets for high value added products. Some 18 seafood processing projects with a total investment of €7 million were made through the scheme. These investments are expected to generate new sales of €32 million and 158 jobs in the seafood processing sector by 2014. BIM launched a new Seafood Value Adding Scheme in 2011 to support seafood companies with developing added value products. The scheme assists with concept development, including business planning, product development and packaging. Some 15 projects have been approved, covering testing, developing a range of new products, new packaging formats and development of high value by-products from primary processing. BIM's Seafood Development Centre has been open for two years. In that time, it has brought market-led seafood innovation and new product development to the forefront in the Irish seafood industry. The centre is working with over 330 large, small, and innovative start-up companies to develop Ireland into an international seafood leader. New product sales developed by the centre are estimated at approximately €10 million per annum to date and growing. The centre is also leading graduate placement and sustainable innovation through training programmes.

### Fisheries Protection

231. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the degree to which fish stocks have recovered arising from catch restrictions or other conservation policies, with particular reference to the most affected species; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40044/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** For 2011, the advice from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF) once more underlines the poor state of many fish resources where Irish Fishermen have an interest.

However it is not all bad news, improvements are evident on for some stocks such as, Celtic Sea cod and haddock. Generally, the state of fish stocks in European waters is improving. The

proportion of over fished stocks in the Atlantic and nearby seas fell from 32 out of 34 stocks in 2004 to 22 out of 35 stocks in 2010, i.e. from 94% to 63%. This demonstrates that determined action does make a difference.

The eventual and incremental move to MSY should also bring significant benefits, and will mean a change from fishing intensively on scarce resources to fishing lightly on larger stocks. Phasing out over fishing will undoubtedly improve the state of resources and lower the impact on the environment. It will also improve the economic profitability of the catching sector

That said, many stocks in the west of Scotland, Irish Sea and Celtic Sea are still over fished and stock sizes are small. Eight stocks are so depleted that, according to scientific advice, they should not be caught. Of 14 stocks where MSY assessments could be made, eight stocks were found to be overfished.

The Long term management plan for Cod in existence since February 2009 has not to date had the desired effect with the Commission proposing a zero TAC for Cod in the Irish Sea and in the West of Scotland.

232. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which total fish landings species at Irish ports has fluctuated over the past ten years to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40045/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA) are responsible for the collation of landing data. Outlined as follows are figures for all landings (Irish, EU and Non-EU vessels) at Irish ports by weight since 2007.

Year	Weight
2010	245,856
2009	222,327
2008	149,214
2007	198,478

The figures shown have been provided by the SFPA and are available on their website at [www.sfpa.ie](http://www.sfpa.ie). There are currently no comparable figures prior to 2007, however, I have asked the Authority to revert directly to the Deputy with the complete set of figures in due course.

### World Trade Negotiations

233. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the degree to which he expects to be in a position to obtain maximum support from his EU colleagues in any World Trade Organisation negotiations thereby ensuring the future maximum employment prospects for the agricultural and fishing sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40046/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The WTO Doha Development Round talks are stalled at present and the prospects for conclusion of an agreement are uncertain at this point in time. Nevertheless, I will continue to maintain pressure to secure an acceptable outcome from these negotiations that does not undermine the development of European and Irish agriculture.

There is good support for this position among my colleagues in other Member States. Over recent years an alliance of some 14 Member States, including Ireland, has pressed on a continu-

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ous basis for a strong CAP and to defend EU agricultural interests in the WTO. Indeed this alliance has been augmented from time to time by support from additional Member States.

As negotiations on the WTO Doha Development Round develop, I intend to maintain and develop the alliances with like-minded Member States to secure the best possible outcome for Ireland from these negotiations.

### **Food Labelling**

234. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent on-going checks take place to ensure that all food imports are compliant with traceability, husbandry and processing standards applicable here and throughout the EU; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40047/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The work to ensure compliance with the application of health and hygiene regulations within the remit of my Department is carried out by staff from the Veterinary Public Health and Agriculture Inspectorates who specialise in particular sectors of primary food production. They are supported in this work by Department laboratories through sampling and analyses of the products concerned. All compliance work is subject to regular audit by both the FSAI and the Food and Veterinary Office of the EU.

Regarding imported produce, consignments of food products of animal origin directly entering on to the territory of the EU must be the subject of a prior notification of import. My Department, in co-operation with Customs service, monitors and operates animal and public health controls at EU approved Border Inspection Posts (BIP) on all direct imports into Ireland coming from non-EU (or third) countries.

These are required to undergo veterinary examination at the BIP of entry to include documentary checks (100%), identity checks (100%) and physical checks ranging from 20% to 50% of consignments according to whether the consignment consists of meat or meat products. Consignments failing to comply with veterinary control checks may be detained for further examination and where non-compliance is established are returned to the exporting country or destroyed at the importers cost.

### **Dairy Sector**

235. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he expects prospects and opportunities for the dairy sector here to expand over the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40048/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I believe that prospects and opportunities for the dairy sector will expand significantly over the next five years 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.

These positive medium-term forecasts are what the Food Harvest 2020 report seeks to exploit in setting out the strategic vision for the agri-food and fishing sector. From a dairying perspective, the ending of milk quotas in 2015 represents an exceptional opportunity to increase our milk output, and Food Harvest 2020 has targeted a 50% increase in milk production in the next decade. This target is ambitious but I also believe it is realistic, because the dairy sector has the capability to expand at producer and at processor level. I chair the High Level Implementation Committee, whose function is to direct and take whatever action is needed to successfully implement Food Harvest 2020. The Dairy Expansion Activation Group has got the implementation ball rolling in the dairy sector. It has produced a Road Map setting out 55 actions that are required to achieve the 50% increase in milk production. Dr. Sean Brady, who chaired the Group, is continuing to facilitate the process of implementation and to monitor progress. All of the stakeholders are being encouraged to discharge the responsibilities assigned to them, and the response will be monitored and reported on.

“Milestones for Success”, the first annual progress report on the implementation of Food Harvest 2020, was published in July. More than 90% of the 215 initiatives have been commenced, and I am confident that the momentum generated by that good start will be carried forward.

### Sheep Sector

236. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he expects the prospects for Irish lamb producers to expand over the next five years; the most likely factors to affect the industry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40049/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I am very pleased to see that the Irish sheep sector continues to show positive signs of renewal. Last year we saw a halt in the decline of sheep numbers. Provisional estimates for June 2011 from the results of the Crops and Livestock Survey 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 those in June 2010 to 4.8 million. Significantly there was a 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 too 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%.

In addition 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.

The market performance of the sheep sector, in common with other agricultural sectors, is a function of supply and demand. The long-term future of the sector will depend on its ability to satisfy the market and in order to do this well it must focus on competitiveness, innovation and the demands of the consumer.

The Food Harvest 2020 Strategy includes specific recommendations for the sheep sector. It envisages that over the coming years, demand for sheepmeat on the European market will outstrip production levels, which could provide opportunities for exporting countries such as

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Ireland. This should provide the potential for better returns, provided the industry can continue the market and product diversification which has been evident in recent years. At producer level there is likely to be improved price prospects, provided an increased focus on production, efficiency and product quality is evident. Based on a renewed commercial focus by the sheep sector, building consumption on the domestic market and through the implementation of the recommendations of Food Harvest 2020, the industry has targeted a growth in output value of 20% by 2020.

The recommendations of the report focus on farm competitiveness and the processing sector. On the farm side, they emphasise the importance of the continuance of the application of on-farm labour efficiencies and new technologies, breed improvement and the production of a quality product. On the processing side, the focus is on efficiencies, innovation and improved product range.

In recent years the sector has also received a number of key supports, including €7 million from the 2009 Single Farm Payment National Reserve under the Uplands Sheep Payment Scheme and €54 million for the three year grassland sheep scheme which commenced in 2010. These measures have provided a much-needed boost to sheep farmers' incomes, which should encourage them to stay in the sector. The Grassland Sheep Scheme in particular is proving to be a valuable support mechanism in terms of improving income and confidence in the Sector.

Bord Bia will also spend up to €1m this year on a promotional strategy for the Irish sheep sector which addresses the issue of safeguarding the future of the sector in the following ways:

- By encouraging Irish consumers to buy more Quality Assured lamb.
- By collaborating with its French and English counterparts in a campaign to reverse the decline in consumption of lamb on the French market, which accounts for over 50% of our exports.
- By working with individual exporter to increase the amount of exports to higher value markets such as Germany and Scandinavia and thereby reduce Ireland's dependency on the French market.

