



DÍOSPÓIREACHTAÍ PARLAIMINTE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

DÁIL ÉIREANN

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

Tuesday, 14 December 2010.

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Dé Máirt, 14 Nollaig 2010.
Tuesday, 14 December 2010.

Chuaigh an Ceann Comhairle i gceannas ar 2.30 p.m.

Paidir.

Prayer.

Ceisteanna — Questions

National Recovery Plan

1. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the way the proposals contained in the National Recovery Plan, 2011- 2014 will impact on his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45172/10]

2. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the way it is intended to achieve the savings in his group of Votes set out in the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45173/10]

3. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he has drafted an action plan under the Croke Park Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45954/10]

4. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the projected expenditure by him in 2011; the way that figure compares with the estimate for 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46017/10]

5. **Deputy Enda Kenny** asked the Taoiseach the arrangements he is putting in place for the implementation of those elements of the Government's National Recovery Plan that relate to his Department or the agencies under his aegis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46018/10]

6. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on his Department's estimates for 2011 [46961/10]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 1 to 6, inclusive, together.

Savings of up to €35 million will be implemented from my group of Votes, which includes the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Central Statistics Office, CSO, by 2014. The focus of savings is primarily aimed at administrative efficiencies given that most of the expenditure across this group of Votes comprises administrative budgets. The total allocation for my Department in the Estimates set out in the budget book for 2011 is €25.062 million. This is an overall decrease of 15% — €4.394 million — on the 2010 Revised Estimates allocation. This includes a reduction of 15% in the administrative budget. Savings will be achieved through administrative and operational efficiencies as set out in the Department's action plan, which includes commitments with regard to staff numbers, budgets, procurement and shared services. In light of the nature of the work of the Department, the action plan is closely aligned with measures to improve the effectiveness of the Civil Service as a whole, in particular through enhanced mobility and shared service provision.

The outputs of the CSO are demand-driven to a large degree and respond to European Union and national statistical obligations. The CSO has also achieved operational savings and continues to prioritise work programmes in light of emerging budgets. The 2011 allocation for the CSO includes significant additional resources to provide for conducting the 2011 census of population. These resources will be reduced in 2012 and in subsequent years. The outputs of the law offices are also demand-driven. In addition to securing economies and increased operational efficiencies, the law offices have been exerting strong control in respect of expenditure on legal fees. This will be continued in the coming years.

With regard to the measures set out in the national recovery plan to enhance competitiveness, increase active labour market policy efforts and accelerate the rate of economic growth, my Department will support the implementation of these measures through the work of the relevant Cabinet committees and their associated senior officials groups.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: In respect of the proposed savings in the Department of the Taoiseach and its associated group of Votes, are reductions in staffing levels envisaged? The Taoiseach should outline the position in respect of both the Department and the other offices.

The annual report for 2009 for the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was published today. The DPP stated in the report that his office was very stretched and that in the event of an increase in the workload of the office something must give. Will the Taoiseach assure Members that no prosecution will not be pursued or that no prosecution will be delayed on foot of any savings that are to be made in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions? If a Garda file or files are presented to the office relating to the investigations the Garda has under way in the banking sector, can the Taoiseach assure Members that there will be no delay in the pursuit of or dealing with such files?

The Taoiseach: On the last matter raised by the Deputy, there has been close liaison between the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the investigating authorities and obviously they are a matter of major priority. It is in the public interest that they are dealt with as expeditiously as possible. Concern has been raised about the length of time it takes but there

is also a necessity to ensure there is due process and that nothing is said or done that would compromise the prospective prosecution of any persons arising from those investigations. Taking all of that into account, there is no reason to believe that these matters will not be given the utmost priority.

In regard to the savings in the Department, the Government, as I said, has already reduced its overall staff numbers by 10% since January 2008 and will continue to reduce numbers, while maintaining services, by a further 2% below the employment control framework target set by the Department of Finance by the end of 2014. That is the reference point for that question.

Since January 2008, some 35 staff have been redeployed to other departments and we will continue to facilitate actively the reallocation of staff to the areas of greatest need in accordance with the redeployment arrangements set out in the Croke Park agreement. The total budget for the Department was reduced between 2008 and 2010 by 31%, including a reduction of 11% in the administration budget. The administration budget Estimate for 2011 has been reduced by 15% over the 2010 Revised Estimate. Further savings over the period of the plan will be achieved through continued efficiencies and procurement practices, greater use of technology and shared services, energy efficiency programmes, the use of central framework agreements and the close monitoring of all expenditure.

Regarding the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, which was referred to by the Deputy, there is a pressing requirement for all public sector organisations to examine critically how they operate and seek to deliver greater efficiencies. Like other public service organisations, the DPP is subject to the decision of the Government to restrict recruitment and promotions. However, the office has taken steps to comply with the Government decision without adversely affecting front line prosecution services.

We will continue to work with officials from the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions and the Department of Finance to ensure the necessary resources continue to be available to the DPP to enable it to fully and effectively discharge its function.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: I note there is an allocation of €6.7 million for the Moriarty tribunal for 2011, which is a slight reduction on what was provided in 2010. Why is the allocation almost as high in 2011 as it was for 2010 if, as we have been told, it has now completed its public hearings? When does the Taoiseach expect the tribunal to complete its work and present its report?

The Taoiseach: We are still working to the schedule which applied in the last correspondence we received from the judge. We have received no correspondence since then that would change the situation.

On the allocation within subhead D, the provision relates to the running costs of the tribunal in 2011 and the costs which are estimated to arise in 2011 in regard to the completion of the tribunal's work. It is expected to include reporting costs and some element of the award of legal costs. As it is not possible to assess definitively the amount of legal costs which may be awarded by the tribunal or the timing of these awards, provision of approximately €6.7 million has been included. However, this is an estimate only. The total spend in 2010 to the end of November was €2.545 million.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Did I hear the Taoiseach correctly when he said in the block of Votes relevant to his Department that the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is included?

The Taoiseach: Yes.

Deputy Enda Kenny: In view of the comments made by the DPP, Mr. Hamilton, in respect of the difficulties his office is experiencing, if further savings are to be made there in 2011 can the Taoiseach confirm they will not be at the expense of it being able to deliver the service of which the DPP has spoken in the past? Those services are necessary if we are to have fairness and transparency in the justice areas with which the DPP deals.

The Taoiseach: As I said in response to the third issue raised by Deputy Gilmore when he was asking supplementary questions, we will work with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, which is a public sector organisation. The issues that apply to other offices, which are having to make these changes and adapt to these circumstances, also apply to the DPP's office. The number of staff in the office's directing and solicitors divisions have remained relatively unchanged in the past two years. Most of the savings have been made in the administration division. This has allowed the office to achieve savings and efficiencies while preserving front line prosecution services to meet the needs of its workload. The Department of Finance recently sanctioned the temporary recruitment of up to four solicitors to cover for staff on maternity leave in 2011. It has also sanctioned the recruitment of three temporary solicitors to deal with files relating to the banking and financial sectors. This will enable the DPP to assign existing experienced staff to the banking files, while using the temporary appointments to fill posts in other areas.

These issues are arising all the time in the present circumstances. The changes in staff numbers in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in recent years have taken place in the context of the solid staffing base that was put in place in the office in 2007. Following a review of staffing requirements at that time, the Minister for Finance approved 28 new permanent posts and one contract post for the office. Some 21 of those posts related to legal and professional grades, which was a reflection of the increase in the volume and complexity of the work being undertaken by the office. Officials in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Finance are making an ongoing effort to work together to ensure the necessary resources are available.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I thank the Taoiseach for that response. The Director of Public Prosecutions made two important points. He said that if the current trend continues, "something will have to give". He also said he is considering extending to serious cases of sexual abuse the facility available to him when people look for a reason a prosecution was not pursued in serious cases. In his response, the Taoiseach outlined the number of staff who have been recruited in the legal and personnel sections of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions in recent years. Based on those figures, is the Taoiseach happy that something will not have to give? In other words, if there is an increase in correspondence or contact with the office about the service it provides, is the Taoiseach reasonably happy that the office will be able to meet that demand?

The Taoiseach: I have outlined the context of the situation as things stand. Like any organisation, I am sure it would be helpful for this organisation if other staff were available. We have to work within the constraints that apply to us all. I recognise the importance of the independence of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. We need to work in a realistic way to address certain issues. As the Deputy is aware, these matters arise on an ongoing basis. The office is working despite the reductions that have taken place, which have been primarily on the administrative side, as I have said. The nature of the work done by the office means that administrative people are important, just as the staff in the professional and other grades are important. Everyone has a job to do. The office will have to try to work within the constraints

under which we are all having to operate without affecting its ability to do its job. I am sure it is doing a very good job in difficult circumstances. As I said in my opening reply:

The outputs of the law offices are also demand-driven. In addition to securing economies and increased operational efficiencies, the law offices have been exerting strong control in respect of expenditure on legal fees. This will be continued in the coming years.

There is increased work. There are substantial fees to be paid for that work. One has to ensure it is paid for at rates that can be afforded by the taxpayer.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Question No. 5 relates to the elements of the Government's national recovery plan which come under the Department of the Taoiseach or agencies under it. Does the Taoiseach have any information in his brief on what those elements of the Government's national plan are in so far as they affect his Department or agencies under its control and the arrangements being made for those elements to be implemented?

The Taoiseach: My Department has to play its part in achieving the overall expenditure reductions required by the National Recovery Plan 2011-14. I was making the point that a large portion of the budgets of the offices under the group of Votes for which I have responsibility are administrative in character and, quite properly, have been taking reductions. They are making a contribution as one might expect the Taoiseach's office to do in giving a leadership role in that respect. Whatever has been sought has been delivered on.

The delivery of front line services to the public will not be affected as a result of the introduction of the cost saving measures. An action plan is in place to achieve that and to use the redeployment mechanism that is available where there are critical service pressures. We have been able to contribute in that regard, with some 35 staff members from the Department of the Taoiseach being moved elsewhere where that was considered helpful. The Department also continues to do the job it is expected to do. There is a further 15% cut this year within the Department, so that is giving a lead as one would expect.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I do not know whether the Taoiseach has had the same opportunity as other Deputies in the interludes from this House at weekends to learn from constituents how they feel about the situation unfolding, particularly the first real outworking of the so-called national recovery plan, namely, the budget and the impact it is having already on the lives of ordinary people, along with all the other measure signalled from January to March, etc.

I can share with him, however, my experience of the anger, concern and fear, the emotions most in evidence among the people I have met since the House adjourned last Friday. For them, the so-called national recovery plan is, indeed, a national impoverishment plan so devastating is the effect it will have on their lives. As he has indicated on a number of occasions here that €14.5 billion has been taken out of the economy over the past two years, how does the Taoiseach rationalise that taking another €15 billion out of the real economy over the next few years will make a difference when the first €14.5 billion clearly has not impacted in any way in terms of turning the tide? How is it that by doubling that figure and taking another €15 billion out of the economy we are going to see a change, because none is evident? Unemployment remains at a very high level and emigration is growing — hence the impact on the live register — in addition to the bank deficit debacle and the range of other issues presenting at this time. None of this is being corrected, it seems, by any of the measures that have been taken so far. How does the so-called national recovery plan impact in relation to the programme for Government? What are the Taoiseach's views of the comments this morning on "Morning Ireland" by the Minister for Finance when he talked about silly post-election political prog-

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

rammes? In my view and that of many listeners, he was referring to the Fianna Fáil-Green Party programme for Government after the last election. Does the Taoiseach agree with the Minister that these were silly programmes?

The Taoiseach: All of us interact with the public on an ongoing basis, regardless whether one is at home or travelling throughout the country. One of the big pluses is the degree of certainty it provides for people in terms of what is envisaged for the coming year. The uncertainty before the budget and some of the commentary made upon it beforehand spooked people as to what was involved. While it seeks a contribution from all sections of society, given the importance of putting our public finances back in order, it also provides us with the means for recovery, having stabilised the economy this year following a contraction of 7.5% the previous year. The budgetary strategy for 2010 came in on target, with expenditure broadly within target and revenues up €500 million on what was expected. We still have a deficit. In other words, the difference between what we spend and what we take in must be reduced.

The Deputy's suggestion, which is implicit in the premise of his question, that we can continue to implement budgets wherein the level of expenditure exceeds the level of revenue coming in is not possible in current circumstances in this or any other country. The false option which the Deputy may be indicating is not available at all. The recovery plan is predicated on reducing expenditure, increasing taxation and promoting growth. That is what we will continue to do, as provided for in the plan. On the suggestions put forward by the Deputy's party, I fundamentally disagree with them in terms of prospects for growth. The suggestion that 80% of the €15 billion could be made up from increased taxes would probably be the biggest jobs killer of all. I do not agree either with the Labour Party suggestion that 50% of that sum should be raised by way of taxes, with the other 50% being raised by way of cuts.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Labour Party recommended less tax cuts than the Government implemented.

The Taoiseach: Exactly. The Labour Party suggested more tax.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Government did more in relation to tax than we were recommending.

The Taoiseach: That is not correct.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It is correct.

The Taoiseach: I have read the Labour Party documentation. I would have thought Deputy Gilmore had read the document presented by him.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The Taoiseach should read again what it says in regard to income tax.

The Taoiseach: I will bring into the House tomorrow and read what it says into the record.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Bring it on.

The Taoiseach: It is clear what the Labour Party's tax take is, which is €2.5 billion.

Deputy Seán Sherlock: The Taoiseach has misinterpreted it.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is obviously encouraged by the media commentary on his defence of the indefensible here last week when he employed an old talent he had buried for some time, namely, his usual bluster. While that may have given a bit of lift to Fianna Fail backbenchers, it has done absolutely nothing for the wider public or to assuage the real fears of Opposition voices in this House. Contrary to the Taoiseach's view that the question I posed implies "sit still and everything will be fine", nothing could be further from the truth. The Taoiseach has not answered any of the questions I put to him.

The Taoiseach referred to having read other parties documents. Without question, I am confident that I can stand over the potential impact of the stimulus package we have commended in our recommendations. The Government has not provided a stimulus package on job retention or creation. The national impoverishment plan which the Government is out-working and under which it introduced with some trumpeting last week the first budget—

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask Deputy Ó Caoláin not to lose sight of the fact that this is Question Time.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: We are obviously going to disagree. The sad reality is that the Taoiseach has again demonstrated a closed mind to other ideas because they come with respective party political tags, which is most regrettable. I again ask the Taoiseach to reconsider the position he is taking because there is no evidence, despite what he has endeavoured to sell here this afternoon, that taking money out of the economy will arrest the decline and lead to recovery. It cannot and will not. I again ask the Taoiseach to respond to the reference by the Minister for Finance this morning on "Morning Ireland" to the programme for Government between Fianna Fáil and the Green Party as a silly post-election political programme.

The Taoiseach: That was not his position. He was speaking generally about the roles of programmes for Government over the past 15 to 20 years.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: There were all silly. Is that right?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should allow the Taoiseach to continue.

The Taoiseach: No. If the Deputy would like my answer, I can give him an answer.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: That is what the Taoiseach is saying now and that he was referring to them all.

The Taoiseach: I am not. If the Deputy wants me to answer the question—

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am listening to the Taoiseach.

The Taoiseach: We are not in a kangaroo court where a preconceived decision is made.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I would hope not.

The Taoiseach: So would I. I would love to see the Deputy trying to bring me into one. All programmes for government are subject to the budgetary circumstances. I refer him to every one of them, including the rainbow coalition programme and the Fianna Fáil-Labour Party programme. All commitments in every programme are subject to overall budgetary requirements because, otherwise, there is no reality to them and that is why those provisions are in place in every programme.

[The Taoiseach.]

Second, the counterargument I am putting is the Deputy is saying the €15 billion should be left in and we should run another deficit of €18.8 billion next year.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Not at all.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy, therefore, is saying he would not take this amount out. If he will not take it out one way, what way will he take this out? Is it going to be tax?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is the one who said he had read our document—

The Taoiseach: I am trying to figure out the Deputy's position.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: —and he has had it for several weeks.

The Taoiseach: It still does not make sense to me. That is why I am asking questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: It makes sense.

The Taoiseach: If Sinn Féin is not taking €15 billion out in expenditure, is it taking it out in tax or is it taking it out at all? Will it be taken out of one bank and put in another? Is the party bringing it down somewhere else and putting it somewhere.?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Does Deputy Cowen want me to answer a Taoiseach's question?

The Taoiseach: What does the Deputy want me to do with the deficit?

An Ceann Comhairle: Let us not have a breakdown of normal arrangements.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I agree with the Taoiseach that I would make an eminently better job of it than he is and that he is not capable of answering the questions being asked.

The Taoiseach: I am answering the questions but I am clearly upsetting the Deputy.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I would be very happy to take Taoiseach's questions with the Ceann Comhairle's permission.

The Taoiseach: Rather than putting the questions, I will answer them as well.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: If the Taoiseach is lost — and clearly he is — I would be very happy to take up the position.