Teagasc has also allocated almost €1.5 million for sheep research for 2011.

All of these initiatives and supports have benefitted the sheep industry.

### **Beef Exports**

237. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the extent to which he expects the beef export industry to remain competitive in European or world markets in the future with particular reference to the next five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40050/11]

238. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total value and volume of beef imported and exported in each of the past five years to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40052/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 237 and 238 together.

The tables detail the volume and value of beef imports and exports since 2007.

## Irish beef imports

Year	Volume (tonnes cwe)	Value €
2007	22,743	72.92m
2008	24,252	84.36m
2009	26,792	88.86m
2010	28,802	106.48m
2011 (to Aug)	20,739	74.63m

## Irish beef exports

Year	Volume (tonnes cwe)	Value €
2007	523,000	1.5 bn
2008	483,000	1.5bn
2009	460,000	1.4bn
2010	505,000	1.5bn
2011 (CSO to Aug)	307,000	1.17bn

As is set out in the table for exports beef accounted for around €1.5 billion of approximately €7.9 billion of food exports in 2010, and the live cattle trade, which reached almost 140,000 head for the year, was worth an additional €183m. Beef exports in 2011 are expected to grow by 9% to upwards of €1.7 billion for the year. In the first six months of 2011, exports of fresh and frozen beef from Ireland increased 4% as demand from outside the EU boosted shipments.

The shift in the dynamics of the global beef market has resulted in a substantial convergence between EU and world beef prices and I am satisfied that this will create new and significant opportunities for the Irish beef industry over the next five years.

**Dairy Industry**

239. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the total value and volume of dairy products imported and exported in each of the past five years to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40053/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Central Statistics Office compiles data on trade in agricultural products. The following tables set out the value and volume of the main dairy commodities imported and exported over the past five years.

## Irish Dairy Produce Exports 2006 -2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
<i>Butter</i>						
tonnes	141,516	143,272	123,995	120,050	134,413	111,547
€000	346,524	419,618	355,562	278,890	420,691	393,002
<i>Cheese</i>						
tonnes	140,296	146,710	164,712	172,018	178,111	107,181
€000	429,671	486,646	611,978	500,313	560,572	363,052
<i>SMP</i>						
tonnes	49,302	68,956	37,717	35,255	51,489	46,323
€000	102,945	202,417	100,969	64,088	114,718	112,819

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	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
<i>WMP</i>						
tonnes	80,367	58,688	56,952	45,958	53,246	47,515
€000	150,421	154,157	163,914	94,515	135,416	136,258
<i>Whey</i>						
tonnes	70,013	64,347	61,264	59,846	50,123	38,134
€000	75,748	91,325	82,963	64,313	67,379	58,393
<i>Casein</i>						
tonnes	41,119	38,823	33,236	31,462	35,162	24,447
€000	215,910	240,794	259,233	160,752	206,582	167,754
<i>Infant Formula</i>						
tonnes	98,809	94,030	106,836	101,524	96,951	64,833
€000	540,220	556,147	622,809	606,862	589,837	408,759
<i>Total</i>						
tonnes	621,422	614,826	584,712	566,113	599,495	439,980
€000	1,861,439	2,151,104	2,197,428	1,769,733	2,095,195	1,640,037

## Irish Dairy Produce Imports 2006-2011

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
<i>Butter</i>						
tonnes	7,737	5,840	5,568	7,739	8,145	4,074
€000	21,009	14,267	14,408	16,635	19,916	11,004
<i>Cheese</i>						
tonnes	28,951	41,871	41,963	39,857	48,609	44,581
€000	102,624	148,382	157,399	128,850	151,662	98,091
<i>SMP</i>						
tonnes	5,760	8,955	3,944	2,466	2,673	1,311
€000	11,773	22,709	9,796	5,317	4,964	1,859
<i>WMP</i>						
tonnes	7,253	5,546	6,333	3,521	5,018	2,185
€000	18,076	14,060	16,272	7,582	13,542	6,790
<i>Whey</i>						
tonnes	22,470	17,296	17,696	21,873	19,222	15,139
€000	14,932	16,721	12,577	15,973	12,009	10,658
<i>Casein</i>						
tonnes	649	341	390	756	460	388
€000	3,866	2,914	1,879	3,014	2,930	2,654
<i>Infant Formula</i>						
tonnes	2,152	1,824	5,153	838	1,610	2,683
€000	13,291	10,875	14,055	4,320	7,298	10,894
<i>Total</i>						
tonnes	74,972	81,673	81,047	77,050	85,737	70,361
€000	185,571	229,928	226,386	181,691	212,321	141,950

\*Figures for 2011 are to August 2011

Source: CSO

### Fishing Industry Development

240. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine if the business plan for the fishery harbour centres published in 2009 is being implemented; the status of this report; his views and intentions relative to its content and recommendations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40094/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The Business Plans for the Development of the Fishery Harbour Centres which were prepared by Burke and McIver Consulting and published in 2009 provide a blueprint for the future development of the six Fishery Harbour Centres. The Business Plans set out a five year timeframe for implementation of the recommendations.

In the course of their consultations Burke and McIver Consulting visited the six Fishery Harbour Centres and listened to the concerns and suggestions of the various stakeholders and harbour users. The Business Plans set out for each harbour the concerns and issues raised by Stakeholders and draw conclusions as well as making various recommendations.

The publication of the Business Plans coincided with a significant downturn in the economy and the moratorium in relation to the recruitment in the Public Service. Indeed this is acknowledged in the conclusions in Section 12 of the report. Notwithstanding this however, my Department has been cognisant of the value of the plans and the need to implement as appropriate, the recommendations made within the context of the various constraints currently prevailing.

I can confirm that my Department has made significant progress in relation to the key priorities identified in the Business Plans and has for example: —

- Arranged for the appropriate Induction Training for new Harbour management.
- Organised regular meeting with Harbour Masters where a strong emphasis has been placed on the need to ensure the optimum use of the harbour facilities.
- Organised regular Harbour Users Fora at the Fishery Harbour Centres where the views of all stakeholders are sought and discussed. The stakeholders include:—
  - Fishermen
  - Commercial users of the harbour
  - Local representatives
  - Other Government Agencies and Local Authorities
- Co-operated with Bord Iascaigh Mhara in raising the profile of the harbours with a view to expanding and seeking new business.
- Worked to ensure that where it is possible and compatible with the needs of the fishing
- Initiated a review of the existing Rates & Charges Order.
- Put a specific Unit in place to deal with the property portfolio at the Fishery Harbour Centres.
- Continue to oversee and progress Capital Investment in the Fishery Harbour Centres.

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My Department continues to use every opportunity available to implement and progress the recommendations of the business plan. This is being achieved in the context of reduced staffing levels and resources.

### **Aquaculture Licences**

241. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number of aquaculture licences issued in the past five years by him; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40095/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The European Court of Justice issued a judgment against Ireland in 2007 and this has largely determined what can be done since that time in relation to aquaculture licensing in most of the Bays around Ireland. In that context, twenty three aquaculture licences were issued in the past five years.

The low number of licences issued largely arises from the need for full compliance with the terms of that judgment with particular reference to the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. The majority of areas for which these licences are sought are designated Special Areas of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive and/or Special Protection Areas under the EU Birds Directive (Natura 2000 sites).

My Department, in conjunction with the Marine Institute and the National Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is engaged in a comprehensive programme to gather the necessary baseline data appropriate to the conservation objectives of aquaculture sites located within Natura 2000 areas. The comprehensive data collection programme together with the setting of appropriate conservation objectives will enable all new and renewal applications to be appropriately assessed for the purpose of ensuring compliance with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. Once the relevant data has been collected, conservation objectives for the site are set by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The establishment of these conservation objectives by NPWS allows individual licence applications to be assessed against the conservation objectives.

My Department is working very closely with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to complete the overall assessment process and significant progress is being made.