The Taoiseach: Do I not welcome the formation of that group?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The one thing the Taoiseach can be sure is he will not be in it. Do not worry.

The Taoiseach: That is for sure. The Deputy should not worry about. I will not contaminate the Deputy's group with my presence.

If the Deputy is saying we should leave the €15 billion in, then one is talking about continuing with the deficits we have. It is clearly the case that there is no access to funds available to this country on that basis and, therefore, by July 2011, when the Deputy goes up to Monaghan for his weekend sojourn after being in the House — if he is still here after the next election — he

will be have to explain to his constituents how Sinn Féin will get them their social welfare payments even though we have suddenly run out of money but he will be able to say to them “But do not worry, Sinn Féin has a plan”. I would love to know what that plan will be.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The running out of money——

The Taoiseach: Sinn Féin was not short of funds before. It has very creative ways of finding money.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: That is so ridiculous.

The Taoiseach: It is not. The next way one closes it——

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Government parties have presided over the loss of countless billions of euro and they are the people who are going to strap the deficit with a debt for years and years to come.

An Ceann Comhairle: Can we have the Taoiseach without interruption please?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Give us a break. The Taoiseach has no credibility

The Taoiseach: The Deputy cannot take this because Sinn Féin does not have a credible alternative.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: We certainly do

The Taoiseach: If he is not taking €15 billion out in expenditure, he will have to take it out in taxation. We have, therefore,——

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: This is about what the Government will do.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy has suggested I have the wrong proposals. I have explained to him in the House over a number of weeks why I think ours have a better chance than his. He said, “No, we would not take it out” and then he said, “We would take it out”. When I ask him how he would so, he is not prepared to say. The bottom line is in Sinn Féin’s documentation there is an 80% adjustment through taxation and a 20% adjustment through expenditure.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: No, what the Taoiseach is missing out——

The Taoiseach: That is what it says. I am not missing anything. That is the basic point and that is the biggest jobs killer of all.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: We propose the investment of in excess of €7 billion in a stimulus package over three and a half years. The Taoiseach should think about that because it is the one thought he has not had and it is the one that could make a critical difference to job creation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is imparting information. He ought to ask questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is reversing our roles.

Regulatory Reform

7. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach if he will make a statement on the publication of the recent OECD report on Better Regulation in Ireland [45949/10]

8. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding the implementation of the 2001 OECD Report on Regulatory Reform; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45950/10]

9. **Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin** asked the Taoiseach the position regarding the publication on 2 November 2010, of the OECD Report on Better Regulation in Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46968/10]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 7 to 9, inclusive, together.

I have outlined to the House on many occasions progress on the implementation of the OECD's 2001 report on regulatory reform in Ireland and the Government's 2004 White Paper on regulation. The better regulation unit in my Department is tasked with driving and supporting key projects across Government. In this context, it chairs the senior officials' group on economic regulation which oversaw the preparation of the Government's statement on economic regulation. Following the publication of that statement, I chaired the first meeting of the annual regulatory forum on 26 February last. The regulatory liaison group has already met twice this year.

Relevant Departments have been working closely with regulators in recent months to stress-test regulatory frameworks to ensure that they are sufficiently robust to be able to respond to major shocks and changes in their sectors and in the wider economy. A number of potential scenarios have already been identified in the case of each sector and it is expected that the Government will receive a report on the stress testing exercises shortly.

On 2 November last, the OECD published its Review of Better Regulation Systems and Processes in Ireland. The report is available at www.betterregulation.ie and copies have also been placed in the Oireachtas Library. The review was conducted as part of a larger project funded by the EU Commission and encompassing the original 15 members of the EU. It provides a comprehensive analysis of regulatory capacity in Ireland and the processes underpinning it. These processes include regulatory impact analysis, RIA; administrative burden reduction and approaches to the enforcement of regulation; and our approaches to the negotiation and transposition of EU legislation from a better regulation perspective.

The OECD notes that, in many areas, Ireland compares well with its European counterparts but suggests that further efforts will be necessary to improve competitiveness and contribute to economic recovery. Ireland's input into the recent EU Commission/OECD review was overseen by the senior officials group on economic regulation, which has now been tasked with developing appropriate actions to respond to the OECD's findings and recommendations.

The better regulation unit has an ongoing role in supporting Departments conducting regulatory impact analysis on legislative proposals. The importance of this function was highlighted by the OECD in its recent report. While good progress has been made, it is clear there are still problems regarding the quality of RIAs produced by Departments and the extent to which Departments comply with RIA requirements relating to draft EU legislation and significant statutory instruments. This will be among the issues which the senior officials group will look at as part of the response to the OECD's latest report.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: These questions relate to the OECD report on better regulation. Last night we saw on our television screens an example of no regulation. The "Prime Time Investigates" programme showed horrific examples of the way in which home care companies are recruiting workers with no training, no Garda vetting and no checking of references. It appears there is little or no inspection of what is taking place. A policy decision by this Government to wind down services being provided through the public health authorities and the HSE

cut the amount of home help that is available to families caring for older people. A new private sector in home care provision has developed which is not regulated and parts of it, as we saw last night, has serious questions to answer. When will there be regulation of home care provision to deal with the horrific examples of abuse of elderly people which we saw on our television screens last night?

An Ceann Comhairle: It sounds like a question for the Minister for Health and Children.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It is about regulation.

The Taoiseach: The supplementary documentation I have relates to the OECD report, which is a more general regulatory report.

I did not see the programme last night but I am aware from reports about it that there are clearly issues which are unacceptable and must be investigated and examined closely. The vast majority of services in this area are supplied by the HSE and HSE personnel but, as the Deputy said, a home care package programme has also been brought forward. There are many reputable service providers in that area but clearly some are unscrupulous and have not done their job properly. There is a commitment to look at this area, in respect of the public provision directly from the HSE and in respect of those who are involved in providing services through the private sector. All of that will have to be examined as a matter of urgency and I welcome the fact that this will be done.

In respect of the question on regulation, providing guidelines and making sure that standards and access to these services are more uniform across the country, I noted what the Minister of State with responsibility for elder people had to say this morning about guidelines coming forward in the New Year, as a result of much work done on the issue recently, and I look forward to those guidelines being brought forward quickly.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The problem is the huge gap between the theory and the practice. We have an official report from the OECD dealing with regulation, and then we have what is happening on the ground at a practical level. The reason we have the problem described so clearly last night on “Prime Time Investigates” is that this Government has made it more difficult for families to care for older people. There have been reductions in home help provision and home help hours, and people have difficulties in getting——

An Ceann Comhairle: This is the “foot in the door” syndrome.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: ——the carer’s allowance. I also heard what the Minister of State had to say this morning. She spoke about guidelines being introduced, but she was not able to say when the statutory regulation will be brought in. I understand that some work is being done in preparing legislation. Can the Taoiseach tell us when there will be statutory regulation of home care services?

The Taoiseach: We are moving into specific territory, but to be as helpful as I can, I do not accept that the Government has been seeking to make it more difficult. For example, the supervisory function of HIQA has been a good introduction for the health services in general and has led to a more objective uniform standard being provided. There has been a great increase over time in the provision of home help and carers. We are seeking to maintain front line services to the greatest extent we can, but there is a budgetary reality that we must try to deal with. We certainly hope that these community based services can continue to be provided to the greatest extent possible. I do not have that information in front of me now. It is true that it has become more widely available, and that is a good thing. There is obviously pressure

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on budgets everywhere, given the current situation. However, I believe that this level of provision will be as good as we have seen in recent years, as a result of efforts made in other areas to find savings. That is as it should be.

Entitlements for carers have remained for those who have other sources of welfare benefit, which was an innovation that was brought forward. We brought about a situation that changed considerably from the previous administration where carer's allowance became the highest social welfare payment in the code. These are all indications of the policies put in place that show we were trying to assist those people who are caring for their families, where it is appropriate, in community-based settings or home settings. That is as it should be.

Statutory regulation has to be examined as a matter of urgency. Putting in place guidelines as a first step to invoking statutory policies needs to be done in any event. In terms of an immediate response, whatever can be done as part of a wider approach of preparing statutory instruments and so on should be done. The investigation by the HSE, which will cover everyone who is in receipt of such services and which will presumably take some time, should inform us about the best way forward.

As Deputies know, the spectrum of need varies from case to case. We started with basic home help services — good-neighbour type services — which were provided in a flexible way and were suitable for those who require care and their families. We need to make sure there is proportionality in whatever we try to do. We must provide the necessary protections, but let us not have a system that would prevent people from——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: One final supplementary, Deputy Ó Caoláin.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Go raibh maith agat.

The Taoiseach: ——taking on work in a helpful way. We must make sure the work is done on a neighbourly basis.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: A minor filibuster.

The OECD report published on 2 November, which was welcomed by the Taoiseach, stated: “Regulatory as well as policy failures were a fundamental factor underlying the downturn”. Is the Taoiseach aware that in 2006 the same OECD stated in a report on house prices that the most likely scenario was that prices would level out or decline slightly? In 2008, it went further and stated: “Much of the exceptionally large increase in house prices can be justified by Ireland's strong income growth, population expansion and the rising share of younger households”. Clearly, there is a major discrepancy between the position of the OECD in 2006 and 2008 and its position in 2010. Would the Taoiseach like to comment on that discrepancy and on the role of the OECD in helping to create an illusion, a mirage?

The Taoiseach: I do not think it played any role in creating an illusion or mirage. What the Deputy's point shows graphically, as I have said myself on other occasions, is that international commentary in previous years did not foresee the scope, depth or severity of the financial crisis that came upon us in the autumn of 2008 and that we have been seeking to deal with since. In the planning that was undertaken, such worst-case scenarios were not contemplated as something to be prepared for. The OECD was not alone in that regard. The IMF, which deals with situations of crisis in economies, whether fiscal or otherwise, itself did not include that scenario in its planning.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: It certainly did not. The Taoiseach is quite right.

The Taoiseach: Not very many people, if anyone, did. There are many who, with hindsight, point to this, that or the other to suggest that they were saying it all along but that was certainly not the case in the years preceding the crisis. There were risks but a confluence of the realisation of all of those risks was not regarded as being worthy of short odds. The international and domestic problems that hit us subsequently were very severe and we are still contending with them. The OECD was not on its own in saying that, and its having said that does not take away from other good work it has done, including the work we are considering in these questions.

Priority Questions

Departmental Funding

28. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will provide details of the implications of Budget 2011 for his Department; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46336/10]

30. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on whether the impending Budget cuts to rural services will lead to isolation in rural communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46337/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 28 and 30 together. As Deputy Feighan is aware, in the current economic circumstances we are faced with difficult decisions. The Government has considered several measures in the context of the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 to provide the basis for a sustainable approach to the current financial situation. Throughout Government, our approach has been to do this in as balanced a way as possible. Taking into account the recent Supplementary Estimate and the full year funding associated with functions transferred into and out of the Department during 2010, gross funding for my Department is reduced by a total of 13% in 2011, current funding by 6% and capital funding by 28%. Within this context, my primary concern is to make every effort to ensure that the daily front line services provided with funding from my Department are protected, especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities.

In our current financial circumstances it is clear that objectives must be pursued with less resources than previously. However, we will continue to strive to achieve good outcomes and value for money notwithstanding these constraints. Every saving that can be made from cutting back on overheads will be pursued such that the urban, rural, Gaeltacht and island communities we serve retain, to the greatest extent possible, the services that have been developed in partnership with them over the years. Different areas throughout my Department's Vote will experience different levels of adjustment next year. For example, the reduction in current funding proposed under the national drugs strategy for my Department next year will be some 1.2% and I am confident that front line services provided in this area will not be adversely affected.

In terms of rural development, the 2011 proposed allocation will provide for increased investment in the rural economy. Significantly advancing the roll out of the Leader programme will be a key priority for the Department in 2011 and this is reflected in a substantially increased allocation for the programme next year. The programme continues to play a key role in enhancing the economic potential of the rural community and in creating jobs and improving the quality of life in rural areas. Overall, Deputy Feighan should note that details as to the manner

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in which the funding will be allocated between various programmes will be published in due course in the Revised Estimates Volume.

Deputy Frank Feighan: While overall the Department received a 13% cut in funding in the budget, some areas have been especially targeted. Does the Minister accept there has been a 94% cut in the CLÁR programme, which provides funding for infrastructure in disadvantaged areas, and that the programme has been more or less abolished? Is it the Minister's intention to withdraw the programme entirely? The budget allocation of €500,000 does not represent a credible plan.

The Minister is responsible for Cabinet co-ordination of the drugs strategy. Will the Minister provide details of the cuts to drug funding made in all Departments? Current spending is down 7%. I realise the Minister stated this reduction is less for front line services but I am concerned that this amounts to juggling with figures. What was the allocation under the national drugs strategy last year? What will this figure be in 2011? Is the Minister concerned with the current funding cut——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: There are several questions for the Minister to answer. I will call the Deputy again.

Deputy Pat Carey: Regarding the overall spend, there is very little capital spending in our Department and, in some cases, little or nothing. For example, an allocation of €3 million was made in the capital budget under the national drugs strategy this year. As it turned out, not all of that was used and some of it was transferred to current spending towards the end of the year to meet demands in that area.

I refer to CLÁR funding. For a variety of reasons, not least of which is the fact that local authorities have found it difficult during the past year to propose programmes that would qualify for CLÁR, a small amount of money has been left over. Unfortunately, this will not be spent because local authorities and other community groups have been unable to access the matching funding.

Spending in the subhead related to the drugs area has been reduced on the current side by between 1.3% and 1.7%. I chose this course of action deliberately but the overall average cut or reduction has been approximately 2.7%.

Both the local and regional drugs taskforces have been advised in the past week of their allocation for the coming year. They are in discussions with the Department at the moment. I have requested that any reductions which arise are made through further savings in the area of administration, overheads and travel. The last place I wish to see further reductions is in services targeted at the front line, especially at vulnerable clients, such as those available in the drugs milieu.

Current spending this year in the drugs area is €32.79 million with €1 million allocated to capital. Although I do not have the precise figures, the comparison for last year was a reduction of approximately 2% overall in tackling the drugs problem.

Deputy Frank Feighan: The budget was designed to be vague. Many incendiary devices and booby traps will go off in the coming months. Unfortunately, ordinary citizens must pay. They do not understand what is coming down the line because the Minister has not highlighted or printed it. Does the Minister not accept that if some moneys were left over from €10 million, the 94% cut equates to €9.5 million on the CLÁR scheme and surely that is grossly in excess of what was left over?

The budget has been criticised as an especially anti-rural budget with cuts to rural transport, a hike in school transport costs, cuts to carers for the disabled and blind and cuts to CLÁR and RAPID programmes. Is the Minister concerned that this budget is effectively anti-rural and that people living in rural areas have been hit disproportionately by this budget?

Deputy Pat Carey: There are no incendiary devices. This project has been deliberately worked out and much of it was done in consultation with the sector. Contrary to Deputy Feighan's remarks, the budget for rural communities has been, in fact, increased significantly for the coming year. The outturn for this year is €48 million and it will be €60 million for the Leader programme next year. A great deal of work can and is being done and will be done under this heading. I do not agree with the remarks. The Leader programme benefits not only mainland communities but the island communities. Comhar na nOileáin and MFG are two Leader companies that do remarkably good work in this area. I do not agree that anything approaching the level of reduction insinuated has been applied to rural communities. The reverse is the case.

National Drugs Strategy

29. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs further to Parliamentary Questions Nos. 141,143, and 144 of 24 Samhain 2010, his views regarding the data supplied by the Health Research Board showing the high level of drugs use here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46334/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: As indicated in my previous reply, the data to which Deputy Wall refers is primarily drawn from the 2010 annual report of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, with the Health Research Board being the national agency through which the Irish input is channelled.

For the reasons outlined, I emphasise the need for caution when using data to derive cross-European comparisons. Also, the Irish input on heroin is based on a study published by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs, NACD, in December 2009. As indicated at the time due to several technical factors associated with the capture or recapture methodology used the figures were regarded as an overestimate of the opiate-using population here. The NACD is currently undertaking research aimed at identifying an appropriate estimate model for use in Ireland, taking the data sources available into consideration.

I accept that heroin use remains a major problem in our country. All the indications are that, while the use of heroin is relatively stable in the Dublin region, it has become more widely dispersed throughout the country, especially in the major cities and in towns throughout Leinster. The data under reference also emphasises the welcome increase in the number of people who are in receipt of treatment to deal with their drugs problems. As I pointed out previously, new opiate substitution services have opened this year in Cork, Tralee and Wexford, and these will be followed shortly by facilities in Kilkenny, Waterford, Limerick, Dundalk and Drogheda.

Deputy Jack Wall: I thank the Minister for his reply. I resubmitted this question because I believed the Minister's reply to my questions in November had watered down the extent of drug use. When it is claimed figures given should not be taken as absolute, it still should not take from the fact that use of drugs such as heroin, cocaine, cannabis, etc in Ireland is relatively high. We saw how in the past several days the death of one person, a sad and unfortunate individual who was prominent in radio and television, led to reams of newspaper columns on the circumstances surrounding his death. Accordingly, we must not water down the survey's results but highlight them to youngsters about the dangers of drug use.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have a question?