### **Harbours and Piers**

242. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the overall costs to the State of developing the new facilities at Killybegs, County Donegal; the number of auctions held to date at the auction hall; the other uses being made of the auction hall and the income it is generating; his views that the spend on the project is value for money for the State; his plans for the future of the facility; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40096/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre benefited from an investment of in excess of €50 million between 1999 and 2005. The investment saw the provision of world class facilities at the harbour including 450 metres of new quay, cargo sheds and a boat repair building. The investment at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre has had a significant and positive impact on the Killybegs Region and has led to substantial increases in economic activity for the region. The following tables illustrate well the year on year increase in the economic outturn accruing to the region.

## Value of Landings at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre (€ millions)

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Amount	39.94	37.79	47.34	65.48	67.23	71.61

## Value of Pelagic Fish Processing at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre (€ millions)

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Amount	72	65	76	99	95	94

## Value of Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre Ancillary Activities (€ millions)

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Amount	34.09	33.11	32.28	35.74	37.41	40.64

I am confident that the investment made at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre will continue to accrue significant benefit to the region for the future.

The auction hall facility was not part of the new harbour development project and predated that development. Demand for harbour based fish auction facilities has declined in recent years in line with current market practices and there is currently no demand at all for fish auctions at Killybegs Fishery Harbour Centre. The auction hall has been used to facilitate fishermen in relation to the storage of nets and has also facilitated the hosting of the popular biennial Fish Ireland Exhibitions. In addition and as a goodwill gesture towards the local community my Department has allowed the storage of church furniture in the hall whilst the local Roman Catholic Church is undergoing renovation.

243. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the number properties managed by him at Killybegs, County Donegal, Howth, County Dublin, Castletownbere, County Cork, Dingle, County Kerry, Dunmore East, County Waterford and Rossaveel, County Galway, are occupied on rent review lease; if he has engaged with each tenant to review downward the rents in view of the economic climate; the outcome of this review if any; the number of properties vacant and the length of time they have been vacant; the way the vacant property is being managed and marketed; the cost of maintenance and security relative to each vacant property; the amount of State funds spent at each location over the past six years or the cost of the original investment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40097/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department owns and operates, under Statute, six Fishery Harbour Centres at Killybegs, Ros an Mhíl, An Daingean (Dingle), Castletownbere, Dunmore East and Howth. Properties located in the Fishery Harbour Centres are, when appropriate, offered for lease. An individual lease agreement, which is a formal legally binding document on both parties, is voluntarily signed at the outset by the tenant and a Departmental official (on behalf of the Minister).

The specific terms and conditions of each lease are unique to each property and my Department is not in a position to comment on the terms of individual leases. All leases issued in the six Fishery Harbour Centres contain provisions for regular rent reviews and those agreed prior

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to the application of Section 132 of the Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Act, 2009, have what are referred to as “upward only rent reviews”.

I am however, cognisant of the prevailing economic climate in which tenants of the Fishery Harbour Centres are operating and whilst my Department is precluded from offering tenants a downward rent review, it has recently offered tenants on whose properties rent reviews have been due since 2008 the opportunity to remain at the rent as set at the time of the most recent review. This move has provided a level of certainty to tenants in relation to the rental charges.

Vacant properties at the six Fishery Harbour Centres are managed in accordance with the requirements of the individual Fishery Harbour Centres and the Department of Finance issued Public Procurement Guidelines and are offered for lease as and when appropriate.

All of the properties are located within the bounds of the Fishery Harbour Centres and any necessary maintenance and security is managed by the individual Harbour Masters and staff.

Capital works at the six Fishery Harbour Centres are funded under the Fishery Harbour & Coastal Infrastructure Development Programme and the expenditure on the Programme since 2006 is set out in the following table.

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
	Actual Spend (millions)					Approved (millions)
Castletownbere	€10.9m	€8.1	€7.6	€7.9	€4.5	€2.7
Dingle	€0	€0.3	€1.0	€0.41	€1.1	€0.61
Dunmore East	€0.57	€1.2	€0.58	€0.6	€0.27	€0.94
Howth	€0.29	€0.17	€0.16	€0.18	€0.25	€1.2
Killybegs	€2.4	€0.49	€0.41	€0.43	€0.57	€0.8
Rossaveel	€0.42	€2.1	€3.3	€6.6	€1.5	€1.6
Total	€14.6	€12.4	€13.1	€16.1	€8.2	€7.9

### Grant Payments

244. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine further to Parliamentary Question No. 419 of 8 November 2011, when payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Clare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40105/11]

**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 and full payment has issued in respect of 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 in respect of the 2011 payment. These checks have been successfully completed and 75% payment in respect of 2011 amounting to €2702.69 will issue shortly.

### Departmental Negotiations

245. **Deputy Pádraig Mac Lochlainn** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine

the current status of negotiations with the Crown Estate on the question of propriety ownership of Lough Foyle. [40159/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department is working with the Loughs Agency and other relevant Departments and agencies to address the issues involved which are complex in nature.

Every effort is being made to bring the process to a conclusion as soon as possible.

### Departmental Expenditure

246. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40172/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** My Department has spent no money on public relations companies since 2006. Public relations advice, where required is provided by my Departments Corporate Affairs Division.

247. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40188/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The vast bulk of the Department's advertising is carried out in the print media. This includes the publication of Statutory Notices that are required to comply with various national and EU legislative requirements. Other media such as television and radio are rarely used. Internet media has not been used to-date.

The amount spent on advertising is set out in the table.

Year	Value
2006	€1,177,252
2007	€1,575,993
2008	€1,218,023
2009	€480,144
2010	€462,768
2011 (Jan-Nov)	€269,451

The figure for 2011 shows a 42% reduction compared to 2010.

### Grant Payments

248. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will receive their single farm payment and disadvantaged area payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40227/11]

**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 10 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 pay-

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ments 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.

249. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a REP scheme payment will issue in respect of persons (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40238/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** The person named commenced REPS 4 in January 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. These checks have now been completed and a cheque for 75% totalling €7901.95 will issue to the person named in the next few days. I also expect that the 25% balancing payment for 2011 applicants will commence shortly.

250. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when an application for single farm payment will be issued to a person (details supplied) in County Wexford. [40271/11]

**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 11 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.

251. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine when a disadvantaged area aid payment will issue in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40287/11]

**Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (Deputy Simon Coveney):** An application under the 2011 Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 22 April 2011. The Terms and Conditions governing the Scheme require, inter alia, that applicants maintain a minimum stocking density on their holding of 0.15 livestock units per forage hectare declared, for at least three consecutive months, during the calendar year of application. However, where the holding of an applicant is identified as not meeting this minimum requirement, the person in question is invited to submit evidence of satisfactory stocking i.e. Flock Register, Horse Passports or details of a REPS or Commonage Framework Plan, which provides for a lower stocking level.

The person named was written to on 1 September and again on 22 November 2011, and invited to submit appropriate evidence of the numbers of livestock maintained on her farm, as Department records currently do not show the person named as having yet achieved the minimum stocking density. On receipt of a satisfactory response from the person named, the application will be further processed with a view to payment at an early date.

### Health Service Staff

252. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if posts of social workers in child services are filled when staff are on long-term sick leave, maternity leave and so on; in view of the Roscommon child care report if she will outline the procedure employed to hand over this in such cases; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40099/11]

253. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the number of social worker whole time equivalent in family and child services in the years 2008, 2009, 2010 and to date in 2011 in County Roscommon; the number of whole time equivalent retirements and recruitment in each year; the plan for whole time equivalent recruitment by year end and in 2012; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40102/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 252 and 253 together.

The employment control framework for the HSE provides that the grade of social worker is exempted from the public sector moratorium on recruitment and filling of vacancies.

The Ryan Report Implementation Plan committed to the recruitment of an additional 270 social workers. The first 200 of these new posts were in place by the end of 2010. The HSE National Service Plan includes financial provision for the recruitment of a further 60 social workers this year.

The additional social workers will be targeted at priority areas of the service having regard to an overall assessment of workload undertaken by the National Director and his team. The recruitment of the additional social workers is one element of a wider change agenda within the HSE, through which I believe we can deliver better outcomes for children and families. This reform agenda will lead to the establishment of the new Child and Family Support Agency which will provide a dedicated focus on child protection and support families in need.

In relation to the specific manpower related matters raised, I have asked the Health Service Executive for the information in question which I will forward to the Deputy.

### Departmental Expenditure

254. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of money spent by her on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40174/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department was formally established on 3 June 2011 and to date there has been no money spent on public relations companies.

255. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs the amount of money spent by her on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40190/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** My Department was formally established on 3 June 2011 and to date there has been no money spent on international, national and local media.

### Child Abuse

256. **Deputy Anne Ferris** asked the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs if she will consider establishing a statutory inquiry to investigate allegations of abuse by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [40342/11]

**Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Deputy Frances Fitzgerald):** I have seen the recent media reports in which the individual referred to by the Deputy was named. However, I am not in a position to comment on these reports. The media coverage linked the individual concerned to a supplementary report prepared by the Dublin Archdiocese Commission. Following publication of the Commission's Report the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform announced that an Assistant Garda Commissioner was being appointed to examine the Commission's report, specifically in relation to how complaints were handled and investigated by the Church and State authorities. Such matters are still under consideration by An Garda Síochána.

I have indicated that I am awaiting receipt of the HSE's national audit report on all Catholic dioceses before responding to calls for the establishment of further statutory or other inquiries. The HSE, which has statutory responsibility for child welfare and protection, has been conducting a national audit of all Catholic dioceses and Religious Orders. It expects to be in a position in the Spring of 2012 to furnish a report to me on the diocesan element of this audit.

### Food Labelling

257. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Health the number of instances in which non-compliance with food labelling has been detected in each of the past five years to date in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40051/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Responsibility for the enforcement of food labelling legislation rests with the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) and its official agents, which include the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM), Local Authorities (LAs) and the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority (SFPA).

In 2008 the HSE, carried out 18,068 food labelling inspections which identified 2,866 non-compliances. In 2009 54,177 food labelling inspections identified 8,425 non-compliances. In 2010, 52,571 food labelling inspections identified 7,079 non-compliances. No data is available for 2007 and the data for 2011 is not yet available. It should be noted that in the course of an inspection, an inspector may check compliance with one or more labelling regulations. Many of these non-compliances might be for minor food labelling infringements and Environmental Health Officers follow-up on all of these non-compliances with the food business operators to ensure future compliance. In the other official agencies, food labels are checked at production level as part of routine food controls. The number of inspections specifically on food labels is not separately recorded.

DAFM Egg and Poultry Inspectors verify compliance with labelling and the marketing standards for eggs and poultry from primary production through to retail. In 2007, DAFM undertook 1,349 inspections in poultry producer establishments to verify compliance with the Labelling and Marketing Standards for poultry, of which 10 non-compliances were identified. In 2008 DAFM undertook 1,409 inspections in poultry producer establishments to verify compliance with these standards for poultry, of which 28 non-compliances were identified. In 2009 DAFM undertook 1,432 inspections in these establishments and identified 20 non-compliances. In 2010

DAFM undertook 1,359 inspections in these establishments and identified 7 non-compliances. FSAI has also carried out, in co-ordination with the official agencies, labelling surveys on specific aspects of the nutrition and health claims legislation, allergen labelling, fish and fish products and gas-flushed chicken fillets.

Following on from the inspections the official agencies undertake appropriate enforcement action with the food businesses. They also verify that compliance is achieved. As already indicated above in most cases breaches of labelling legislation do not pose a serious risk to public health and compliance with the legislation is done through the provision of advice to the food business and appropriate changes to the food label.

In May 2009 a prosecution was taken by the FSAI against a food business in Galway for breaches including the Labelling of Fishery and Aquaculture Products regulations 2003. One 2009 HSE prosecution cited offences under the 2006 Country of Origin of Beef regulations and a further prosecution cited the Beef Labelling regulations 2000. In 2010 four HSE prosecutions cited offences under labelling legislation including the general labelling, country of origin of beef, fish labelling and beef labelling regulations.

### **National Drugs Strategy**

258. **Deputy Jonathan O'Brien** asked the Minister for Health the dates on which he will publish the results of the two research projects conducted by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs. [40143/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** The National Advisory Committee on Drugs will publish a number of reports over the coming months and, if the Deputy could provide the details of the research projects he has in mind, I will arrange to forward the publication dates.

### **Medical Cards**

259. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a medical card will be issued immediately in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite the matter. [40264/11]

**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.

### **Health Services**

260. **Deputy Dominic Hannigan** asked the Minister for Health if he will ensure that car parking charges at Blanchardstown Hospital, Dublin, are limited in order that patients are not faced with a financial burden when they attend the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40057/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

261. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Health the reason orthodontic treatment is not covered under their medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40075/11]

**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.

### Official Engagements

262. **Deputy Sean Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when he will give a date in relation to his proposed visit to Abbeyleix community nursing unit, County Laois; if he will visit St. Brigid's hospital Shaen, County Laois; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40080/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** Requests to meet my colleague Minister Reilly are normally arranged through his Office. I understand that such a request has been received in relation to Abbeyleix Community Nursing Unit and St. Brigid's Nursing Home, County Laois and that Minister Reilly has already indicated he will visit Abbeyleix in the New Year. However, a particular date has yet to be confirmed.

### Disabled Drivers

263. **Deputy Jerry Buttimer** asked the Minister for Health in relation to persons who have restricted range of movement in one arm which makes driving severely difficult but who do not meet the criteria for a primary medical certificate, if there is any source of assistance available to facilitate them in acquiring an automatic car or adapting a manual vehicle in order that they can maintain their mobility and independence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40082/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Health Service Executive may pay a Motorised Transport Grant towards the purchase of a vehicle and/or adaptations to a vehicle being purchased by a person with a severe disability who is 17 years or older where a vehicle is essential for him/her to retain employment. Self-employed persons who satisfy the criteria of eligibility may also be considered.

Application is made to the local Health Service Executive office. In order to be eligible to receive the grant, a number of conditions must be satisfied. The key eligibility criteria are that the individual applying must

- meet the medical criteria
- require a car in order to retain employment
- be means tested to determine the amount of grant payable.

Eligibility for the Motorised Transport Grant may also be considered in "Exceptional Circumstances" other than for employment retention, for a person with a severe disability who lives in very isolated circumstances and where their disability prevents them from using public transport.

### Health Services

264. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the steps he is taking to integrate access to and use of blood results both in primary care and acute hospitals; the estimated saving of such a system; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40098/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

265. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health if he has reviewed the report by the Irish College of General Practitioners, *Primary Care Teams — A GP Perspective*; his response to its conclusions and actions to be taken; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40100/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** I welcome the recent report by the Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP), *Primary Care Teams — A GP Perspective*. A meeting is being arranged between the HSE and the ICGP to examine the report in detail and to explore how both organisations can collaborate more effectively in the future. I have asked the HSE to keep me informed of progress in this regard. The report recommends investment in ICT, the creation of a Unique Patient Identifier and the provision of secure email for the health services. One of the HSE's objectives is to install ICT infrastructure at all Primary Care Team sites to provide a minimum level of capability that will support a common set of applications and services. I fully support the prioritisation of Primary Care ICT development as the lack of an integrated system is undoubtedly an impediment to the proper management of the service.

A key issue for the health services is the ability to identify patients across different ICT systems such as the GP referrals system, Integrated Patient Management System and the National Integrated Medical Imaging System, as well as many other systems. The Department of Health is examining the issue of unique patient identification in the context of wider public service initiatives in identity management. The core principles of good information governance, including patient privacy, confidentiality and safety, must be at the centre of all deliberations. The work must also have regard to the requirements of the Data Protection Acts and the Health Information and Quality Authority.

Universal Health Insurance, linked to money following the patient, is a central element of the health reform agenda set out in the Programme for Government. A prerequisite for the implementation of such a system of health insurance is patient centric data clearly identifying clients. The Department is currently working on legislation, to be published next year, which will underpin the use of information in the health sector.

The requirement for secure e-mail in the health services and in particular the Primary Care setting is recognised and the HSE is currently developing proposals for a secure mail solution in conjunction with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Programme for Government also provides for the introduction of a new GMS contract with GPs with an increased emphasis on the management of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and cardiovascular conditions. It is envisaged that the new contract will also focus on prevention and will include a requirement for GPs to provide care as part of integrated multi-disciplinary Primary Care Teams. The preparation of a revised GMS contract will be advanced during 2012.

### **Departmental Expenditure**

266. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the cost of leased properties in each of the past three years in each primary community continuing care area; the number of properties vacated in each year and the savings accrued; the number of properties with a lease renewal in 2011 or 2012; the number in 2013 and 2014 which are due for renewal; the number

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within five years, ten years, 15 years or in excess of that and the total value of leases in each category; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40101/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Management of the Health Service Executive property portfolio is a service matter: therefore, your question has been referred to the Executive for direct reply.