Deputy Jack Wall: Will the Minister ensure a positive review is made of these figures for this purpose?

Deputy Pat Carey: I have no intention of watering down any findings on drug use. The drugs problem is serious. Even if Ireland did not feature in any league tables, as far as I am concerned, any abuse of drugs is an abuse too much.

The report, published on 10 November, states 55% of problem opiate users were in opiate treatment in 2007, the last year for which we have an estimate. In Dublin, the average waiting time for a substitution treatment programme is between two weeks and six weeks. Those living outside Dublin can wait between one month and two years. Since I was appointed, I have concentrated on improving these times in Leinster with the Health Service Executive.

It should also be noted from the report that up to 30% of those entering treatment reported injecting use, while 22% of new cases reported injecting drug use. The proportion of injector cases has decreased since 2003, however. In 2007, 74% of drug related deaths, such as overdose poisoning, were due to opiates alone or opiates in conjunction with other drugs. There was a steady rise in heroin seizures between 2004 and 2007. At its peak in 2007, there were 1,698 heroin seizures, while in 2009 it came to 1,455, a 14% reduction.

The general population survey reported 1.7% of adults used cocaine in the year prior to the survey and that the percentage was higher among young adults, 3.1%, and men, 2.3%. Ireland is ranked fifth highest in the EU for cocaine use. In 2008, of those who entered treatment, up to 17%, 761 people, reported cocaine as their primary use. What really must be examined for the future is the number of cocaine deaths which increased from ten in 2003 to 63 in 2007 while the number of seizures rose from 566 to 1,749. However, it decreased significantly in 2009.

Deputy Jack Wall: These are the figures we want in the public domain. While the Minister has read them out here, I want to see them in every health centre, doctors' clinic, GAA grounds and other public places to highlight the dangers of drugs. Alternatives to drugs must be provided through better recreational facilities and so forth. We have some hope if we can reduce the demand for drugs; if not, we will have a battle at all times.

On several occasions in the House, I have raised the danger of cocaethylene, the chemical caused by mixing alcohol and cocaine. Unfortunately, over the past several days we saw how this has emerged again. However, the Department and other drug abuse agencies have not highlighted the danger of mixing alcohol and cocaine. It is important those who use cocaine and mix it with alcohol are aware and warned of these dangers.

Deputy Pat Carey: I agree with Deputy Wall that this information should be provided in the public domain such as doctors' surgeries. Interestingly, when I recently launched a programme for a drugs taskforce I was informed it was all very fine having such information in doctors' surgeries but it needs to be in places where young people recreate such as GAA clubs and so on. It is all very fine for professional practitioners to have access to this information but an in-your-face approach is needed. There are examples of effective uses of such an approach across the country.

Question No. 30 answered with Questions No. 28.

School Patronage

31. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the Irish Human Rights Commission's discussion paper on education and religion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46338/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Mary Alexandra White): The discussion paper on education and religion was published by the Irish Human Rights Commission, an independent statutory body, on 27 November last. It has sought views and comments on the issues from individuals or organisations by the end of next January. When it has had an opportunity to consider any such comments or views, it will submit a report to the Government.

In advance of consideration of that report by, in the first instance, the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills and, subsequently, by the Government, the Deputy will appreciate that comment by me would not be appropriate. I encourage members of the public and organisations with an interest in these matters to make their views known to the commission.

Deputy Frank Feighan: Has the Minister of State had discussions with the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills on this matter?

Deputy Mary Alexandra White: No. It is appropriate the Irish Human Rights Commission feels free as an independent statutory body to conduct its work as it sees fit. It would be inappropriate for me to comment until such time as the consultation phase is over.

Deputy Frank Feighan: Is there a concern that schools may eventually have to adopt different practices than those currently in place? How will this affect schools from a practical perspective?

Deputy Mary Alexandra White: The Deputy will appreciate that question is more appropriate to the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, as it is more relevant to her Department's remit.

Straitéis don Ghaeilge

32. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** den an Aire Gnóthaí Pobail; Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil glactha ag an Rialtas leis an Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge, na socruithe leis an phlean a chur i bhfeidhm, costas measta bliantúil na straitéise, an fhostaíocht bhreise a bheidh i gceist; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [46339/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: Ghlac an Rialtas leis an straitéis 20-bliain don Ghaeilge ag a gcuinníú ar 30 Samhain agus táthar ag súil go mbeidh an cháipéis foilsithe an tseachtain roimh Nollaig. Tá an straitéis bunaithe ar ráiteas an Rialtais i leith na Gaeilge 2006, nuair a dhearbhaigh an Rialtas a thacaíocht d'fhorbairt agus do chaomhnú na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta. Tá réimse leathan gníomhaíochtaí sonraithe sa straitéis i réimsí an oideachais, na Gaeltachta, an teaghlach agus na seirbhíse poiblí. Táthar ag súil go mbeidh dul chun cinn á dhéanamh ina leith seo ar bhonn céimnithe ó thús 2011 ar aghaidh.

Díreofar i gcéim bhunaithe na straitéise ar dhaoine a chur ar an eolas faoin straitéis, ar na príomhbhearta tosaíochta a bhunú, ar na struchtúir eagraíochtúla agus oibríochtúla a bhunú agus ar na pleananna oibríochtúla ó na gníomhaireachtaí poiblí forfheidhmiúcháin a fháil.

Tá sé beartaithe faoin straitéis go mbunófar aonad straitéise i mo Roinnse chun tús áite a thabhairt do chur i bhfeidhm na straitéise. Beidh an t-aonad straitéise freagrach as maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar an bpróiseas pleanála straitéise agus ar phleananna oibríochta ó na comhlachtaí forfheidhmithe, chomh maith lena cinntiú go ndéanfar feidhmiú tras-rannach ar thionscnaimh. Tá na céimeanna tosaigh á dtógáil chun an tAonad sin a chur ar bun.

Chomh maith leis sin, tá obair tosaithe i mo Roinnse ar dhréacht-reachtaíocht a ullmhú chun Údarás na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta a bhunú agus chun sainmhíniú nua do cheantair Ghaeltachta a rianú.

[Deputy Pat Carey.]

Maidir le ceist maoinithe na Straitéise, beidh gá le cur chuige níos spriocdhírithé agus níos straitéisí i dtaobh cur chun cinn agus buaná na teanga. Cuirfidh an Straitéis creatlach níos fearr ar fáil chun é seo a dhéanamh trí na hacmhainní atá ar fáil dúinn a atreorú i dtreo na réimsí atá sonraithe faoin Straitéis. Tá soláthar de €1.5m curtha ar fáil do 2011 i gcóir na Straitéise agus creidim go mbeidh sé seo dóthanach don chéad bhliain de chur i bhfeidhm na Straitéise de bharr go mbeidh an obair dírithe go príomha ar phleanáil, ar reachtaíocht agus ar athea-grú struchtúr.

Ó thaobh na fostaíochta de, beidh gá féachaint ar na hacmhainní atá ar fáil dúinn sna cúinsí reatha agus na deiseanna atá ann chun an tairbhe is fearr agus is féidir a bhaint astu chun fostaíocht a chruthú. I gcás na Gaeltachta, leanfar le ról a bheith ag Údarás na Gaeltachta maidir le cruthú fostaíochta agus forbairt fiontraíochta sna blianta atá amach romhainn.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Aontaímid go léir go bhfuil an straitéis tábhachtach ach tá cur i bhfeidhm na straitéise níos tábhachtaí fós. Tá ceisteanna bunúsacha, tábhachtacha le freagairt ag an Aire. Má amharcanann duine ar chaiteachas na Roinne don bhliain seo agus don bhliain seo chugainn agus na blianta amach romhainn, tá titim thubaisteach ann. In 2007, bhí €112 milliún ag an Roinn agus an bhliain seo chugainn, tá €40 milliún, beagnach an rud a dúirt an Bord Snip Nua, a dúirt €36 milliún. Nach n-aontaíonn an tAire liom go mbeidh sé an-deacair ar fad freagracht a ghlacadh ar straitéis na Gaeilge agus ar rudaí eile a bhaineann leis an Ghaeltacht nuair atá titim chomh tubaisteach sin ar an chaiteachas atá á chur fáil don Roinn sa bhliain seo chugainn agus na blianta ina dhiaidh sin? Níl sin dodhéanta. Tá an Rialtas ag cleasaíocht mar níl sé i gceist aige ach an straitéis a chur amach nuair nach bhfuil sé ar intinn aige í a chur i bhfeidhm.

Deputy Pat Carey: Is fiú tabhairt san áireamh go bhfuil soláthar iomlán de €36 milliún curtha ar fáil i meastacháin na Roinne i leith fhorbairt na Gaeilge agus na Gaeltachta i rith 2011. Ní áiríonn an Teachta an maoiniú de €9.4 milliún atá le tabhairt do na hoileáin, a bhfuil formhór acu sa Ghaeltacht, nó an maoiniú d'Fhoras na Gaeilge, nó an maoiniú substaintiúil a chuireann an Stát ar fáil do no meáin chraoltóireachta Gaeilge ar nós TG4 agus Raidió na Gaeltachta go háirithe. I gcomhthéacs na ndeacrachtaí eacnamaíochta faoi láthair, léiríonn an infheistíocht shuntasach seo tiomantas leanúnach an Rialtais i dtaca leis na hacmhainní cuí a sholáthar chun an Ghaeilge a chothú agus a chaomhnú.

Maidir le cúrsaí Gaeilge agus Gaeltachta i gcoitinne, tá comhaontú ginearálta ann go bhfuil gá le cur chuige níos spriocdhírithé, mar a dúirt mé cheana, i dtaca le hinfeistíocht acmhainní sna réimsí seo.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Luaigh an tAire forbairt Gaeltachta agus oileáin ansin. Nach n-aontaíonn an tAire liom go bhfuil gearradh siar de 42% ann ar an chaiteachas Gaeltachta agus oileáin don bhliain seo chugainn, gearradh siar uafásach níos mó ná aon Roinn eile? Nuair a amharcaim ar Údarás na Gaeltachta, a mbeidh cúraimí breise air maidir le straitéis na Gaeilge agus cúraimí fiontraíochta, tá titim sa chaiteachas ansin ó €22 milliún in 2007 go dtí €6 milliún an bhliain seo chugainn. Deir an tAire go mbeidh dualgais bhreise ar an údarás. Caidé mar is féidir leis an údarás na dualgais bhreise sin a chomhlíonadh nuair atá titim mar sin sa chaiteachas? Níl sé indéanta agus ní chreideann éinne é. Tá an Rialtas ag cleasaíocht leis an Ghaeilge, leis an teanga, leis an Ghaeltachta agus leis na hoileáin.

Deputy Pat Carey: Ba mhaith liom cur in iúl don Teach go raibh an chuid is mó den chaiteachas a bhí ag an Roinn le blianta beaga anuas sa chuntas chaipitil a bhain le chéibheanna, leis

na hoileáin agus le bhóithre. Bhí caiteachas an-mhór ann agus leanfaimid ar aghaidh le cé Chill Rónáin agus beidh halla Bhaile na Finne á thógáil againn.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Tá hallaí go leor eile ann, cad faoi halla Naomh Fionáin San Fhál Carrach?

Deputy Pat Carey: Beidh €12 milliún caiteachas caipitil ag Údarás na Gaeltachta ag Údarás na Gaeltachta an bhliain seo chugainn. Tá €6 milliún ann ach tá €4 milliún sa bhreis ar fáil ag an údarás as na scaranna ó Bioniche agus €2 milliún sa bhreis as a chuntais féin. Chomh maith leis sin, d'aontaigh an Teach liom go dtabharfainn tuilleadh airgid don údarás i mbliana chun billí a íoc.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Tá Údarás na Gaeltachta féin ag rá go bhfuil géarchéim ann i láthair na huaire. Ní aontaíonn an t-údarás leis an Aire ar chor ar bith.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Tá orainn anois leanúint ar aghaidh do ghnáthcheisteanna eile.

Other Questions.

Irish Language

33. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he has considered the 20-year strategy for the Irish language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46121/10]

41. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans regarding progressing the 20-year strategy on the Irish language in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46055/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: I propose to take Questions Nos. 33 and 41 together.

As I mentioned earlier, the 20-year strategy on the Irish language was approved by Government at its meeting of 30 November. It is intended to publish the final document next week and further information will be available at that time concerning the steps to be taken for its implementation. The strategy has been developed in line with the Government's policy statement on Irish of December 2006, which affirmed the Government's support for the development and preservation of the Irish language and the Gaeltacht. As discussions have gone on, I think the House is united on this.

The objective of the strategy is to increase on an incremental basis the use and knowledge of Irish as a community language. The strategy is the culmination of a process that involved widespread consultation with the public, key stakeholders and a cross-party Oireachtas committee.

The strategy has a number of areas for action such as education, the Gaeltacht, family transmission of the language, public services and the community. The implementation of the strategy will begin in 2011 when appropriate structures will be put in place and legislation brought forward in order to ensure the successful implementation of the strategy in a cost-effective manner over its 20-year time frame.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Táimid ag comhoibriú le chéile.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is iontach an rud é.

Deputy Dinny McGinley: Whatever about the policy of Straitéis na Gaeilge, on which all parties are agreed, does the Minister agree that its implementation is now a top priority? Is the Minister seriously stating it will be possible to implement all aspects of that policy when there are such huge cutbacks to the resources available to Roinn na Gaeltacht and Údarás na Gaeltachta. The latter bodies will have a certain responsibility in the implementation of this policy. It will be an impossible task and this calls into question the Minister's seriousness and the Government's commitment to the strategy at this late hour.

Deputy Pat Carey: It is a 20-year strategy, not a 20-week one. Everybody is serious about this matter. A unit has been established in my Department to co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy as soon as the final document is published. Some €1.5 million has been set aside in the coming year's Estimates specifically for rolling out the initial phases. Whatever Governments are in office over that 20-year period will have to adhere to the strategy. It is recommended that the Cabinet sub-committee on Gaeilge and the Gaeltacht will have a monitoring role in implementing the strategy, as will the Dáil, and the Seanad if it is around. To answer Deputy McGinley's question, I am convinced that it is possible to implement the 20 year strategy in full, but every Government will have to make a commitment. The fact that parties on the other side of the House have taken ownership of the strategy reassures me that it will be possible.

Of course it will involve resources, year on year. That is why resources will have to be committed to it. I am advised that €1.5 million will be sufficient to roll out the initial phases of the strategy. There will be other parts to it. The education sector will have to play a part in the strategy, as well as other Departments.

Deputy Brian O'Shea: I share the concerns of Deputy McGinley. A new strategy has been put in place but there is far less money to put it into effect. Less money will be spent on the Irish language.

The Minister mentioned a co-ordinating unit in his Department. What powers will the unit have? Will it merely consult with other Departments or has it powers to make sure the various recommendations of the strategy are put in place? Will it simply be another harmless talking shop with no effective function?

Deputy Pat Carey: I repeat that the strategy is a 20 year one. The next couple of years will be frugal, but I am sure that whatever Government is in power will put in enough money to roll out the initial phases of the strategy.

The unit is not a toothless talking shop. It is headed by an official at director level. She will be working with a team of people across the Department to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are implemented. It will not be a toothless tiger. It will make sure that the objectives are pursued and fulfilled across Departments. An Coimisinéir Teanga also has a role in this. There will be a high level committee of senior civil servants and the Cabinet committee on Gaeilge and the Gaeltacht will be there also. The implementation group is based in Furbo. The senior officials group has been in place for some time and is working on the drafts of the strategy, and there is also the Cabinet Committee on Gaeilge and the Gaeltacht.

Whether I am here or not, I will be disappointed if this approach is not continued. I think it will be. While the targets are ambitious, they are achievable.

Deputy Frank Feighan: Cén dáta a foilseofar an straitéis ag an Rialtas?

Deputy Jim O'Keeffe: Maith an fear.

Deputy Pat Carey: Foilseofar an straitéis an tseachtain seo chugainn. Cuirfidh mé eolas cruinn chuig an Teachta nuair atá an dáta socraithe. Déanfar iarracht í a foilsiú Dé Máirt seo chugainn, más féidir liom é sin a eagrú. Beidh mé i dteagmháil leis an Teachta.

Deputy Frank Feighan: Agus cén t-am?

Deputy Pat Carey: Níl a fhios agam fós, ach tá mé beagnach cinnte go ndéanfar é go luath san iarnóin.

Clár Reachtaíochta

34. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** den an Aire Gnóthaí Pobail; Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta cathain a bheidh an reachtaíocht ar fáil d'Údarás na Gaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [46059/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: Mar a chuir mé in iúl don Teach cheana, is i gcomhthéacs an Straitéis 20 bliain don Ghaeilge a dhéanfar athruithe maidir le cumhachtaí agus feidhmeanna Údarás na Gaeltachta a chur i gcrích.