### **Mental Health Services**

267. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Health his views on a matter (details supplied) regarding mental health; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40104/11]

272. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health if he is considering establishing a directorate for mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40171/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 267 and 272 together.

This Government is committed to implementing *A Vision for Change* and reforming our model of health care delivery so that more and better quality care is delivered in the community. In this regard I have asked the HSE to prepare an implementation plan, which will identify specific areas of *A Vision for Change* that can be progressed over the next three years, with time lines, detailed costs, structures and identifiable person(s) responsible for driving the change. The question of a Directorate for mental health and issues related to staffing levels particularly in community mental health teams will be examined in this context. The additional €35 million announced in Budget 2012 for mental health services will enable the HSE to enhance the multi-disciplinary composition of the existing community mental health teams and focus on key priorities in mental health.

### **Long-Term Illness Scheme**

268. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Health the reason lupus, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are not medical conditions that qualify under the long-term illness scheme. [40122/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** There are no plans to extend the list of conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Under the Drug Payment Scheme no individual or family pays more than €120 (€132 from 1 January 2012) per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme significantly reduces the cost burden for families and individuals incurring ongoing expenditure on medicines. In addition, people who cannot, without undue hardship, arrange for the provision of medical services for themselves and their dependants may be entitled to a medical card. In the assessment process, the Health Service Executive can take into account medical costs incurred by an individual or a family. Those who are not eligible for a medical card may still be able to avail of a GP visit card, which covers the cost of general practice consultations.

### **Medical Cards**

269. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health when a decision will issue on an

application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Roscommon; the reason for the delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40124/11]

**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.

270. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding an application for a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [40163/11]

**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.

### Health Services

271. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health the number of patients referred by the Health Service Executive to a centre (details supplied); the total cost to the HSE for their accommodation and treatment at this centre including the maximum and minimum individual cost per patient; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40169/11]

**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.

*Question No. 272 answered with Question No. 267.*

### Departmental Expenditure

273. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40181/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Press and Communications Office of my Department liaise with the media on behalf of the Department as well as all Ministers and do not use the services of a PR company. However, my Department has availed of these services in areas such as health promotion campaigns including, *inter alia*, smoking cessation, alcohol awareness, men's health, obesity and breast feeding. Work carried out by these companies included public awareness and communications campaigns, as well as advertising and consumer research.

The information requested by the Deputy in relation to my Department to the end of 2010 is set out as follows. Details in respect of 2011 are not available at this time. This information will be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy.

Year	Amount €
2006	40,000
2007	48,400
2008	16,034
2009	0
2010	0

274. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40197/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The information requested by the Deputy in relation to my Department to the end of 2010 is set out as follows. Details in respect of 2011 are not readily available at this time. They will be compiled and forwarded to the Deputy.

Year	Amount €
2006	1,375,000
2007	48,400
2008	62,315
2009	115,003
2010	155,280

Responsibility for many advertising and promotional campaigns transferred to the Health Service Executive in early 2006. This includes media campaigns in relation to alcohol, smoking, illegal drugs, obesity etc. Resulting from this transfer of responsibility, the Department's costs for advertising etc. reduced substantially since 2006. The expenditure in 2007 relates exclusively to a public information campaign on the Nursing Homes Support Scheme — “A Fair Deal”. Expenditure in 2008, 2009 and 2010 relates to a number of public consultation and information campaigns.

### Hospital Services

275. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Health the expected opening date of Tralee community hospital, Kerry; if he will outline the long-term facilities to be placed in the hospital; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40207/11]

**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

276. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health if the €50 million efficiency savings for mental health services, disability services and child care as per the comprehensive expenditure review 2012-2014 are intended to be used to fund the €50 million additional funding for mental health services and primary care; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40209/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** There is no doubt that there are challenges facing the mental health, disability and childcare services as a result of reduced resources by way of an additional efficiency target of €50m in 2012. This target is in addition to 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. It is clear that the acceleration of the health reform programme and reducing our dependency on costly staff-intensive models of service, will be central to ensuring that these efficiency targets are met.

I am, however, pleased to be in a position to provide additional ring-fenced funding of €35m for mental health services in line with the commitment in the Programme for Government. This funding will further advance the implementation of ‘A Vision for Change’ — the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy. It will

- (i) enable the HSE to enhance the multi-disciplinary composition of the existing adult and child & adolescent community mental health teams;
- (ii) focus on key priorities in mental health; and
- (iii) increase the availability of psychological and counselling services at primary care level.

As 90% of mental health needs are dealt with in primary care settings, this funding will assist in developing closer links between mental health services and primary care.

The balancing €15m which was provided under the Programme for Government commitments will provide for free GP access to holders of a Long Term Illness Card.

### **Health Services**

277. **Deputy Patrick Nulty** asked the Minister for Health the proportion, if any, of the €145 million savings from the employment control framework-pay cost containment as per the comprehensive expenditure review 2012-2014 that will come from the mental health services; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40210/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The gross current budget for the Health Sector for 2012 is €13,644m. An additional €79m is to be raised through a number of measures to increase the level of income from private patients treated in public hospitals and also to improve the collection rate of these charges. When account is taken of the Government's target savings, the need to meet unavoidable cost pressures and priority Programme for Government commitments, the savings target in 2012 is €543 million.

There are a range of measures identified to meet these savings targets including those arising from the implementation of the Employment Control Framework and other pay cost containment measures. The reduction in health service numbers under the ECF recently approved by Government, when taken with the other factors above, will result in reductions in services in 2012 and beyond. All programmes will come under scrutiny as a result of the reduction in expenditure, and the extent and nature of the impact on services will fall to be addressed in preparing the HSE's National Service Plan for 2012. The nature and range of the savings measures taken in recent years means it has become increasingly necessary to focus on improving the way services are organised and delivered. This is entirely appropriate and in keeping with the focus in the Programme for Government on reforming the way health services are funded and delivered to achieve greater productivity and more cost-effective services.

The National Service Plan will be submitted to me before Christmas, after which I have 21 days within which to approve the Plan or direct that it be amended. It is my intention, however, that this process will be concluded by the end of the year. My Department and the HSE are working collaboratively to develop the Plan in the context of the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure, the Programme for Government reform agenda and commitments for Mental Health and Primary Care. It will also take account of unavoidable cost increases and the savings measures agreed by Government, and will indicate at a high level how these will impact on the various service/care areas.

### **Care of the Elderly**

278. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health if he will increase the home-help hours for a person of 83 years of age (details supplied) in County Longford who is living alone

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and currently has only a half hour per morning, which is not sufficient for her needs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40219/11]

**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.

### Medicinal Products

279. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding the drug pradaxa and its prescription for medical card patients presenting with atrial fibrillation; if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the Health Service Executive has informed patients that they must pay for this drug; if his further attention has been drawn to the fact that pradaxa is clinically safer for many patients than warfarin; if he will ensure full and equal access to pradaxa for medical card patients; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40226/11]

**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 blood clots 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 will also take into account any clinical differences between Pradaxa and alternative anticoagulants. 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 healthcare 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.

### Health Insurance

280. **Deputy Michael McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the timeline for the injection of funds into the VHI and the potential impact on this arising from the proposed changes to the charging for public beds used by private patients in public hospitals. [40235/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The amount of capital reserves required by the VHI would fall to be determined by the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI) in the context of its role under the European Communities (Non-Life Insurance) Framework Regulations, 1994. In assessing an application for authorisation by an insurer, the CBI takes account of the three year business plan submitted, using optimistic, realistic and pessimistic scenarios. It is not possible at this point to give a figure or timeline for addressing VHI's capital shortfall. However, any increase in claims costs will have an impact on the company's business plan and will be taken into consideration by the CBI in arriving at a capital figure. It is important to note that given the current structure of the market, this will be mitigated by the level of transfers which will arise under the scheme of risk equalisation to be put in place from 2013 onwards.

I have made it clear that I expect the VHI to now take further steps to address claims costs and a process of examining those costs in detail is about to begin.

### Hospital Services

281. **Deputy Tom Fleming** asked the Minister for Health when a person (details supplied) in County Kerry will receive an appointment for a MRI scan; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40241/11]

**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 Staff

282. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if reductions in fees paid to hospital consultants have been accounted for in his budget 2012 Estimates; the level by which they will be reduced; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40243/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** There are no proposals at present to reduce the remuneration of hospital consultants. My immediate priority is to achieve more effective implementation of the existing contract so that patients get faster access to services and achieve better outcomes within the budgets available to hospitals. I believe there is plenty of scope under the existing contract and the Croke Park agreement to achieve greater productivity from consultants. For example, increased consultant participation in patient discharges at weekends could more quickly free up beds for emergency admissions. I am satisfied that considerable efficiencies can be achieved under the terms of the 2008 contract, if consultants embrace this reform agenda.

The 2008 Consultant contract provides for an extended working day, an increase in the length of the working week and structured weekend work, with consultants working as part of a team delivering the Clinical Directorate Service Plan and focusing on greater equity in the provision of care. I believe that the efficiencies, productivity increases and reform, that can be achieved, will be worth more to the health system than simply reducing the pay of consultants.

### Hospital Charges

283. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the charges set by him in respect of inpatient and outpatient hospital care and for visiting an accident and emergency department; if these charges have changed during the course of 2011; if these charges will change in 2012; the revenue accruing from such charges in 2011; the anticipated income in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40244/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The current statutory public in-patient charge is €75 per day subject to a maximum of €750 in any period of 12 consecutive months. This charge is payable by all public patients subject to exemptions specified in regulation, which include medical card holders, amongst others. There was no increase in the public in-patient charges in 2011 and there are no plans to increase these charges for 2012.

The private/semi-private accommodation charges for private in-patients in public hospitals for 2011 are set out as follows. I will shortly announce increases for 2012.

	Hospital Category	Private Accommodation	Semi-Private Accommodation	Day-care
1	HSE Regional Hospitals, Voluntary & Joint Board Teaching Hospitals	€1,017	€889	€732
2	HSE County Hospitals Voluntary Non-Teaching Hospitals	€789	€693	€564
3	HSE District Hospitals	€260	€222	€193

These charges are in addition to a statutory in-patient charge for private patients in public hospitals of €75 in respect of each day during which a person is maintained, subject to the maximum payment in any 12 consecutive months of €750.

The current statutory out-patient charge ( i.e. the A&E charge) is €100 per visit. Again this charge is payable by all patients subject to specified exemptions which include medical card holders, those presenting with a letter of referral from a G.P. and those admitted directly through A&E, amongst others. Private patients are also liable to a charge for the use of MRI in public hospitals, currently set at a maximum of €400. There are no plans to change these charges in 2012.

The expected income from in-patient, outpatient and accident and emergency charges in 2011 is estimated at €522 million. It is expected that 2012 income will be broadly in line with that of 2011.

### Prescription Charges

284. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the annual savings to be achieved from the prescription charge; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40245/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** Prescription charges result in savings to the Health Service Executive of approximately €27 million annually. Despite the very difficult budgetary situation, the Government has ruled out an increase in prescription charges.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

285. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the number of inpatients to each accident and emergency department in November 2010; the average wait in each accident and emergency in November 2010; the number of inpatients to each accident and emergency department in November 2011; the average wait in each accident and emergency in November 2011 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40246/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Immediately following my appointment as Minister for Health, I set about establishing the Special Delivery Unit, the purpose of which is to

unblock access to acute services by improving the flow of patients through the system. As a priority the SDU is addressing the issue of unacceptably long trolley waits.

The SDU is putting in place an infrastructure based on information collection and analysis, hospital by hospital, so that we will know what is actually happening in real time. This will allow for performance management to be embedded in the system to sustain shorter waiting times.

The problems in our emergency departments are complex and they did not arise overnight and they will take time to resolve but they are being tackled in a systematic and relentless fashion through the SDU. I do not minimise the scale of the task before us but I am very confident that the SDU will facilitate real performance improvement in the Irish hospital system.

The particular issues vary from hospital to hospital and some of the solutions will depend on local factors. As part of the process of forming the overall picture of the emergency department situation nationally, the SDU has identified fifteen hospitals which between them account for 80% of the trolley wait problem in the hospital system and Liaison Officers from the SDU are working pro-actively to support these sites. As part of this process some once off funding to the end of the year is being made available to hospitals based on specific proposals to reduce waiting times and to help address issues such as delayed discharges. Adherence to the agreed criteria will be closely monitored by the SDU.

The conditions and performance measures which hospitals will have to meet are as follows; for the remainder of the year and throughout January 2012 no patient will wait more than 23 hours in the hospital's Emergency Department. In addition the trolley wait target must be maintained at least 70% below the maximum daily trolley count since January 2010. Other conditions/performance measures include: seven day ward/discharge rounds; achievement of all Acute Medicine Programme milestones; and implementation of approved measures to effectively stream elderly patients.

My Department has asked the HSE for the detailed information sought by the Deputy and I will be in further communication with him in relation to it as soon as possible.

### **Health Service Staff**

286. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the total number of persons who have applied for the Health Service Executive voluntary redundancy scheme; if he will provide a breakdown of applicants between management and administration and support staff; if he will provide a breakdown of applicants on a HSE area basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40247/11]

287. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the total amount of funding made available to the voluntary redundancy scheme in 2012; the estimated cost of the scheme in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40248/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I propose to take Questions Nos. 286 and 287 together.

Firstly I would like to clarify that there is currently no voluntary redundancy or voluntary early retirement scheme available in the public health sector.

The 'grace period' during which the calculation of public service pensions is unaffected by the pay reductions applied under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) (No. 2) Act 2009 expires on 29 February 2012.

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The HSE estimate that approximately 4,000 retirement estimate requests have been received in recent months. It is not possible to say how many of those who requested estimates will actually retire by the end of February 2012. Previous experience with voluntary exit schemes in 2010 has shown that many estimate requests do not translate into actual departures and therefore it would not be safe to draw any conclusions based on these figures.

However current data from the HSE indicates that approximately 1,500 individuals have applied to retire on or before 29 February 2012. This number is likely to increase over the next two months as additional employees give notice of their intention to retire in advance of the end of the 'grace period'.

In the 2012 Estimates, funding of €97m has been provided to fund additional lump sum payments in the health sector in 2012. Additional pension costs in 2012 will also be funded from within the HSE Vote.

It is likely to be February 2012 before an accurate profile of intended retirements is available.

### Hospital Charges

288. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the rate of hospital charges inpatient, outpatient and accident and emergency in 2011; the categories of patient required to pay hospital charges; the changes in charges that will take place in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40249/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The current statutory public in-patient charge is €75 per day subject to a maximum of €750 in any period of 12 consecutive months. This charge is payable by all public patients subject to exemptions specified in regulation, which include medical card holders, amongst others. There are no plans to increase these charges for 2012.

The private/semi private accommodation charges for private in-patients in public hospitals for 2011 are set out below. I will shortly announce increases for 2012.

	Hospital Category	Private Accommodation	Semi-Private Accommodation	Day-care
1	HSE Regional Hospitals, Voluntary & Joint Board Teaching Hospitals	€1,017	€889	€732
2	HSE County Hospitals Voluntary Non-Teaching Hospitals	€789	€693	€564
3	HSE District Hospitals	€260	€222	€193

These charges are in addition to a statutory in-patient charge for private patients in public hospitals of €75 in respect of each day during which a person is maintained, subject to the maximum payment in any 12 consecutive months of €750.

The current statutory out-patient charge (i.e. the A&E charge) is €100 per visit. Again this charge is payable by all patients subject to specified exemptions which include medical card holders, those presenting with a letter of referral from a G.P. and those admitted directly through A&E, amongst others. Private patients are also liable to a charge for the use of MRI in public hospitals, currently set at a maximum of €400. There are no plans to change these charges in 2012.

289. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the anticipated income from statutory inpatient, outpatient and accident and emergency charges in 2011 in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40250/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** I am advised by the Health Service Executive that the total anticipated income from statutory and voluntary hospitals in respect of inpatient and accident and emergency charges in 2011 is estimated at €37,147,270. The public hospital statutory in-patient charge is currently €75 per day up to a maximum of €750 in any twelve consecutive months during which an individual is maintained as an in-patient in a public hospital or is admitted as a day-case. This charge is subject to a number of exemptions, in particular, it does not apply to persons with full eligibility (medical cards). The current charge for attendance at Emergency Departments (A&E) is €100 per visit subject to certain exemptions, in particular, persons with full eligibility (medical cards) and persons with a letter of referral from a registered medical practitioner. No other charges are applicable in relation to public outpatient services.