Ó tharla go bhfuil an straitéis faofa ag an Rialtas anois agus le foilsiú go han-luath, beidh tús á chur láithreach leis an bpróiseas chun feidhm a thabhairt do na moltaí éagsúla atá inti. Mar chuid den phróiseas sin, beidh Bille maidir le hathstruchtúrú Údarás na Gaeltachta le réiteach agus déanfar gach iarracht an Bille seo a thionscnamh chomh luath agus is féidir. Níl sé indéanta ag an tráth seo, áfach, dáta tionscanta cruinn a thabhairt. Is dócha go dtuigfidh an Teach cén fáth.

Deputy Brian O'Shea: Nuair a cuireadh síos an cheist seo ní raibh an buiséad curtha os comhair an Tí. Nuair a deineadh sin, fuair amach go laghdófar deontas Údarás na Gaeltachta le haghaidh tionscnamh and caiteachas caipitil ar fhoirgneamh ó €18 milliún síos go dtí €16 milliún. Tá eagla orm go bhfuil sé ar intinn ag an Rialtas cúraimí forbartha maidir le postanna agus eacnamaíocht a sheoladh chuig eagraíocht éigin eile, ar nós Fiontar Éireann nó an IDA. An bhfuil sé ar intinn ag an Rialtas feidhm eacnamaíochta agus forbartha sa Gaeltacht a chur go dtí eagraíocht éigin eile?

Deputy Pat Carey: Ní hí sin an aidhm atá ag an Rialtas. Teastaíonn uainn go bhfanfadh cúraimí fiontraíochta agus fostaíochta ag an eagra nua. Ar ndóigh, is féidir an cheist sin a plé sa Teach nuair a pléifear an reachtaíocht nua.

Maidir leis an chéad cheist a chuir an Teachta O'Shea, tá €12 mhilliún le haghaidh Údarás na Gaeltachta sa chuntas caipitil don bhliain seo chugainn. Tá an méid srianta siar, ceart go leor, ach tá mé cinnte gur féidir leis an Údarás a chúraimí a gcur i gcrích, fiú amháin leis na ciorraithe sin.

Deputy Brian O'Shea: An nglacann an t-Aire leis go bhfuil todhchaí na Gaeilge fite fuaite le todhchaí na Gaeltachta? Má tá an Ghaeilge le caomhnú agus le forbairt sa Ghaeltacht, an nglacann sé leis go gcaithfear postanna a gcur ar fáil chun an t-aos óg a choimead sa Ghaeltacht agus chun go leanfadh an teanga mar theanga bheo? Muna dtarlaíonn sin, an bhfuil deireadh le hathbheochaint na Gaeilge agus lena forbairt amach anseo?

Deputy Pat Carey: Is dócha go bhfuil. Sin an freagra is giorra gur féidir liom a thabhairt. Ach, tá an-éifeacht ag scéim na gcuntóirí teanga ar fhás na Gaeilge ins na scoileanna. Ba cheart na hionaid teaghligh a mhéadú bliain i ndiaidh a chéile le linn tréimhse na straitéise. Má leanann gach Rialtas leis na spriocanna atá sa straitéis, tá mé cinnte gur féidir athrú an-mhór a dhéanamh ar staid na Gaeilge.

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Ceist eile is ea teorainneacha na nGaeltachtaí. Ceist chasta í sin, agus caithfear í a plé go macánta amach anseo.

Community Development Projects

35. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the impact of the reduced allocations totalling €9 million in 2011 across community development programmes and projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47124/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: The adjustment to my Department’s community development budget has been structured to protect front line services and supports at the expense of administration, overheads and ancillary costs. While the overall adjustment will impact on some programmes, my Department will continue to prioritise front line services to the greatest extent possible.

In the case of the Local and Community Development Programme, the Deputy should note that the 2011 funding allocation has been maintained at close to 2010 levels. The allocation to the programme for next year of €63.5 million represents a cut of order of 6% on the funding available last year. I am confident that this will allow for the continuation of important support for people in disadvantaged communities and will allow for the key, essential, front line services delivered through the programme to be maintained for 2011.

In order to protect the invaluable work being done at the coalface by community and voluntary groups, my Department will shortly commence a structured dialogue with the community and voluntary sector with the aim, *inter alia*, of ensuring that the impacts of any budgetary adjustments to the services provided by the sector are minimised, as far as possible. To this end, my Department will be working with the sector to achieve greater consolidation, co-ordination and efficiencies among service providers.

As the Deputy may be aware, contracts under the scheme to support national organisations will finish at the end of this year, and I am pleased to note that a new scheme for national organisations has been developed and this will be advertised shortly. Funding under the old scheme will be extended on an interim basis — until March 2011 at the latest — to allow for the new scheme to be rolled out.

Jim O’Keeffe: The Minister and I are of one mind with regard to the need to protect front line services to the greatest degree possible. The latter was my main concern in respect of tabling this question. As the Minister is aware, there are hundreds if not thousands of small community groups throughout the country which are doing outstanding work, mainly on a voluntary basis. Their efforts are being supported through an extremely small allocation of State funding. I am keen that the enormous amount of voluntary work that is being done should continue.

Having indicated that front line services will be protected to the greatest extent possible, is the Minister in a position to indicate the areas in which the €9 million will be saved? If he can provide clarity in that regard, I will be able to rest assured that the services to which I refer will be fully protected. Will the relevant savings be made in the administrative or bureaucratic areas or in other areas?

Deputy Pat Carey: In the interest of assisting Deputy Jim O’Keeffe, I am in a position to inform him that there are approximately 24,000 of the voluntary groups to which he refers. As far as I am concerned, these are the most important groups of their kind, particularly in the context of the way they deliver front line services. The relevant subhead also includes partner-

ship and integrated companies and covers a range of areas and significant funding has already been allocated in respect of it. I have informed the organisations that reductions will have to be made in the areas of administration, overheads, the printing of glossy brochures, the holding of fancy launches, travel, etc. In addition, they will be obliged to consider salary comparisons across the sector. It is in these areas that savings can be achieved. From my contacts with the organisations in question, I am convinced that such savings will be made.

There are 22 volunteer centres throughout the country and these do extremely good work. I am anxious to continue to provide support to these centres. The Department also supports 64 of the larger national organisations and a new scheme relating to these will be advertised and rolled out in the coming year. Most of what is happening at present will continue to happen.

Members will be aware of what has taken place this year in the context of the integration of community development projects into the local companies. In most cases, work in this regard has proceeded in a reasonable manner. I am under no illusions but that there has been some pain involved at a local level. However, the vast majority of the community development projects are well on their way to being integrated. There may be a small number in respect of which additional time may be required for such integration.

Deputy Jack Wall: Will the Minister indicate how the consultation process will operate, particularly in light of the large number of groups and projects involved? Will officials from the Department be handling the process or does the Minister propose to appoint consultants? How long will it take for the consultation process to be completed?

Deputy Pat Carey: The structured dialogue I referred to earlier was suggested by those within the sector. In some respects, it flows from what took place in the social partnership process over many years whereby the social partners and the Government would engage with each other. The Department is proposing to develop, in conjunction with those in the sector, draft papers. This process will facilitate and enable the discussion to take place. I am of the view that the consultation process should not be too lengthy. The basis for agreement is about right and most people are aware of what we want to try to achieve, namely, a more equal and more healthy society in which individuals feel they have a role to play.

We want to build on the strengths that already exist. I was not being frivolous when I stated that there are 24,000 voluntary groups throughout the country. These groups are both large and small, some of them are extremely ineffective while others are great at what they do. During the recent two-week period of bad weather, these groups came from nowhere to provide assistance. They operate under the radar but they were there when the cold snap arrived. We must try to ensure that we get the best out of these groups.

I must admit that I obtained the idea for this consultation process from the neighbouring island, where the structured dialogue with the voluntary sector has been quite successful. As long as I hold office and am in a position to exert any influence, the objective of the process will be to develop in this country a civic society that will make a difference.

Poverty Levels

36. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on recently published Central Statistics Office figures on poverty; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46069/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: The annual survey on income and living conditions, SILC, published by the CSO is the official source of data on national poverty indicators, such as at-risk-of-poverty, material deprivation and consistent poverty. The SILC poverty figures for 2009, published on

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25 November last, provide the first indications of the impact of the economic crisis on living standards and poverty levels. The at-risk-of-poverty rate was 14.1%, a decrease from 14.4% in 2008. The fact that the at-risk-of-poverty rate did not increase and, despite the rise in unemployment, actually fell slightly highlights the key role of social transfers in ensuring minimum living standards in times of economic difficulty.

The consistent poverty rate of 5.5% in 2009 is a slight increase from the 2008 level of 4.2%. While disappointing, this trend must be seen in the context of the continuous decline in consistent poverty since 2003, when the rate was 8.2%. The 2009 rate is comparable to the 2007 figure of 5.1% and is lower than the 2006 rate of 6.5%. The long-term trends in regard to consistent poverty indicate that the Government's poverty reduction target, set out in the national action plan for social inclusion 2007 to 2016, remains on track. In fact, the 2009 SILC results show some vulnerable groups such older people have a consistent poverty rate of 1.1%, which is below the interim target of a 2% to 4% consistent poverty rate by 2012.

In meeting the current economic challenges, the Government is committed to prioritising those who are the most vulnerable and to protect, as far as possible, front line services in marginalised communities. The overriding objective now is to restore economic growth and maximise employment in order that the recent progress made in tackling poverty can be continued and that the goals in the national action plan for social inclusion regarding an inclusive and fair society can be achieved.

Deputy Frank Feighan: In view of the fact that 443,000 people are currently unemployed, does the Minister accept that if the survey were carried out now or early in the new year, when the budget cuts will take effect, the results would be altogether different?

Deputy Pat Carey: The impact of this year's budget will be apparent in the near future. I would not like to anticipate what will be the outcome in this regard. However, what emerges will obviously inform the process of policy formation in the months ahead.

Deputy Frank Feighan: Will the Minister admit that the recent budget and the policies outlined in the Government's national recovery plan will do nothing to alleviate the situation and will only serve to increase the gap between high earners and those who are struggling to cope on a daily basis?

Deputy Pat Carey: The findings currently available indicate that each of the budgets from 2008, including that introduced last week, have been very progressive. In other words, those who are in a position to pay most are being obliged to do so and those on lower incomes are being protected as far as is possible. The ESRI reports that have been published since I entered the Department indicate that all groups, particularly the elderly, have benefited significantly from social transfers. When issues relating to family income supplement, entitlement to medical cards, etc., are factored into the equation, there will be a better indication of the impact of the recent changes on particular groups.

Deputy Jack Wall: Have the Minister or any of his Government colleagues been involved in discussions regarding the plight of voluntary organisations as Christmas approaches? Will funding be provided for these organisations in order that they might provide assistance to people who have fallen into poverty? Groups such as the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are pleading for funding so that they might try to attempt to deal with the crisis that exists. I was informed about one instance where the amount being paid out by a particular group rose from €5,000 to €50,000 in one week. What will the Government do to provide solace to such groups through the provision of funding as Christmas approaches, given that the Christmas bonus has been

done away with? The opposite to that is that the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is paying this now instead of the Government. Have there been discussions to alleviate this position?

Deputy Pat Carey: While virtually all charities certainly will state they are under pressure, I can confirm to the House that for quite a number of years, my Department has been giving assistance to the bigger charities, some of which were named by the Deputy. Moreover, only today I approved the payment of further moneys to the same organisations that have been funded heretofore to address the issues that are arising and have arisen previously.

Community Development

37. **Deputy Michael D. Higgins** asked the Minister for Community; Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the affect the announcement of a 10% cut in funding will have on the services his Department can provide to communities [46045/10]

63. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Community; Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on whether the community sector cannot absorb any further cuts because they are already stretched beyond their limits as a result of the disproportionate cuts already imposed and as a result of the increasing demands on them; if he will offer a commitment that there will be no further cuts to the sector and make a statement detailing any discussions that took place on the subject of the community sector between Irish Government representatives and officials from the EU or International Monetary Fund [46148/10]

Deputy Pat Carey: I propose to take Questions Nos. 37 and 63 together.

Allocations to most subheads in my Department's Vote will be reduced by varying amounts in the budget, as is the case in all Departments. In the current economic circumstances, we are faced with difficult decisions. The Government has considered a number of measures in the context of the National Recovery Plan 2011-14 to provide the basis for a sustainable approach to the current financial situation. Across the Government, its approach has been to do this in as balanced a way as possible.

Within this context, my primary concern is to make every effort to ensure that the daily front line services that are being provided with funding from my Department are protected, especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities. In the prevailing financial circumstances, it is clear that objectives must be pursued with fewer resources than previously. However, I will continue to strive to achieve good outcomes and value for money, notwithstanding these constraints.

Every saving that can be made from cutting down on overheads and administration will be pursued. This is to ensure that the range of urban, rural, Gaeltacht and island communities served by my Department will retain, to the greatest extent possible, the services that have been developed in partnership with them over the years.

Additional information not provided on the floor of the House.

My Department will shortly commence a structured dialogue with the community and voluntary sector with the aim, *inter alia*, of ensuring that the impact of any budgetary adjustments on the services provided by the sector are minimised, as far as possible. To this end, my Department will be working with the sector to achieve greater consolidation, co-ordination and efficiencies among service providers.

As Deputies may be aware, contracts under the scheme to support national organisations in the community and voluntary sector will finish at the end of this year. In this regard, I am pleased to confirm that a new scheme has been developed and will be advertised in the coming

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weeks. To this end, my Department recently wrote to the organisations funded under the current arrangements to advise them that interim funding will be provided to them for a limited period, that is, to 31 March 2011 at the latest. This will allow for the submission and assessment of applications under the new scheme.

I am not aware of any discussions of the nature referred to with officials from the EU or the IMF.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I will allow supplementary questions now in order to get in two such questions.

Deputy Jack Wall: As the Minister has stated, obviously the front line services are of greatest concern. While I am sure it is his intention, I ask the Minister to ensure there is no loss of employment or service. In circumstances in which the unknown provides problems in this regard, I ask that the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs should consider individual cases. I do not suggest this should apply to everyone because there have been cutbacks. However, there have been instances in which an unknown development has led to major problems in respect of a particular group. In such circumstances, the door should remain open in respect of considering the provision of funding to avoid the removal or reduction of, or damage to, front line services. In such circumstances, I seek the goodwill of the Minister and the Department. However, the same must be said in respect of the individual groups, namely, it is not simply a case of an open door but that this should be addressed in specific and special cases.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: I will be brief although there is much that could be said on this question. Does the Minister agree that the cuts made to the community and voluntary sector during the economic crisis have been grossly disproportionate? Moreover, the culmination of the combined cuts from last year and this year is that there will be quite a high number of job losses in the sector. Does the Minister agree that the estimated value to the economy from this sector is approximately €6.5 billion and that this value represents a return to the State of more than €2 million? This means that one will get a return if one invests in this sector.

Deputy Pat Carey: In response to Deputy Wall, I would like to think that my Department has a good relationship with his client groups, be it the approximately 480 groups in the drugs sector, the community projects, the Leader companies and so on. The officials have a record of being quite responsive to the needs of communities, including, as I always stress, the need to address emerging needs. It is the known unknowns or the unknown knowns, whichever term one might use.

In response to Deputy Ó Snodaigh, I accept there have been significant reductions in spending in this particular sector in recent years. However, I set out, with some success, in this year's budget to keep to an absolute minimum any reductions in this regard. As I have stated in replies to other questions, any savings that can be made in administration, overheads and so on must be made to protect front line services. A significant amount of resources still are devoted to the community sector and one should not underestimate the impact that such funding has on the ability of those groups to carry out their programmes.

Written Answers follow Adjournment Debate.