The anticipated income in 2011 is set out in the table below.

	Amount €
Public Charges	€28,616,419
Emergency Dept	€8,530,851
Total	€37,147,270

290. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the meetings he has held with members of the health insurance industry in relation to changes in charges announced in budget 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40251/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Secretary General of my Department met with representatives of the three insurers on the day of the Government announcement relating to changes to bed charges for public hospitals. Following on from this I met yesterday with the three commercial insurers, Aviva Health, Quinn Healthcare and VHI Healthcare. They have agreed to set up a Health Insurance Consultative Forum to tackle issues of mutual concern.

The meeting resulted in clear agreement that all would work cooperatively in driving down costs related to health insurance. There was agreement too that savings could be achieved in terms of services provided by both public and private hospitals.

I indicated that I was happy to hear any proposals from the insurance companies which would result in lower costs for the health insurance sector.

In recent days the issue of a possible rise in costs of health insurance premiums has been widely reported. I made clear to the health insurers that I believe significant savings can still be made, the effect of which can be to minimise the need for such increases.

The Health Insurance Consultative Forum will also provide the participating parties with an opportunity to consider issues related to Government moves to implement its policy of Universal Health Insurance. The Government has made clear that the future delivery of health services under UHI will require competing insurance companies driving efficient, cost effective delivery of high quality health care. The forum will allow the insurance companies consult with the Department of Health on many significant changes on the road to the full implementation of Universal Health Insurance.

## Departmental Expenditure

291. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the level funding allocated to each sub-heading in his Department which remains unspent; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40252/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Gross Current Vote for my Department in 2011 is €331.610m, of which €241.552m was spent to the end of November, leaving €90m unspent at that date. The current projection is that there will be a surplus of at least €40m on the Vote in the current year which will be surrendered to the Exchequer. This surplus can be attributed to a number of factors:

### *Hepatitis C Compensation Subheads*

#### *Subhead D, Inquiries and Miscellaneous Legal Fees and Settlements*

There is a projected surplus of some €4-5m on this subhead this year. Subhead D provides for statutory and non-statutory enquiries and miscellaneous legal fees and settlements. Given the fluctuating nature of legal cases and settlements, the Department cannot be certain when a case may settle, and any unspent funds at the end of the year are surrendered to the Exchequer. To date in 2011, there have been a number of large payments made (€2.6m and €3.7m), with a total of €14m spent from the subhead to date, almost all of which relate to clinical negligence claims. Legal cases can run for some years, and acceptance of a settlement can be required at short notice. Demands on the subhead are determined by the number of legal cases in process at any given time, but given the uncertain nature of legal cases there is a need for some flexibility with this subhead.

### *Administrative Budget*

The Administrative Budget is projected to be €4m in surplus in 2011. €1m of this relates to a provision made in Subhead A.7 in relation to a proposed consultancy in relation to VHI. A further €1.5m approximately is on other non-pay subheads, such as training, cleaning, office machinery and supplies etc. The remainder of the surplus is attributable to the non filling of vacancies as a result of the moratorium on recruitment, and reduced levels of overtime.

### *Grants to Health Agencies*

It is anticipated that there will be savings of approximately some €11m in relation to Grants to Health Agencies. The main agencies showing surpluses are the Health Research Board and the Health Information and Quality Authority, with small surpluses on some of the other directly funded agencies.

There is also a projected underspend of €6.2m on the Gross Capital Vote of €16.091m, €1.5m of which was approved for a Capital carryover into 2012.

## Hospital Charges

292. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the basis on which the figure of €143 million was arrived at savings to be achieved on the generation and collection of private income in budget 2012; the contacts he has had with insurance companies before arriving at this figure; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40253/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The €143m comprises €18m being the full year effect of the increase provided for in 2011 following the Value for Money review on private accommodation in public hospitals, €50m for the accelerated income collection from private

health insurers; and €75m being the part year effect of the proposal to introduce legislation allowing public hospitals to raise charges in respect of all private patients, irrespective of whether they occupy a designated private bed.

Private patient charges contribute the greatest proportion of income receipts. However, there are difficulties in relation to private patient fees, namely

(i) the full cost of services provided is not covered by the charges;

(ii) a significant proportion of private patients are not currently chargeable due to the current rules in relation to bed designation; and

(iii) there are major delays in recouping the fees from the private health insurance companies

These issues were examined in the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Economic Cost and Charges Associated with Private and Semi-Private Treatment Services in Public Hospitals which was published by the Department in December 2010. Under the average per diem costing methodology currently used by the public hospital system, the full cost of treating private patients is not charged. While the gap between the cost and the charge has narrowed significantly in recent years due to increases in the level of charges that apply, a shortfall still arises. The Value for Money Review recommended that increases in the charges should be implemented to bring the charge to the level of average cost. This approach was targeted to yield an additional €75m for the Exchequer in 2011 with a further €18m in 2012.

I have also announced a major change in the charging regime for private patients in public hospitals. Under existing legislation, public hospitals cannot charge private patients who occupy public beds. This represents a loss of income to the public hospital system and provides a significant subsidy to private insurance companies. It is intended to introduce new legislation next year to allow public hospitals to raise charges in respect of all private patients in public hospitals. This new system is fairer and entirely in keeping with the changes required along the road to universal health insurance. Removing this subsidy to private patients will help to protect services for public patients. It is estimated that an additional €200m per annum would arise, for which €75m has been anticipated next year as given the need for legislation, a full year effect will not apply until 2013.

While the HSE and voluntary hospitals recoup a considerable amount from private health insurance companies in return for private and semi-private treatment services provided to patients with private health insurance cover, lengthy delays often occur between the discharge of patients and the receipt of payment from the health insurance companies. This has led to an unacceptably high level of debtor days/months with a significant amount in fees outstanding. Some hospitals are much more efficient at collecting income than others, and for this reason, a target of €50m accelerated income has been set for 2012 which would aim to bring more hospitals to the standard of the better performing hospitals.

The Secretary General of my Department met with representatives of the three insurers on the day of the Government announcement relating to changes to private charges for public hospitals. I intend to meet with the insurers myself shortly. It is my intention to outline to the insurers my firm belief that the level of claim costs and the underlying base cost of those claims must be examined in detail and must be addressed urgently, in order to protect the sustainability of the private health insurance market.

### **Nursing Homes Support Scheme**

293. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the level of new funding available for the fair deal scheme; the number of patients waiting to be accepted onto the scheme; the average length of time patients are waiting to be accepted onto the scheme; the level of funding in 2011; the level of funding in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40254/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The total budget for long-term residential care in 2011 is approximately €963m. This is, in reality, the budget for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme albeit that transitional arrangements must also be facilitated from within the subhead, i.e. people in contract beds, people who choose to remain on subvention and people paying in-patient charges in public nursing homes.

Additional funding of €55m has been provided for the Nursing Homes Support Scheme in 2012. This brings the total funding available for long-term residential care in 2012 to over €1 billion. Subhead B12 in the recently published Estimates for Public Services 2012 contains a total provision of €1,049,710 for long-term residential care. However, this figure includes an amount for ancillary costs associated with long-term residential care for older people.

### **Services for Persons with Disabilities**

294. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health the total cuts to the budget of service providers to persons with disabilities in 2012; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40255/11]

**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.

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.

### **Comprehensive Expenditure Review**

295. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish his comprehensive spending review. [40256/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The Comprehensive Expenditure Review prepared by my Department, and submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

in September, was published on both Departments' websites on 7 December subject to the appropriate redactions.

296. **Deputy Billy Kelleher** asked the Minister for Health if he will publish all correspondence between him and the Department of Finance and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform with regard to preparations for budget 2012. [40258/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** As the Deputy will be aware, a comprehensive review of expenditure was undertaken within each Department which has formed the basis for the 2012 Estimates. The Department of Health draft Comprehensive Expenditure Review was approved by the Minister and submitted to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on 22 July 2011. The Report analysed the 11 HSE care programme areas in terms of rationale, objective and continuing relevance; programme effectiveness; programme efficiency; and additional demands. It also analysed the Department, directly funded health sector agencies, the HSE Corporate and health sector employment. This process facilitated the identification of potential savings and reform measures across the programme areas.