Adjournment Debate Matters

An Ceann Comhairle: I wish to advise the House of the following matters in respect of which notice has been given under Standing Order 21 and the name of the Member in each case: (1)

Deputy Seán Sherlock — the delays in the processing of payments under the disadvantaged area and single farm payment schemes; (2) Deputy Leo Varadkar — that the Minister for Health and Children report to the Dáil on any proposals to downgrade accident and emergency services in the north Dublin hospitals noting that a HSE memo to staff has confirmed that consideration is being given to reducing the number of 24-hour accident and emergency departments from three to two in the north Dublin area and to give an assurance that Connolly Hospital will still operate on a 24-hour basis; (3) Deputy Joe Costello — the need for the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills to outline progress towards building a permanent school for Gaelscoil Bharra, Cabra, Dublin 7; (4) Deputy Dan Neville — an extension to Nicker national school, County Limerick; (5) Deputy Tom Hayes — whether the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government can clarify the position regarding the issue of raw sewage flowing into the River Suir in Golden, County Tipperary; (6) Deputy Thomas McEllistrim — to ask the Minister to consider accelerating the process towards the building of a new school for Spa national school, Tralee; (7) Deputy Mattie McGrath — the current progress on the bypass of Tipperary town; (8) Deputy Joan Burton — the reorganisation and restriction of emergency services at James Connolly Memorial Hospital, Blanchardstown; (9) Deputies Joe Carey, Timmy Dooley and Pat Breen — the need to ensure full cardiac services are retained at Ennis General Hospital; (10) Deputy Deirdre Clune — the need for the Government to demonstrate its support for the Cork docklands project; (11) Deputy John O'Mahony — the urgent need for the Minister to address the low stocks of salt for gritting roads; (12) Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin — the need to respond to an investigation exposing the abuse of older people by private providers of home care; (13) Deputy Noel J. Coonan — the need for the Minister for Transport, Deputy Dempsey, to intervene with the National Roads Authority in the stand-off between subcontractors and contractors regarding the completion of the M7 Nenagh-Castletown section in view of the fact that work has ceased due to industrial action and the road may not open as scheduled; (14) Deputy Kieran O'Donnell — to call on the Minister for Transport to direct the NRA to release additional salt stocks to the local authorities for winter treatment of the road network in time for the severe cold snap forecast for later this week, and to provide the up-to-date status of the State's salt stocks; (15) Deputy Ciarán Lynch — to ask the Minister for Health and Children when the amount of HSE funding for homeless services around the country will be confirmed and when will this be communicated to the voluntary organisations providing those services; (16) Deputy Alan Shatter — to raise concerns expressed by the DPP about resources available to him; and (17) Deputy James Bannon — the need for the Minister for Social Protection to recognise the valuable work of Longford-Westmeath Family Resource Centres through essential funding for 2011.

The matters raised by Deputies Joan Burton, Joe Carey, Pat Breen, Timmy Dooley and Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin have been selected for discussion.

Business of Dáil

An Ceann Comhairle: Before moving onto Leaders' Questions and to advise the House, Members will be aware that a new Technical Group has been formed. Before we take Leaders' Questions today, since the designated leader of the Technical Group is now included I thought this would be an opportune time to remind Members of the procedure under Standing Order 27, which provides for those questions. Leaders' Questions are confined to the leaders of Fine Gael, the Labour Party and now the designated leader of the Technical Group, or in their absence, their respective designated deputy leader. Each leader has two minutes for his or her opening question and one minute for a subsequent supplementary. The Taoiseach has three minutes for the opening reply and one minute for the reply to each supplementary. The overall time allowed is 21 minutes.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: That is a joke.

An Ceann Comhairle: A leader's question must be brief and be about a matter of topical public importance and the single supplementary question allowed must be relevant to that question. Members will appreciate that in order for the Leaders' Questions procedure to be effective as intended by the Dáil in introducing this facility, both the leader asking the question and the Taoiseach or member of the Government replying should be allowed to do so without any interruption. I ask for the continued co-operation of Members in this regard to ensure that the Leaders' Questions procedure reflects well on the proceedings of the House

Deputy Jim O'Keeffe: As before.

Leaders' Questions

Deputy Enda Kenny: I congratulate Deputy Ó Caoláin on his elevation to the rank of leadership of the Technical Group and I know he will strive hard to stay within the strict guidelines the Ceann Comhairle operates in this regard.

Deputy Finian McGrath: I hope Deputy Kenny also does so.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I welcome that the Minister for Finance, on what appears to have been a solo run, has put an end to the payment of €40 million in bonuses to senior bankers in AIB. I do not welcome that on a "Prime Time Investigates" programme, Ireland was exposed last night to a series of incidents of indignity, inhumanity and unchristian and uncaring activities. A number of years ago, Deputy O'Dowd used freedom of information legislation to expose the position that applied in the Leas Cross nursing home, as it then was, and a number of others. The "Prime Time Investigates" programme broadcast last night exposed rotteness at the heart of Irish society. While this may well be relevant to a minority of carers, it was a sickening episode of inhumanity to elderly persons and was something that could happen to anyone or to everyone's mother in such a situation. This is not what the Taoiseach wishes to see, nor what this House wishes to see and it is not something with which Ireland should be obliged to put up.

I would not mind but the impact of the programme was quite devastating for many people. There were images of an elderly person being force fed in 2010, which is an unacceptable practice. Persons who were not vetted, trained or used to administering drugs or food in its various forms to elderly people were visiting the private homes of elderly people. There were uncaring attitudes, where elderly people who were still able to do things for themselves were not allowed to do so. It is a modern-day form of human imprisonment of the worst type.

The Taoiseach has been an advocate of the things he has done in Government and how he has conducted its business. He said on more than one occasion——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, I am afraid I have a note on the time for Leaders' questions.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I note the Ceann Comhairle's note on the time. Time is short for the elderly people in question.

I note the Taoiseach's many responses about acting in accordance with the best advice available to him. The Law Reform Commission made recommendations on regulation of the industry in October 2009. The NESF report, of which I have a copy, stated the same, namely, that regulation was absolutely necessary in situations like this. The Minister of State with responsibility for older people, Deputy Brady, said she expected to introduce regulations in this area early in 2010, almost a year ago.

This is an intolerable practice which has to be ended. In view of the Taoiseach's many comments that his Government acts on the best advice, what is his explanation as to how the situation has been allowed to develop to intolerable and inhuman levels? What are we doing in so-called Christian Ireland in 2010?

The Taoiseach: It is important to point out that the programme, which I did not see, that was broadcast last night alleged that the lack of regulation in the home care sector leaves the recipients vulnerable to abuse. I understand four cases were highlighted. It is important to point out that any individual case where less than professional and caring services are provided is something which nobody in a position of responsibility would stand over. Therefore, there has to be a full investigation by the managers of the services in the HSE into all of these areas and a review must take place in order that they can confirm that clients who are in receipt of these services at local level are obtaining those services in a way that we all would expect.

There are a range of services available in community settings for people who require them. They include home helps, meals on wheels, day care, respite care and home care packages, as they are known. The majority of these are provided by the HSE and some by the voluntary or private sectors. Provision is in place for any complaints to be dealt with. A helpline which was set up this morning as a result of the programme received approximately 54 calls by noon, nine of which related to complaints that clients or their families had, which will be followed up. That complaints procedure is available to everyone who wishes to use it.

Regarding the question of making sure that a uniform level of care or access to services are provided, the Minister of State with responsibility for older people, Deputy Brady, has indicated that work has been continuing on this. In the new year the publication and implementation of national guidelines and procedures for the standardised implementation of the home care packages scheme and quality guidelines for home care support services for older people will be available, which we would all welcome. It is important that those guidelines and standards are proactively promoted.

There are members of the Home Care Association against which no particular case was impugned. People are providing a good service. However, anywhere, any instance or any day where people are treated with less than the dignity that we would expect for our people is not welcome or acceptable. The standards of care need to be of the highest professional standards at all times. The review that is being undertaken will assist in that.

Approximately 9,500 people are in receipt of home care packages at any one time, and 13,000 are in receipt of it annually. Some 80,000 people use more than 21,300 day care and respite care places in our system. Some 54,000 people are in receipt of help under the home health scheme, where hours of care are provided by neighbours and others. Given the spectrum of care available and the need that varies from individual to individual we need a flexible, proportionate response to make sure that people are being cared for and that neighbourliness is being encouraged.

Many people who are still in a community care setting require high standards of care and are attended by district public health nurses, others and people in the area we are discussing. The standard of professional care that we expect is of the highest level at all times and any digression from that must be dealt with and investigated thoroughly.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I asked the Taoiseach for his explanation as to why the recommendations made by expert bodies have not been followed through. He said no one can stand over this situation, the Minister of State will carry out a review and there will be a full inquiry — whether it is public or whatever — in respect of what we saw last night.

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

In September 2009 the NESF report was released which made it very clear what should be done. In October 2009 the Law Reform Commission reported in the same way. In November 2009 the absent Minister of State with responsibility in this area said she would introduce guidelines as early as possible in 2010. We are now told that, a year on, she will do something in the spring. What is the explanation of the Government as to why this has not happened?

I contrast the situation with the fact that the Government is prepared to write a cheque, irrespective of the amount, for banks. We rushed through nursing home legislation in 2006 to take almost €1 billion from elderly people. The legislation in respect of the bank guarantee scheme was rushed through. Legislation will be rushed through tomorrow in respect of credit institutions dealing with bank restructuring. However, there is no urgency about the most vulnerable, deprived and sensitive in our society, namely, those people who are of elderly and venerable years who, in these cases, were demonstrated to be the victims of inhumanity and a downright lackadaisical approach.

I have a letter from An Garda Síochána dated 13 October 2008 which refers to an application made by an eligible group for vetting in order to work with elderly people. Nobody has been vetted, two years on, to work with the elderly people in question. It is another symptom of the situation whereby people with no training or regulation are visiting elderly people. In view of that fact, is the Taoiseach prepared to be big enough to apologise to the elderly people concerned for the situation which has occurred on the watch of his Government, where neither regulation nor care has been practised in the cases evidenced in the “Prime Time Investigates” report?

The Taoiseach: This House would be unanimous in its concern about any digression from the highest standards of care one would expect, particularly for people who are elderly or vulnerable, people who are part of the mental health services and people living in community care settings. I would apologise to any family — I understand four cases were highlighted — for any digression from the standard of care which we are all entitled to expect. Of course that is the situation. It is not a question of being big enough or small enough to apologise. It is a question of this behaviour not being justified in any case, regardless of the number of people who are receiving proper care, thankfully. I do not accept the opening remark made by the Deputy — it was obviously geared more towards the headlines — to the effect that we are rotten to the core as a society. I do not accept that.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I did not say that.

The Taoiseach: You did. You said——

Deputy Enda Kenny: I said the programme exposed a “rottenness”.

The Taoiseach: You referred to rottenness at the core of Irish society.

Deputy Fergus O’Dowd: Yes. It is rotten.

The Taoiseach: I do not accept for a moment that such a comment properly——

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach should check his recollection.

The Taoiseach: If I may, Deputy.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I did not use the word “core”.

The Taoiseach: I listened in silence to what he had to say. I am not making a political point.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Do not.

The Taoiseach: I do not accept that level of rhetoric. It is irresponsible.

Deputy Enda Kenny: What was it so?

The Taoiseach: There were four cases. It is not about “rotteness” at the core of our society. It is about the four cases that were reported on yesterday. We do not know whether they are representative of more cases. That is why a review must take place. I am talking about a review.

Deputy Enda Kenny: The Taoiseach referred to “a full investigation”

The Taoiseach: If I may——

(Interruptions).

The Taoiseach: Many carers do their jobs conscientiously and professionally.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I agree.

The Taoiseach: As a representative of his constituency, Deputy Kenny knows many people who are dealt with properly and appropriately. Millions of home help hours are provided to 54,000 people in this country.

Deputy Enda Kenny: What will the full inquiry involve?

The Taoiseach: There are thousands of people in receipt of home care packages and day and respite care places. They receive good care in the great majority of cases, thankfully, because we do not have a society with “rotteness” at its core. We have a society with a strong, compassionate and professional approach.

Deputy Enda Kenny: You do not monitor any complaints.

The Taoiseach: I believe the great majority of people are receiving a good service, given the resources——

Deputy Enda Kenny: You do not monitor any complaints.

The Taoiseach: I am sorry, Deputy, do not interrupt me now. You made that point.

Deputy Fergus O’Dowd: There is no monitoring.

The Taoiseach: I do not accept that premise.

Deputy Fergus O’Dowd: They could not care less about them.

The Taoiseach: I accept that in any individual case that arises, such as the four cases that arose in this programme, a review is required. Some 65,000 people are in receipt of this range of services in the community. We want to see all of those reviewed. I do not refer to a full inquiry in the sense of a public inquiry. I am talking about a full review. Where problems arise, as they do from time to time when clients and families are less than satisfied with the level of service being provided in individual cases, those complaints are dealt with and arrangements are made for other providers and other people to come into those homes. I refer to what

[The Taoiseach.]

happens when families make the point that they are less than happy with the level of service, or perhaps with the person who is providing the service.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: There is no central monitoring of any complaints.

The Taoiseach: That has happened on many occasions. Obviously, such concerns have to be accommodated where they are justified, or where it is reasonable for people to make that case. We need to take on board the lessons that are to be learned in this case.

Deputy Enda Kenny: One of the lessons is that a central monitoring system is needed.

The Taoiseach: We should not jump to the conclusion in all circumstances, or in all cases, that this is symptomatic of something that is systemic throughout the system. I do not intend to resile from my personal belief, which is that those who receive services, regardless of how they are provided, must at all times have the requisite dignity and care demanded by a professional approach. I refer to vulnerable and elderly people, in particular.

Deputy Terence Flanagan: There are no inspections.

The Taoiseach: We all have members of families who have had the benefit of these services over the years. I am sure the majority of cases represented in this House, as elsewhere, would reflect that view as well. In no way should it dilute our sense of duty to those to whom that standard was not applied, as made evident in last night's programme. It is clear that a full and comprehensive review of all such cases must be conducted by local managers to ensure a situation like that we saw last night is neither prevalent nor continuing.

Deputy Fergus O'Dowd: They do not examine them now. That is the problem.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: During Taoiseach's questions earlier this afternoon, I asked the Taoiseach about last night's episode of "Prime Time Investigates", which showed the cruel, abusive and inhuman treatment of vulnerable elderly people and the lack of regulation of this area. These problems have resulted from the Government's determination to privatise home care services. I intend to return to the subject on the Order of Business proper.

I would like to ask the Taoiseach about the letter the Minister for Finance has written to Allied Irish Bank, which purports to stop the payment of €40 million in bonuses to executives of the bank. The Government was shamed into sending the letter. It originally told us nothing could be done for legal reasons. It said it would deal with the matter by taxing future bonuses. The Government then said it would examine the matter again. Eventually, the Minister for Finance wrote the letter. I suppose it is a case of better late than never. The issue that arises is whether it might be too late. The Minister for Finance has acknowledged that the letter cannot stop the payment of the bonus to Mr. Foy, who took the legal challenge against AIB. The challenge was not contested by AIB.

I have been told that proceedings have been already started in at least 90 other similar legal challenges. Will the letter sent by the Minister, Deputy Brian Lenihan, prevent the payment of bonuses to the 90 people who are involved in those cases? Can the Taoiseach explain why the letter was not sent at an earlier stage? The Government had a number of opportunities to take a position of this kind. It could have done so when the legislation on the guarantee was being dealt with in 2008. I remind the House that the legislation provided that terms and conditions, relating for example to remuneration and bonuses, would be attached to the guarantee. Why was the letter not sent when the original recapitalisation of AIB, in the original amount of €3.5 billion, was brought forward by the Government? When did the Government

first become aware that these bonuses were to be paid? When was it informed that legal action had been initiated? When was it informed that a judgment — to the effect that a bonus was to be paid in Mr. Foy's case — had been made without contest?

The Taoiseach: I assure Deputy Gilmore that efforts were made in this matter in November 2010, after a final judgment was granted or entered in the case he mentioned. Earlier this month, after the recapitalisation of the banks had been agreed in the agreements with the IMF and the EU, the Minister was able to find a means, through the letter he provided, of making it clear to the bank directors that they would be acting in the best interests of the bank if they were to accede to his view. He made it clear that although there was no requirement for them to obtain his prior consent, which could not be conferred or inferred in respect of any decisions they might take on the matter, they would have his consent. It was not required. This approach provided a legal basis upon which the bonuses may not be paid, or would not be paid. Whereas the judgment in the case of Mr. Foy is a matter of a court order and has to be paid, my understanding is that the other cases which are in process have not yet been paid. It is important for us to deal with this matter as expeditiously as possible, therefore, to provide as much legal justification as possible for the decision we are seeking to have effected, which is that these payments will not be made. I understand that in October 2010, AIB informed the Department that 91 employees had initiated legal proceedings in either the Circuit Court or the High Court, depending on the individual amounts involved, with the first case scheduled for 3 November 2010. It is clear that the employees in question are the people to whom this set of proceedings relates. As Members are aware, the liberty to enter a final judgment from the Master of the High Court in respect of the individual concerned was done in November 2010. I do not have a date for that.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The position, as I understand it and as the Minister for Finance has been communicating it, is that he has told Allied Irish Banks that if it proceeds to pay these bonuses, the bank will not benefit from the taxpayers' money the State intends to put into the bank. That is a position we would all support, but my question is whether it will work. The Minister has already acknowledged that it cannot affect the bonus in the case that has already been through the court and where the award has been made. The Taoiseach says there are 91 other cases in which legal proceedings have started. My advice is that, according to the Buckley case in 1950, the Oireachtas or the Executive cannot intervene or supervene — the word now being used by the Minister — in a case which has already commenced. If that is the case, while the Minister has sent his letter, bonuses will still have to be paid.

The Taoiseach's answer earlier has not clarified the position for me. Are we in a situation where the Minister is shutting the door after the bonuses have bolted? While he has finally taken action after all the publicity, are we not in a situation where it will not do the trick? Given that he did not do this when the guarantee legislation was going through the House, when the original recapitalisation was being done or when he found out that the bank was considering paying the bonuses, and although the letter is written and the threat made, are we in fact in a situation where, as this works its way out, we will find that the bonuses will end up having to be paid?

The Taoiseach: The Deputy is not correct in his assertions. This was a pre-2008 event, as he knows, and took place before the crisis. It was an existing——

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It was 2009 when it took place.

The Taoiseach: That is right, when the payments were being made. The issue had been deferred from 2008 into 2009 and was continuing to be deferred because obviously there was

[The Taoiseach.]

some debate as to whether the payment could be avoided. However, the legal advice was to the effect that it had to be paid, and there were some 1,460 employees who had chalked up aggregate bonus awards to the tune of around €35.5 million. Therefore, the issue of the 91 employees is not the same as the 1,460, which is the total number.

The supervening issue being referred to by the Minister was such that he was indicating to the bank that if it was to go ahead and pay these bonus awards, it would be putting at risk the State money to be provided under the recapitalisation programme. Therefore, the directors of AIB took a unanimous decision that it was in the best interests of the bank, given that series of events, not to proceed with the bonus awards, despite the legal advice the bank had been given. This was the basis on which that decision was taken by the bank and it is the basis upon which we are now proceeding.

This decision was the result of continuing efforts over the weekend, following political discussions and advice on whether there was a way this matter could be resolved so that the taxpayer would not have to provide money for this purpose, despite the fact that there were pre-existing contractual arrangements in place. Therefore, as was said by the Minister this morning, this is difficult territory in legal terms, but we believe this is the means by which we can ensure that bonus payments are not paid, and to do so in a way that withstands legal scrutiny.

Deputy Pat Rabbitte: Sounds to me like a fudge——

An Ceann Comhairle: We are moving on. I call Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: A Cheann Comhairle, I thank you at the outset for the opportunity to address the issue highlighted in the “Prime Time” programme last evening, that is, the disgraceful treatment of elder citizens by so-called home care providers, under the matters selected for the Adjournment.

Tomorrow, the Taoiseach will seek the endorsement of the Dáil for the Government’s sell-out deal with the IMF. I know he will deny it, but I believe this debate and vote is taking place as a result of letters issued on my behalf by solicitors to both the Offices of the Chief State Solicitor and the Attorney General last week, demanding that this opportunity be provided to Members of this House under Article 29 of the Constitution, and that this be acceded to by Government by the close of business today. Otherwise, I would have reserved the opportunity to take whatever action I deemed necessary, including legal action. I know the Taoiseach will deny this, but that is my belief and it is the backdrop to what we are looking at tomorrow.

Does the Taoiseach recall the same IMF in its financial systems stability assessment update of 2006, stating: “Good progress has been achieved in strengthening the regulatory and supervisory framework.” How well did it examine the situation then obtaining before it made that claim? Let us make no mistake: the birds of prey trio, comprising the IMF, the ECB and the EU, have been cheerleaders all along through the Celtic tiger years and have been encouraging endless borrowing. They have been applauding direct tax reductions and avoidance and they now have their claws deeply embedded in our economic and political future. Would the Taoiseach not agree that it is time to clip their nails and send them back from whence they came?

Make no mistake, personal and all as Mr. Ajay Chopra can be, we do not want a new lord-lieutenant here in Ireland. We have history books full of those experiences. We want to retain whatever last vestiges of our economic sovereignty and independence, and we can have that.

An Ceann Comhairle: This is Leaders’ Questions and the time is limited.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I have already asked two questions, a Cheann Comhairle, and I will ask a few more. The IMF is the body to which the Taoiseach wants to sell out the remaining economic sovereignty we have in this State. Will he not now grasp the opportunity in this eleventh hour moment and not proceed with this shameful deal, given that the IMF's board has itself decided to postpone the final sign-off, consequent to the fact that we are going to debate this matter and vote on it here in the House tomorrow?

As a citizen and elected representative, I have the right to demand this, but I am appealing to the Taoiseach not to proceed with these actions——

An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputy give way to the Taoiseach, please?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am concluding with this. I am appealing to him not to burden this and future generations with a bank bailout debt created by the gamblers who gambled on Anglo Irish Bank and other corrupt banks, and who lost. I am asking——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is into long-winded statements which are entirely inappropriate for Leaders' Questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Will he heed the cry of the people and those who are already hurting in our society as they say, "This is not our debt — we did not take this gamble"?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is completely out of order. I have already asked him to give way to the Taoiseach.

The Taoiseach: The purpose of the motion being tabled tomorrow is to ensure there is full certainty regarding the views of this House, as expressed last week by a majority in its support for the first instalment of this four-year recovery plan through the passing of the budget. The purpose is to demonstrate that there is no uncertainty about the fact that this House, representative of the Irish people, is anxious to ensure that we bring the funding certainty to this State over the next three years that this programme will provide.

The request from Sinn Féin Members that we not do so suggests that they have some funding mechanism in mind. If they could let us know what that is, we would be glad to hear from them. However, it would surprise me if the funding mechanism was such that it would have that amount of money available. Let us wait and see.

The real issue is that for this country to rule itself for the next three years, we need to have funding available to deal with the deficits we are reducing over time in a manner that seeks to protect to the greatest extent possible the social and economic gains of the past. To do that there has to be certainty and stability, and that is what this programme provides for us. Those prospects are available. The only alternative mechanism I am aware of for the provisions of funds for the sovereign would be from the markets, which we are not in at present. If we were to seek to obtain money from those markets, it would be at far higher rates than what is available under the agreements for discussion and decision tomorrow.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Ó Caoláin on a brief supplementary.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Will the Taoiseach not accept that the alternative is that we should not be paying this bank bailout debt and that, if it is the case that the Sinn Féin propositions fall in any way short in terms of current spending, we would be infinitely better off going to the open market and paying additional percentages for a much smaller sum of money, thus retaining our control, self determination and sovereignty in relation to our economic

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future? What the Taoiseach is proposing to do will strap our people into horrendous circumstances for many years into the future.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is imparting information and should ask a question.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Surely, I can have a moment to do so.

An Ceann Comhairle: Yes but only one minute is allowed in respect of supplementary questions on Leaders' Questions.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am asking the Taoiseach how he can reconcile the prediction by his Government in the so-called national recovery plan — a national impoverishment plan, as I referred to it earlier — that there will be 5% GDP growth between 2010 and 2012 with the EU Commission prediction of 2.8% growth, that consumer spending will increase by 1% when the Commission claims it will decrease by 2.8% and that there will be an increase in employment by 18,500 and the Commission's prediction of a further decrease in employment of 4,000?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is allowed only one minute to ask a supplementary question.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: How does the Taoiseach reconcile these widely divergent views and predictions in regard to the future, and with a body with whom the Government is entering into a fixed deal for many years to come? I ask that the Taoiseach take the opportunity to talk to his advisers and to listen to the alternative views, if not from the political parties lined up in this Chamber, to the other non-politically aligned views being expressed——

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, please ask your question.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: ——by the voluntary community sector, the trade union movement and ever growing number of economists. It is not too late. There is a better way.

The Taoiseach: What I cannot reconcile in terms of their logic are the two propositions I have just heard from Deputy Ó Caoláin. The first proposition is that we ignore sovereign debt markets from whom we have obtained the money and to default on the debt.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: No, we are talking about bank bailouts.

The Taoiseach: The second proposition was that I should not ignore EU Commission forecasts on growth, employment and other economic indices and should reject my own.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I asked how the Taoiseach reconciled them.

The Taoiseach: The first series of questions were a call to Irish sovereignty and the second series were that the Government should ignore our own opinions and take on board someone else's. The illogicality of what the Deputy says is self-evident.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am not commending them to the Taoiseach at all.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, please.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy has been helpful in terms of allowing me to glean Sinn Féin's policy position, which is to suggest that our sovereign debt is not a sovereign debt, that we

default on that sovereign debt, which is probably the party's new definition of not recognising the sovereigns.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: It is bank bailout debt, not sovereign debt. Put it back in the category it belongs.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Ó Caoláin please allow the Taoiseach to continue without interruption.

The Taoiseach: The third proposition is that we then go to those markets from whom we have obtained those funds for more funds at a higher rate, all of which are illogical and impossible. The Deputy's view — he can check the official record — is that we do not acknowledge the debts we have, do not pay them back and get more money at higher interest rates, if necessary.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is totally misrepresenting me.

The Taoiseach: That is what the record will say.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is misleading the Dáil, as he has done every day as Taoiseach——

The Taoiseach: The Deputy had better check with the politburo before he comes in tomorrow.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Taoiseach, without interruption please.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: ——and when Minister for Finance——

Deputy Pearse Doherty: Have a proper debate.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is a disgrace.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: Some €35 billion of the IMF deal is going into the banks. That is not a sovereign debt.

The Taoiseach: Is Deputy Doherty the leader of Sinn Féin?

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach is fooling nobody.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: I will have to ask Deputy Doherty to leave the House if he does not restrain himself.

Deputy Pearse Doherty: The Government will not get away it. What it is doing is disgraceful.

Deputy Tom Sheahan: The Deputy has done a good day's work now.

Requests to move Adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32

An Ceann Comhairle: Before coming to the Order of Business I propose to deal with a number of notices under Standing Order 32. I will call on Deputies in the order in which they submitted their notices to my office. I call Deputy Naughten.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I seek the Adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss a matter of urgent national importance, namely, despite making a sound economic

[Deputy Denis Naughten.]

argument against the reduction of up to €13.25 million in the cost of care for children with severe neurological development problems, the Jack and Jill Foundation has been unable to secure an additional €750,000 from the HSE for 2011, as a result of which the charity will be forced to cut home nursing care and respite services by up to 30% from January.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Ceann Comhairle has already selected my matter for the Adjournment Debate, for which I thanked him earlier.

Deputy Catherine Byrne: I see the Adjournment of the Dáil under Standing Order 32 to discuss a matter of national importance, namely, the need for the Minister for Health and Children to immediately introduce inspections and audits of home care services in this country following the shocking revelations of abuse and neglect of elderly people by a number of care providers which are State funded and the reality of this sickening action on frail and frighten older citizens reflected last night on a business for which “care” was only a word and not a reality.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: Ba mhaith liom an Dáil a chur ar athló chun an cheist rí-thábhachtach seo a phlé, namely, the need for the Government to bring forward legislation to properly regulate shops offering cash for gold, which shops seek to take advantage of the economic circumstances of the least well off and are leading to an increase in burglaries as thieves target jewellery now more than ever. I am aware of an increase in burglaries in my own constituency in respect of which jewellery has been the target. The burglars are specifically targeting the elderly and people living alone as they are considered easy prey. This is becoming a bigger issue as we approach the Christmas period. The prevalence of these shops in particular areas, often on a short time basis only, exacerbates the problem.

An Ceann Comhairle: Having considered the matters raised, they are not in order under Standing Order 32.

Order of Business

The Taoiseach: It is proposed to take No. 7, motion re proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on attacks against information systems and repealing Council Framework Decision 2005/222/JHA; No. 8, motion re referral to select committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of Taxation Agreements; No. 9, motion re referral to joint committee of proposed approval by Dáil Éireann of the Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (No. 2) Regulations 2010; No. 9a, Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 — Finance Resolution; No. 9b, Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 — motion to instruct the committee; No. 38, Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 — Order for Report, Report and Final Stages; and No. 39, Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill 2010 [Seanad] — Order for Report, Report and Final Stages.

It is proposed, notwithstanding anything in Standing Orders, that the Dáil shall later than 8.30 p.m. tonight and that business shall be interrupted not later than 10 p.m.; that Nos. 7, 8, 9 and 9a shall be taken without debate; the proceedings on No. 9b shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion after 60 minutes and the following arrangements shall apply: the speeches shall be confined to a Minister or Minister of State and to the main spokespersons for Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Technical Group, who shall be called upon in that order and who may share time and shall not exceed 15 minutes in each case; the Report and Final Stages of No. 38 shall be taken today and the proceedings thereon shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 9 p.m. by one Question which shall be put from the

Chair and which shall, in relation to amendments, include only those set down or accepted by the Minister for Social Protection; the Report and Final Stages of No. 39 shall be taken tonight and the proceedings thereon shall, if not previously concluded, be brought to a conclusion at 10 p.m. by one Question which shall be put from the Chair and which shall, in relation to amendments, include only those set down or accepted by the Minister for Justice and Law Reform; in the event a division is in progress at the time fixed for the taking of Private Members' Business, which shall be No. 104 — motion re proposal to reduce national minimum wage, Standing Order 117(3) shall not apply and Private Members' business shall be adjourned after 90 minutes.

An Ceann Comhairle: There are six proposals to put to the House. Is the proposal for the late sitting agreed to?

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: It is not agreed. The Labour Party cannot agree to the Order of Business. It is not unusual in the final sitting week before the Christmas break that the Government would seek to use the guillotine and ram through many proposals but, by any standards, what is proposed for this week is extraordinary. Today a social welfare Bill is to be passed by 9 p.m. and the Government has produced 30 pages of Report Stage amendments for that Bill.

An Ceann Comhairle: We will come to that question later.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Tomorrow we have been told we will have a vote on the memorandum of understanding relating to the agreement between the Government and the IMF and the European institutions. We have not yet been supplied with the text of the motion, which we are to debate tomorrow. Four hours are also being allocated tomorrow to deal with complex legislation on banking, the Bill for which was only circulated earlier today. It runs to more than 70 sections dealing with complex banking issues. It was supplied to the Opposition parties at lunchtime and we are expected to debate it, consider it and tease it out in four hours tomorrow. This shows no respect for this House.

I am struck by the irony of the fact that the IMF decided to postpone its decision on the approval of the IMF-EU deal out of respect for the Irish parliamentary process.

An Ceann Comhairle: This question relates to the late sitting.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The only people who are not showing respect to the Irish parliamentary process are the Government parties in the context of the volume of business they want to do in a short time, the fact that they are not providing notice or documentation and legislation on time to the Opposition parties and then giving us minimal time to debate them. In these circumstances, we do not agree to the Order of Business.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: There are 34 amendments on Report Stage of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill and yet a guillotine will apply——

An Ceann Comhairle: This questions relates to the late sitting. The question on the social welfare Bill will be put later.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I am aware of that but, as with the previous speaker, I am making it clear that this is unacceptable because a calculation of the time — and this is a time proposition — suggests we have less than one hour to address the amendments on Report Stage when we have gone through the various steps that have to be taken to order the rest of the business. It is not acceptable. The proposition is to sit later than 8.30 p.m. and not later than 10 p.m. and that is restrictive. The imposition of a guillotine and the limited time available

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

are not acceptable in terms of addressing important legislation and a raft of new amendments, which we have not had the opportunity to properly tease out. We object to the Order of Business.

The Taoiseach: There is a need to proceed with this level of business this week. The issues arising tomorrow are important and have to be dealt with. We can deal with the question regarding the EU-IMF deal tomorrow but it is a matter of providing certainty on the basis that there was some suggestion of there not being certainty.

It is important to put the Bill through the House today. There is other important business this week, which cannot be delayed, and while I understand and accept the difficulty that can cause, it is important that we get it through.

Question, “That the Dáil shall sit later than 8.30 p.m. be agreed to” put and declared carried.

An Ceann Comhairle: Are the proposals for dealing with Nos. 7, 8, 9 and 9a agreed to?

Deputy Enda Kenny: Agreed but when the double taxation agreements motions come back from committee, will it be possible to have a brief opportunity to discuss them in the House? The agreements are with the Kingdom of Morocco and Montenegro and another motion refers to an exchange of information regarding taxes in St. Lucia, the Marshall Islands and St. Vincent and the Grenadine Islands.

Deputy Ruairí Quinn: And Narnia.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I am not sure of the extent of our taxation agreements with these countries but it would at least be interesting to see what is going on both there and here.

An Ceann Comhairle: That can be arranged some other time I am sure.

The Taoiseach: I understand the motions are coming back to the House on Thursday. I am not sure if there will be time to debate them. The idea of referring them to committees is to provide time for Members who want to discuss them to do so. Double taxation agreements provide an opportunity for countries such as this——

Deputy Enda Kenny: What about St. Lucia and the Marshall Islands?

The Taoiseach: We do not have large trade with these islands but they are entitled to the same benefits of trading with Ireland as any other country.

An Ceann Comhairle: The proposal is agreed to. Is the proposal for dealing with No. 9b agreed to?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: It is not agreed. As Deputy Gilmore said, we received 30 pages of Report Stage amendments to the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill, which were circulated at 10.40 last night. Members have not had an opportunity to consider them. The amendments contain four major new policy initiatives about which we were not given notice, including a proposal for a sovereign annuity and sovereign bonds, the status of persons at work and the denial of employment rights to persons engaging in work placement programmes, the 4% levy on officeholders and major provisions in respect of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010. No briefing was available on these important provisions today and it has proven impossible to obtain information from the relevant Departments. This is no way to do business.