This in-depth review formed the basis for all discussions in relation the 2012 Estimates, the determination of the level of funding available for the health budget and the extent of the savings required. This review as redacted was published on my Department's website and can be downloaded from <http://www.dohc.ie/publications/doh—review—expenditure.html>. It would not be usual practice to publish ancillary correspondence between my Department and the Departments of Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

### Hospital Waiting Lists

297. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if a bed will be provided in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will expedite the matter. [40262/11]

**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.

### Nursing Homes Support Scheme

298. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health if an application for the fair deal scheme will be approved as a matter of urgency in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Carlow; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40266/11]

**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.

299. **Deputy John Browne** asked the Minister for Health when an application for the fair deal scheme will be approved in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Wexford. [40269/11]

**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 Service Staff**

300. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health the actions he will take to retain older, more experienced front-line workers in the Health Service Executive to ensure that front-line services retain mixed-ability staff cohorts; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40275/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** The HSE must ensure that the health sector is staffed with personnel with the appropriate mix of skills and experience. This is part of the human resource planning function of any organisation.

While it is not possible to say how many staff will actually retire in any given year, it will be affected by a number of factors. In particular, the grace period during which the calculation of public service pensions is unaffected by the pay reductions applied under the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) (No. 2) Act 2009 expires on 29 February 2012. Separately, staff may apply to retire under the Cost Neutral Early Retirement Scheme.

The current Employment Control Framework provides some flexibility to the HSE and other service providers to manage staffing resources so as to protect front line services as far as possible. In addition, the Public Service Agreement allows for the redeployment of staff based on service need.

#### **Health Services**

301. **Deputy Simon Harris** asked the Minister for Health his plans to introduce independent evaluations of the services offered by the Health Service Executive in specific geographical regions to ensure better co-ordination of services offered to the public in these areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40276/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Róisín Shortall):** I understand that the Deputy is referring to primary care services offered by the Health Service Executive in County Wicklow and the coordination of those services with the local acute hospitals.

As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply to the Deputy.

#### **Services for People with Disabilities**

302. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Health the current criteria for eligibility for the motorised transport grant in respect of a person with a severe disability who is not in employment; his plans to review these criteria; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40280/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Health (Deputy Kathleen Lynch):** The Motorised Transport Grant supports people with a severe disability to purchase/adapt a car where it is

essential for him or her to retain employment. The eligibility criteria are governed by a circular issued by my Department. In order to be eligible to receive the grant, a number of conditions must be satisfied. The key eligibility criteria are that the individual applying must

- meet the medical criteria
- require a car in order to retain employment
- be means tested to determine the amount of grant payable.

Self-employed persons who satisfy the criteria of eligibility may also be considered.

Eligibility for the Motorised Transport Grant may also be considered in “Exceptional Circumstances” other than for employment retention, for a person with a severe disability who lives in very isolated circumstances and where their disability prevents them from using public transport. It is not proposed to change the current circular.

### Medical Cards

303. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health the position regarding a medical card in respect of a person (details supplied) in Dublin 5. [40296/11]

**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.

### Health Services

304. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Health if he will consider correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40344/11]

**Minister for Health (Deputy James Reilly):** Ireland does not have a public cord blood bank and collection of cord blood for private use in low risk families is not provided publicly in Ireland. However, when clinically indicated by a consultant overseeing care, collection of cord blood for donation to an identified family member in high risk families is facilitated by HSE hospitals in collaboration with the Irish Blood Transfusion Service. In addition, where an identified clinical need arises, Ireland has access to cord blood stem cells through international stem cell banks and registries and this is also arranged by the Irish Blood Transfusion Service.

While recognising that science in this area is evolving, the HSE sought and considered expert professional clinical opinion as well as legal advice in relation to this matter. The HSE must ensure that evidence-based, safe, effective and high quality care is provided to patients and their families. In addition, the contracting, by a commercial company, of staff employed at hospitals operated or funded by the HSE, to undertake the collection of cord blood on behalf of that company, was outside the cover provided under the Clinical Indemnity Scheme.

Any hospital wishing to accommodate staff directly employed by third party commercial companies to undertake the procurement of cord blood at hospitals operated or funded by the HSE must therefore ensure that all appropriate arrangements are in place within the context of a robust clinical governance framework to control risks associated with the service. A contract, or service level agreement, should be in place between the third party commercial entity and the hospital concerned. Policies, procedures and guidelines are required to govern how the service is provided. Hospitals and their maternity service teams face significant challenges in

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ensuring a robust clinical governance framework to support a safe and high quality maternity care system.

I am satisfied that the HSE's primary objective is to ensure that there is a safe and high quality maternity service and that it is correct in requiring that appropriate governance arrangements are in place where an individual wishes to collect cord blood in cases where there is no identified clinical need. My Department will keep the emergence of clinical benefits of cord blood banking under review.

### Departmental Expenditure

305. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of money spent by him on public relations companies each year since 2006. [40186/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The amount my Department spent on public relations companies each year since 2006 is as follows:

Year	Amount Spent
2006	€145,127
2007	€355,837
2008	€230,966
2009	€13,669
2010	0
2011	€4,828

306. **Deputy Arthur Spring** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount of money spent by him on advertising with international, national and local media for each year since 2006. [40202/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Since 2006 my Department has spent €18,654 on advertising with international media, €1,463,496 on national media and €187,535 on local media. Included in the national expenditure is a figure of some €29,000 incurred in 2008. A portion of this expenditure was incurred in local media but the breakdown is not immediately available to the Department.

### Sports Funding

307. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the status of grants for inter-county GAA players for 2011 and 2012 as part of the Irish Sports Council funding; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40297/11]

**Minister of State at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Michael Ring):** The grants for Gaelic Players are to be paid for 2011 subject to the conditions of the schemes but the payment will be reduced in line with the overall reduction in the 2011 annual budget of the Irish Sports Council. The matter of funding the schemes in 2012 is under consideration.

### Rail Services

308. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport the amount that has been allocated to Irish Rail for its 2012 public service obligation provision; if

he will also outline the PSO provision for Irish Rail in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40339/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** The provision of public service obligation services by the CIÉ companies is subject to contract between the companies and the National Transport Authority (NTA). In 2012 the total Exchequer funding to be allocated to the NTA in respect of these services is €242.32m. The amount to be allocated to Irish Rail will be determined by the NTA in line with their contract. The amounts paid to Irish Rail in respect of PSO services since 2008 are as follows:—

Year	€
2008	€181.152m
2009	€170.624m
2010	€155.135m
2011	€147.427m

### Harbour Authorities

309. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in addition to the €230,000 spent on consultants in 2010 by Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company, the amount spent on the following consultants working on the master plan, consultants-outside management managing office block No. 2 which is owned by Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company and consultants engaged by Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company in relation to the restructuring costs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40346/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company is a commercial State company and prepares its accounts in accordance with the relevant accountancy rules. The publicly available annual audited accounts for 2010 provide a detailed breakdown of operating costs, including figures for consultancy fees, advertising and promotion, new revenue development fund, corporate governance etc. My Department does not have a more detailed breakdown of the company's costs. Therefore, I have forwarded the Deputy's questions to the Harbour Company for further response. If the Deputy does not receive a reply within ten working days, please contact my private office.

310. **Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett** asked the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport if a person (details supplied) of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company will be repaying the over-payments that they received on their expenses that they claimed from 2007 to 2010; the person in Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company that authorised these payments; in view of the situation with these expenses, his views whether this person should resign their position as a director of Dún Laoghaire Harbour Company; the way the company's accountant and secretary did not pick up on this abuse of expenses; if he will consider sending in his own independent auditors to examine the company's books; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [40347/11]

**Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport (Deputy Leo Varadkar):** Dun Laoghaire Harbour Company's publicly available annual audited accounts disclose the fees and expenses paid to each individual director. The Company confirms each year that it complies with the relevant travel and subsistence regulations. As indicated in my response to the Deputy's question of 29 September last, I understand that the matter of repayment of flight expenses has been resolved.

[Deputy Leo Varadkar.]

The company have recently submitted to me an external auditors' report which examined all the concerns that the Deputy raised previously in relation to the company's finances. This has been forwarded to the Deputy and is in the process of being laid before the Dáil. With regard to these further matters raised by the Deputy, I have forwarded the Deputy's concerns to the Chairperson of the Company and asked that he report back on the matter.