An Ceann Comhairle: We cannot debate this on the Order of Business. The Deputy is pushing the boat out too far on this matter.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The Government is showing complete disregard to Members. It is not possible for us to get a briefing in time to deal with these proposals adequately. Will the Taoiseach show more regard for Members and for the major legislation he proposes to ram through today?

The Taoiseach: I will see what can be done in the time available to see if some briefing can be provided to assist in the discussion.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I did not hear anything about that.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the proposal agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: What is the Taoiseach going to do now? Will he produce a briefing for us?

Deputy Arthur Morgan: If the proposal is agreed, it is agreed.

An Ceann Comhairle: The proposal is agreed.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: What is the Taoiseach undertaking to do?

The Taoiseach: I was going to see if there was anything I could do to assist but if that is not taken as a genuine offer, then I withdraw it.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The debate is about to start. What exactly is the Taoiseach undertaking to do?

The Taoiseach: Obviously I am not in a position to assist.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Do not be sulking now. What does he propose to do?

The Taoiseach: I am sorry. I was trying to extend a courtesy. If it is not taken that way, that is fine.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: At the very least, the debate should be extended.

An Ceann Comhairle: The proposal is agreed to.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: It is not.

Question, “That proposal for dealing with No. 9b be agreed to” put and declared carried.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the proposal for dealing with No. 38 agreed to?

Deputy Enda Kenny: This is not agreed. Deputy Ring, our spokesman on social welfare and protection, has brought to my notice the fact that the debate on the amendments mentioned by Deputy Shortall is expected to conclude by 9 p.m. We have always objected to guillotines on Bills but this is a Bill that should be discussed. There will be no objection to the reference to public office holders but a discussion might be necessary in respect of the definition of “couple” in the context of civil partnerships — there has been a degree of agreement on this — as well as work experience placements and the sovereign annuities and associated bonds from the National Treasury Management Agency. With the debate to be concluded at 9 p.m.

[Deputy Enda Kenny.]

too little time has been allocated to Report and Final Stages. Accordingly, I object to the proposed guillotine in this case.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: Even as the Minister was publishing the Bill, the Government was announcing amendments to it. Sections were introduced in the Bill as the process was moving forward. It is unacceptable. Debating 34 amendments within that short period of time will not afford the House the opportunity to deal properly with this legislation. The Taoiseach was offering a modicum of assistance earlier but withdrew it. Can he not reconsider the time being allocated, lift the guillotine and allow the measure to take its course? We oppose the guillotine.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: We oppose it for the reasons I have stated. There are 34 amendments tabled and the likelihood is that we will get to debate a handful of them in the time allowed. That is unacceptable given the scope of some of the new proposals which we only saw this morning. There is no justification for the guillotine and the Labour Party opposes it.

The Taoiseach: We must proceed in this way, difficult as it may be, because there is a range of work to be completed this week.

Question put:

The Dáil divided: Tá, 77; Níl, 71.

Tá

Ahern, Bertie.
 Ahern, Dermot.
 Ahern, Michael.
 Ahern, Noel.
 Andrews, Chris.
 Ardagh, Seán.
 Aylward, Bobby.
 Behan, Joe.
 Blaney, Niall.
 Brady, Áine.
 Brady, Cyprian.
 Brady, Johnny.
 Browne, John.
 Byrne, Thomas.
 Carey, Pat.
 Collins, Niall.
 Conlon, Margaret.
 Coughlan, Mary.
 Cowen, Brian.
 Cregan, John.
 Cuffe, Ciarán.
 Curran, John.
 Dempsey, Noel.
 Devins, Jimmy.
 Dooley, Timmy.
 Fahey, Frank.
 Finneran, Michael.
 Fitzpatrick, Michael.
 Fleming, Seán.
 Flynn, Beverley.
 Gogarty, Paul.
 Gormley, John.
 Hanafin, Mary.
 Harney, Mary.
 Haughey, Seán.
 Healy-Rae, Jackie.
 Hoctor, Máire.

Kelleher, Billy.
 Kelly, Peter.
 Kenneally, Brendan.
 Kennedy, Michael.
 Killeen, Tony.
 Kitt, Michael P.
 Kitt, Tom.
 Lenihan, Brian.
 Lenihan, Conor.
 Lowry, Michael.
 McEllistram, Thomas.
 McGrath, Mattie.
 McGrath, Michael.
 McGuinness, John.
 Mansergh, Martin.
 Moloney, John.
 Moynihan, Michael.
 Mulcahy, Michael.
 Nolan, M.J.
 Ó Cuív, Éamon.
 Ó Fearghaíl, Seán.
 O'Brien, Darragh.
 O'Connor, Charlie.
 O'Dea, Willie.
 O'Donoghue, John.
 O'Flynn, Noel.
 O'Hanlon, Rory.
 O'Keefe, Batt.
 O'Keefe, Edward.
 O'Rourke, Mary.
 O'Sullivan, Christy.
 Power, Peter.
 Power, Seán.
 Ryan, Eamon.
 Sargent, Trevor.
 Scanlon, Eamon.
 Treacy, Noel.

Tá—*continued*

Wallace, Mary.
White, Mary Alexandra.

Woods, Michael.

Níl

Allen, Bernard.
Bannon, James.
Barrett, Seán.
Breen, Pat.
Broughan, Thomas P.
Bruton, Richard.
Burke, Ulick.
Burton, Joan.
Byrne, Catherine.
Carey, Joe.
Clune, Deirdre.
Connaughton, Paul.
Coonan, Noel J.
Costello, Joe.
Coveney, Simon.
Crawford, Seymour.
Creed, Michael.
Creighton, Lucinda.
D'Arcy, Michael.
Deasy, John.
Deenihan, Jimmy.
Doherty, Pearse.
Doyle, Andrew.
Durkan, Bernard J.
English, Damien.
Feighan, Frank.
Ferris, Martin.
Flanagan, Terence.
Gilmore, Eamon.
Hayes, Brian.
Hogan, Phil.
Howlin, Brendan.
Kehoe, Paul.
Kenny, Enda.
Lynch, Ciarán.
Lynch, Kathleen.

McCormack, Pádraic.
McEntee, Shane.
McGrath, Finian.
Mitchell, Olivia.
Morgan, Arthur.
Naughten, Denis.
Neville, Dan.
Noonan, Michael.
Ó Caoláin, Caoimhghín.
Ó Snodaigh, Aengus.
O'Donnell, Kieran.
O'Dowd, Fergus.
O'Keefe, Jim.
O'Mahony, John.
O'Shea, Brian.
O'Sullivan, Jan.
O'Sullivan, Maureen.
Penrose, Willie.
Perry, John.
Quinn, Ruairí.
Rabbitte, Pat.
Reilly, James.
Ring, Michael.
Shatter, Alan.
Sheahan, Tom.
Sheehan, P.J..
Sherlock, Seán.
Shortall, Róisín.
Stagg, Emmet.
Stanton, David.
Timmins, Billy.
Tuffy, Joanna.
Upton, Mary.
Varadkar, Leo.
Wall, Jack.

Tellers: Tá, Deputies John Cregan and John Curran; Níl, Deputies Emmet Stagg and Paul Kehoe.

Question declared carried.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is the proposal for dealing with No.39 agreed? Agreed. Is the proposal for dealing with Private Members' business agreed? Agreed. I call Deputy Kenny on the Order of Business.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Has the Government decided the date of the return of the Dáil in January? In view of comments made by Deputy Sargent, has the Taoiseach decided which accompanying Bills are expected to be dealt with in parallel to the finance Bill? When is that likely to be completed? This is a matter of considerable interest to many people around the country.

The Taoiseach: It is certainly an obsession of the Deputy. I have indicated that we will return on Wednesday, 12 January. The programme of legislative work will be outlined by the Whip on the week we return. I am afraid I am not in a position to give the Deputy a date for the dissolution of the Dáil.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Can I take it that the finance Bill will be published before the return on the Dáil on 12 January? When will it be published?

The Taoiseach: It will not be possible to publish it before the Dáil returns, since the Dáil is coming back a week early. I am hopeful that we will have it by mid to late January.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I had a request last week for the release of the Minister of State, Deputy Cuffe, so that he could go to Cancún, Mexico, to sort out the climate change Bill. I want to say to him that he seems to have done fairly well, with 187 countries backing him up.

Deputy Ciarán Cuffe: Thank you, Deputy.

Deputy Enda Kenny: It was a pairing that may have been justified in the context of a new world climate agreement.

Comments were made by Deputy Sargent about mayoralty Bills and a number of other Bills that the Green Party wishes to bring forward. In view of the statement from the leader of the Green Party that he wants a general election before the end of January, how does the Taoiseach propose to accommodate all this legislation in the last fortnight in January? Is he up to it?

The Taoiseach: With the Deputy's co-operation, we will outline a work programme for the next session of the Dáil and take it from there. We are returning a week early and the finance Bill will be produced thereafter in the normal way. We will give that proper consideration and there will be other work to be conducted by the House as well. The question of when the Dáil will be dissolved is a matter for the Taoiseach and the President. There is still much work to be done, so I would not pack my bags too quickly.

Deputy Seán Barrett: Deputy Aylward wants the sun on his back.

Deputy Bobby Aylward: I like the sun on my back. I always have.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: There are three matters about which I wish to ask the Taoiseach. The Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children, Deputy Áine Brady, indicated this morning that statutory regulations pertaining to home care services were being prepared in her Department. Is this being done through primary legislation or regulations, and when will it come before the House?

The Green Party announced at a press conference that it would be withdrawing from the Government in January. Have the Green Party Ministers informed him of the date on which they intend to resign from Government?

I share a constituency with the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport, Deputy Mary Hanafin, and it always bothers me that she might know something I did not know.

A Deputy: It should not bother the Deputy.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: In this morning's newspaper the Minister was quoted——

Deputy Áine Brady: We will not tell him.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: ——as saying that the general election would take place in the middle of March. Can the Taoiseach throw any light on this statement?

Deputy Enda Kenny: She wants to dawdle on the doorsteps.

The Taoiseach: When we discussed the issue of home care during Leaders' Questions and questions to the Taoiseach, I made the point that the measures to be implemented in the new year will be the national guidelines and procedures for standardised implementation of the home care package scheme and the quality guidelines for home care support services for older people, which are due for publication, as well as guidelines for the home help service. With regard to statutory regulation, it has been the norm that we produce such guidelines in consultation with the voluntary and community sector and the statutory services. As there is a spectrum of care needs, we must ensure the response is proportionate and flexible. It is important that we maintain the ethos behind many of the schemes, such as good neighbourliness.

In the case of the home help scheme, people from within the community — in many cases, neighbours — are providing much-needed practical services and a home-care environment for people who require assistance. In the vast majority of cases, the services provided are very good. The priority up to now, as Deputies know, has been to deal with residential care services where that was required. We must now consider the home care setting in a way that respects the ethos of the provision of home care while insisting on proper, professional and compassionate standards for people who are in receipt of care. That is the balance that must be struck, and proportionality must be maintained. In this way we can make sure the largest possible number of people have access to these services in a way that is consonant with good standards and neighbourliness.

The other issue raised by the Deputy——

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: The resignations of the Green Party Ministers.

The Taoiseach: Yes. As I said, the Cabinet acts as a collective authority, and while there has been a statement——

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: Does it?

The Taoiseach: Yes, it does. A statement was made some time ago regarding the view of the Green Party Ministers that the dissolution of the Dáil should be considered in the specified timeframe. We are, as a collective authority, working through the issues to make sure our business is done and that all legislative measures consequent on the budget are enacted to provide the necessary certainty, while at the same time ensuring that other important work that is currently being pursued or that must be done within the timeframe specified is dealt with. The work programme for the next session will give greater clarity in this regard.

Deputy Eamon Gilmore: What about the Minister, Deputy Hanafin?

The Taoiseach: I cannot throw any light on a query by the Deputy regarding the Minister——

Deputy Noel Treacy: Check with the editor.

The Taoiseach: ——but if the Deputy does not already have her number, I will give it to him.

Deputy Seán Barrett: That is all very clear, I must say.

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: I noted the Taoiseach's response on the finance Bill. Can he tell us whether other legislation arising from last week's budget is also in the pipeline? Are there one or more Bills yet to present? When will the Taoiseach be in a position to advise on whether such legislation is in the process of preparation and when it will be published? With regard to the Bills the Green Party is pressing to have included before a general election takes place — the climate change Bill and the corporate donations Bill — is it also the intent of the

[Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin.]

Taoiseach and the main coalition partners to deal with both of those Bills in the upcoming term after Christmas and before the Dáil is dissolved?

Deputy Emmet Stagg: What about the greyhound Bill while they are at it?

The Taoiseach: I refer the Deputy to the budgetary measures that have been announced. There is the finance Bill, some pensions legislation and also some betting legislation. That can all be done during the course of the first session when we return. There are also the banking issues. There is important work to be done by the House in a reasonable timeframe and with proper and due consideration. Other legislation that is at an advanced stage of preparation and approval by Cabinet will also be introduced in due course.

Deputy Denis Naughten: I wish to raise the issue of secondary legislation on foot of the Taoiseach's comments earlier on the "Prime Time Investigates" report about elder abuse. We have now heard reports of the abuse of elderly people in the community and in residential care, and we have seen the same thing with regard to children in residential care and in the community. Before we begin to hear inquiries and reports about the treatment of people with intellectual disabilities, would it be possible to include this part of our health services in the inspection regime? In this way we could ensure that those vulnerable people are protected. We should not have another "Prime Time" exposé before action is taken.

If the mental capacity Bill was enacted, it would ensure that a prosecution could be obtained for wilful neglect of a vulnerable person, whether someone with a disability or an elderly person, as we saw in the report last night.

The Taoiseach: I understand the mental capacity Bill is due for publication this session. If this is a Bill that the Deputy feels should be included in our work programme in the new year, I can certainly arrange for that. As he said, it is an important Bill and it would put the statutory framework on mental capacity on a modern footing. Much good work has been done in the disability sector in recent years on a collaborative basis and it would be good if this could be further provided for. This will be considered by the Whip based on what the Deputy has had to say about it and his constant interest in that area.

The matter of intellectual disability and inspection regimes is one to be taken up in the first instance with the Minister for Health and Children. I take the Deputy's point. We should note that much excellent care has been provided in the absence of a statutory framework and that the provision of such a framework gives us no guarantee of uniform professional standards. However, it would help to specify a clear duty of care. We must acknowledge the professionalism of those who operate in different sectors, whatever the statutory or other regime they are working under. We are all in agreement that every individual case of abuse is one too many. A comprehensive review is being undertaken of the four cases that were highlighted in last night's programme. That is as it should be. It is an exercise in accountability and a proper response is required.

The question of inspection regimes for carers of people with intellectual disabilities is something I will consider in consultation with the Minister for Health and Children.

Deputy Jan O'Sullivan: I listened carefully to the Taoiseach's reply and to the Minister of State, Deputy Áine Brady, this morning. We still have not been told when the regulations will be published. Will the Taoiseach give us a date? He is right to say the vast majority of care is good but it is the exceptional cases that need regulation.

An Ceann Comhairle: We have given this matter considerable airing today at various stages.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: They are the people who must be protected by regulation. We need to know this is being dealt with urgently by Government. Will the Taoiseach give us some indication of the date when those regulations will be published such that the small number of cases will be subject to regulation and, therefore, those people we saw on television last night will be protected?

The Taoiseach: Work is ongoing on this matter. There has been a collaboration with the voluntary sector and consultation with the statutory sector to bring forward guidelines. The first point of call is to issue these guidelines, to publish them early in the new year and to put in place a regime that will see their implementation. They will be brought to the attention of everyone, including local managers. The review being undertaken now is as a result of what has occurred and what has been highlighted. There is in existence a complaints procedure where people, families and clients can have recourse to any complaint being dealt with. Where people are dissatisfied for whatever reason — we often find a personality clash or something happens that breaks the bond of trust — it is necessary for good quality care to be provided. Replacements can be provided and rosters can be changed. Often they are changed to accommodate those individual difficulties that arise in families.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: The Taoiseach is talking about the public sector.

The Taoiseach: In the vast majority of cases we are discussing HSE-provided services. A total of 55,000 home helps are run by the HSE. Where home care packages have been advertised to there is also an involvement by the HSE in terms of procurement issues etc. I contend that in the vast majority of these cases the level of complaint thus far is such that given the range of activities and the fact that €200 million more is being spent in this area than was the case even a few years ago, even in the present circumstances, it is an indication of the need for the flexible response and the service in place. There is a spectrum of need which varies from place to place and from individual to individual.

In setting up or preparing for a statutory framework we must ensure this ethos is maintained. This has been the means by which a quality care system has been provided thus far. Keeping it close to the community, close to the family and people who live nearby and who know the individuals concerned is a significant advantage in ensuring that the system works. Were there a different system with people leaving from places of employment to go out and do these tasks in another way we would not have as successful a scheme as we do. I have no wish to be misrepresented in this regard. We are all aware from our personal experience and we want to see the dignity of people maintained and that people are properly looked after. One case is one case too many but the vast majority of cases are handled in a discreet, proper and professional way. Where there are complaints, they too can be accommodated. Let us not suggest this is a systemic problem, although I agree a review should be carried out to determine the extent of the lack of professionalism which was evident in the cases highlighted last night. It is in everyone’s interest to do that. That is being undertaken and local managers have been instructed and directed to do that. It is a good practical response to last night’s programme because certain people must go out and check that people are being looked after properly. If some have started well but are now providing care in a way that is not acceptable, that has become complacent or routine or whatever the issues are, it must be identified at this point. A complete review gives us the prospect of doing this.

Deputy Jan O’Sullivan: The private sector should be included.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Given the indicative priority legislation programme for early in the new year will the Taoiseach give some indication as to whether it might be possible to

[Deputy Bernard J. Durkan.]

introduce the national vetting bureau Bill and, perhaps, the Central Bank (No. 2) Bill, both of which are considered to be urgently required given the present situation?

The Taoiseach: The Bill mentioned by the Deputy is being worked on as a priority. I do not have a date for it, but certainly the vetting Bill is a priority.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: What about the other one?

The Taoiseach: What was the second one?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: The Central Bank (No. 2) Bill.

The Taoiseach: I have mentioned this before. There are two Bills relating to the Central Bank — one is an important immediate job and, as I recall, the second is a consolidation Bill.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: No. It is the reverse.

The Taoiseach: It is one or the other. My apologies. If it is the one to which the Deputy refers, that can be taken early in the next session, as I understand it.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: Whatever about Santa Claus coming down the chimney, he will not be coming on the M7 Castletown to Nenagh roadway. Will the Taoiseach ensure that workers, contractors and sub-contractors in his constituency and mine are paid in order that the road can be opened?

An Ceann Comhairle: That is singularly inappropriate for the Order of Business.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: It is a disgrace that workers have not been paid since 1 November.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is inappropriate. It is a matter for the line Minister. The Deputy should table a parliamentary question. This is the Order of Business.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: Will the Taoiseach intervene and ensure the road is opened? We would like to see the Taoiseach in that part of the country in all his honour and glory.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is a matter for the line Minister. I call Deputy Alan Shatter.

Deputy Alan Shatter: Can I ask the Taoiseach——

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: Will the Taoiseach ensure this happens?

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should put a parliamentary question to the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: I have already put a question to him but he did not accept it.

An Ceann Comhairle: Table a parliamentary question to the Minister.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: I put down a matter on the Adjournment.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: This Bill could be effected in January.

An Ceann Comhairle: Persistence pays in this House.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: I briefed the Minister for Transport on this matter last week and I predicted what would happen but the Minister for Transport did nothing.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, we are talking about a parliamentary question.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: We are talking about people who have not been paid since last November.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am sure. I am not in any way diminishing the importance of the issue, I am merely advising the Deputy how to pursue it.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: Workers haven't been paid and Christmas is coming.

An Ceann Comhairle: Allow your party colleague in.

Deputy Noel J. Coonan: It is very well for the Minister for Transport to smirk about it but people have not been paid.

Deputy Alan Shatter: I wish to ask the Taoiseach about two matters of legislation. No. 90 on today's Order Paper is the Twenty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2009. This is a Bill designed at a time of economic emergency to facilitate the Government to apply the same level of public service remuneration reductions to members of the Judiciary as have been applied to other people. It was published by Fine Gael in advance of the 2009 budget. There have been two budgets in which public sector wage reductions have been applied, neither of which applied to members of the Judiciary.

An Ceann Comhairle: We are not going to debate this now on the Order of Business.

Deputy Alan Shatter: As the Green Party has given the Government some extra time in January, would the Taoiseach agree to take this Bill on board so that when a general election takes place on this simple and straightforward issue, about which there would be no public controversy — we can hold a referendum to coincide with the general election? This would ensure the Judiciary is not perceived as an elite apart from the public sector wage reductions that have occurred. Will the Taoiseach take on board this Bill and allow its enactment? Will he make Government time available for its enactment during the first week we come back and when the Dáil sits again, if the finance Bill is not available to take at that point?

Before the Dáil closes this session, will the Government publish the new, apparently promised, wording, on which it is now working, for a referendum on children's rights in circumstances in which, apparently, the Government is not willing to take on board the proposals of the Joint Oireachtas Committee? If we do not have the wording before the Dáil ends this week, will we have it before we get to the end of this year?

The Taoiseach: I cannot make any such commitment to Deputy Shatter in respect of holding referenda on the day of a general election, whenever that decision is taken.

Deputy Alan Shatter: I am not asking the Taoiseach to hold a children's referendum on election day. I am asking about the judges referendum.

The Taoiseach: I know that. I was about to come to that. The Deputy should allow us even a proportion of the intelligence he has himself. We can answer the Deputy's questions as we heard them; it is a matter of giving us some time to deal with them sequentially. That is no problem.

Deputy Alan Shatter: Referenda refers to two, I am seeking one.

The Taoiseach: I know what the Deputy is seeking.

An Ceann Comhairle: We will listen.

The Taoiseach: However, if the Deputy does not wish to hear the answers or he already knows the answers, what is the point?

Work is continuing with regard to the children's referendum. I cannot give a date this side of Christmas or the new year as to when that will be completed, when the Government will consider it or when we would have to come back to those involved in the previous work in this area. I note that good work was done. I am not sure whether a consensus wording to an amendment can be provided.

Deputy Martin Ferris: Recently, some Ministers claimed it may be necessary to implement part of the McCarthy report's recommendations on the sale of State assets. Last weekend, one Sunday newspaper report referred to an international consortium preparing to make a bid for purchasing Coillte.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy, we cannot debate this matter on the Order of Business.

Deputy Martin Ferris: It is to do with legislation, if the Ceann Comhairle allowed me to finish.

An Ceann Comhairle: Can we have a very brief statement then instead of a long one?

Deputy Martin Ferris: Will the Taoiseach guarantee that no lands belonging to Coillte will be sold off unless there is legislation to that effect? Will this be covered in the forestry Bill?

The Taoiseach: The forestry Bill will not relate to the matter raised by Deputy Ferris. No decision has been made by the Government nor is one due in the near future on the issue. In the immediate future his concerns are not well grounded.

Deputy Martin Ferris: Has an offer been made on Coillte lands?

The Taoiseach: No, not to my knowledge as an organisation. On several occasions, Coillte has entered into commercial contracts with private companies, however. No preparations are being made for the sale of the organisation itself or its land. If Deputy Ferris has an individual issue, we can check it out for him.

Deputy David Stanton: Is it still planned to publish the mental capacity Bill before the session is out?

The Taoiseach: I know its publication was promised before the end of this session. I hope it will be honoured.

Council Framework Decision on Attacks Against Information Systems: Motion

Government Chief Whip (Deputy John Curran): I move:

That Dáil Éireann approves the exercise by the State of the option or discretion under Protocol No. 21 on the position of the United Kingdom and Ireland in respect of the area of freedom, security and justice annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, to take part in the adoption and application of the following proposed measure:

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on attacks against information systems and repealing Council Framework Decision 2005/222/JHA,

a copy of which was laid before Dáil Éireann on 6 December 2010.

Question put and agreed to.

Taxation Agreements: Referral to Select Committee

Government Chief Whip (Deputy John Curran): I move:

That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves the following Orders in draft:

- (i) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Malaysia) Order 2010,
- (ii) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (Republic of Austria) Order 2010,
- (iii) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital and Gewerbesteuer (Trade Tax)) (Federal Republic of Germany) Order 2010,
- (iv) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Republic of Albania) Order 2010,
- (v) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) Order 2010,
- (vi) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Kingdom of Morocco) Order 2010,
- (vii) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Montenegro) Order 2010,
- (viii) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (Republic of Singapore) Order 2010,
- (ix) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (United Arab Emirates) Order 2010,
- (x) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income) (State of Kuwait) Order 2010,
- (xi) Double Taxation Relief (Taxes on Income and Capital Gains) (Republic of South Africa) Order 2010,
- (xii) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Cook Islands) Order 2010,
- (xiii) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Antigua and Barbuda) Order 2010,
- (xiv) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (British Virgin Islands) Order 2010,
- (xv) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Samoa) Order 2010,
- (xvi) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) Order 2010,
- (xvii) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Saint Lucia) Order 2010,
- (xviii) Exchange of Information relating to Taxes (Republic of the Marshall Islands) Order 2010, and
- (xix) Exchange of Information relating to Tax Matters (Belize) Order 2010,

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copies of which were laid before Dáil Éireann on 19 November 2010, 1 December 2010 and 2 December 2010, be referred to the Select Committee on Finance and the Public Service, in accordance with paragraph (1) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 16 December 2010, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply.

Question put and agreed to.

Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (No. 2) Regulations 2010: Motion

Government Chief Whip (Deputy John Curran): I move:

That the proposal that Dáil Éireann approves the following Order in draft:

Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund (No. 2) Regulations 2010,

a copy of which Order in draft was laid before Dáil Éireann on 7 December 2010, be referred to the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in accordance with paragraph (2) of the Orders of Reference of that Committee, which, not later than 16 December 2010, shall send a message to the Dáil in the manner prescribed in Standing Order 87, and Standing Order 86(2) shall accordingly apply.

Question put and agreed to.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010: Financial Resolution

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I move:

That provision be made in the Act giving effect to this Resolution for the charging in accordance with the Act of contributions, being contributions payable by certain public office holders under the State at the rate of 4 per cent of the total remuneration payable to such public office holders in respect of the holding of a public office, where the total amount of remuneration arising from the holding of public office exceeds €5,200 in any contribution year and all such contributions shall be paid into the Social Insurance Fund.

Question put and agreed to.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010: Instruction to Committee

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I move:

That pursuant to Standing Order 172, Standing Order 127 is modified to permit an instruction to the Committee to which the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 may be recommitted in respect of certain amendments, that it has power to make provision in the Bill in relation to:

- amending the Pensions Act 1990 to allow pension scheme trustees purchase annuities approved by the Pensions Board and to provide the courts with the power to relieve a trustee in whole or in part from liability for breach of trust where the court is satisfied that the trustee acted honestly and reasonably in relation to the purchase of annuities approved by the Pensions Board;
- amending the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997 to provide that a pension scheme which purchases a policy or contract of assurance approved by the Pensions Board shall

continue to be an approved scheme for the purpose of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997;

- changing the title of the Bill to take account of these changes;
- the legal structure of the work placement programme or the programme described as the skills development and internship programme.

Pension schemes have been significantly impacted by the downturn in the financial markets. Defined benefits pensions schemes are subject to the funding standard requirements as set out—

Deputy Michael Ring: On a point of order, we need a copy of the Minister's speech since we only got these amendments in the past few hours. Before he continues, I want a copy of his speech.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am sure copies are on their way.

Deputy Michael Ring: I do not want the debate to go ahead without a copy of his speech because this is the first chance we have had to discuss these amendments.

An Ceann Comhairle: Normally copies are circulated. However, in reality there is nothing to say they must be produced.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: In reality, a Cheann Comhairle, if the Minister had any respect for the House, he would circulate his speech. We have been bounced into this without any information or briefing. It is simply no way to do business. I agree with Deputy Ring that we need the speech circulated before the Minister proceeds.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I do not have a speech to circulate, just notes.

Deputy Michael Ring: If we had even the notes, we could study them.

An Ceann Comhairle: The notes will be articulated during the speech.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: This is essentially a Second Stage speech, so we are entitled to a copy of the Minister's speech.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: If the Deputy so wishes, I can get a copy made of my notes.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: This motion to instruct committee is a rarely used procedure and is essentially a Second Stage speech. Will the Ceann Comhairle verify if this is the case?

An Ceann Comhairle: It is a motion to instruct a committee, so it is not essentially a conventional Second Stage speech.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Yes, but there are four proposals that the Minister has not spoken on before.

An Ceann Comhairle: Standing Orders do not oblige the Minister to circulate his speech.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I have no problem circulating the notes I have here.

An Ceann Comhairle: I would have thought that when the Minister articulates his points, they will be quite clear to Members.

Deputy Michael Ring: While I might not be the best on procedure in the House, this Bill has already passed Second and Committee Stages. Today, we were to take Report and Final Stages. Several hours ago, however, we were informed new amendments were to be made but not on Report Stage but as a motion to instruct committee.

Opposition Members are not gods. We do not have the resources of the Department behind us. Since we were handed these amendments only a few hours ago, we need an explanatory note on them to assist us in our responses.

An Ceann Comhairle: In the meantime, I think the Minister should proceed because there is a time limit on this debate.

Deputy Michael Ring: I know, a Cheann Comhairle, but this is not really in order or acceptable.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: A Cheann Comhairle, it is unfair to claim there is a time limit. You allowed this tight time limit which does not allow Members to read the amendments before they are taken or allow for the circulation of explanatory notes on them.

An Ceann Comhairle: We must proceed. The time limit is the order of the House. All I do is put the order to the House for its agreement.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Procedurally it is extremely inept to say the least as well as disrespectful.

An Ceann Comhairle: I am sure whatever is to be circulated will be brought to the Chamber shortly.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Pension schemes have been significantly impacted by the downturn in the financial markets. Defined benefits pension schemes are subject to the funding standard requirements as set out in the Pensions Act 1990, as amended. In response to the crisis, this funding requirement was eased to allow schemes assess the impact of the crisis and determine an appropriate response. In addition, the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2009 provided a range of legislative measures to further help the trustees-employers of pension schemes respond to the funding difficulties in pension schemes.

Further measures have been announced in the national pensions framework which are being progressed by the national pensions framework implementation group. In particular, I announced in October the development of the new model for defined benefits pension schemes proposed in the national pensions framework would be expedited by the framework implementation group.

The amendment to the Pensions Act which I am now bring forward arises from proposals from the Irish Association of Pension Funds and the Society of Actuaries under which a new type of annuity policy, which will make reference to euro-nominated bonds, will be available for purchase by Irish pension schemes and investors. In purchasing this new type of annuity and-or associated bonds, pension schemes will benefit from higher yields than are currently available from French and German markets thereby reducing the cost to pension schemes in meeting their pension liabilities and the requirement of the funding standard.

In an Irish context, the National Treasury Management Agency will issue long-term bonds with a period appropriate to match the funding needs of a typical pension scheme. These bonds will be available for purchase by the insurance industry who will issue annuities based on Irish yields or sovereign annuities. These annuities can be bought by pension schemes to match their

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pensioner liabilities. It is proposed to make these bonds available from 1 January 2011. These bonds can of course be purchased in the normal course by pension schemes.

This amendment is part of a package of measures which are being introduced to assist defined benefit pension schemes and make them more secure in the future. Once these annuities and associated bonds are available, the funding standard amended to reflect engagement with this new annuity policy, the new defined benefit model and the deadline for funding proposals introduced early next year, it is not intended to revisit defined benefits pension schemes. Pension schemes must address their liabilities, their risk and investment strategies in order to ensure that they are properly funded. In other words, we want to introduce a new type of bond that can be bought from the NTMA. There is a double win here because the money that is used to buy these bonds or annuities will go towards funding the State. On the other hand, they give a much better yield than German bonds.

The skills development and internship programme is a new enterprise-led labour market activation initiative aimed at those who are at least three months unemployed. Under this programme, participants will be offered a 12-month placement with host organisations in the private or community and voluntary sectors. In addition to the actual placement, participants will undertake a significant education and training component, which will be certified and will aim to improve their skills and competencies.

FÁS will have responsibility for managing the programme. This will mean that participants will receive a FÁS training allowance equivalent to their social welfare entitlement and will also receive an upskilling bonus of €100 per week during the actual placement phase of the programme.

By providing 12-month placements coupled with a substantial education and training offering, it is intended that the programme will provide a structured pathway to employment for those who are unemployed. The success of the programme will be entirely dependent on enterprises embracing the programme and offering quality placements to the unemployed. The Government has made provision for up to 5,000 places to be supported under this programme. However, this is subject to the level of interest and uptake by enterprises. The Government, through FÁS, will facilitate these placements and provide the education and training provision to participants. Details of the programme are currently being prepared and it is expected to be operational towards the end of the first quarter of 2011.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Is that it?

Deputy Michael Ring: This is no way to do business or to treat Opposition spokespeople. We do not have the resources of the Government, nor the same backup facilities. It is wrong that such amendments are introduced without our having had a prior briefing on them. It is not the way to deal with legislation. I am upset because one never knows what minefields may arise in legislation.

I am disappointed by the way in which this Bill is being handled. We have been talking about it since last summer, so there was no excuse for introducing it in the same week as the Social Welfare Bill which deals with budgetary changes. It is wrong to deal with the legislation in this manner — two days before the House rises for the Christmas recess and then probably into a general election — because we will not have a further chance to discuss these amendments. As we have seen before, legislation that is guillotined ends up in the High Court six months later where it is overturned. We then have to come back to the House to deal with emergency legislation.

The Minister is proposing 5,000 work experience placements but I hope these will be independently monitored. We should put these people through their paces to retrain them. At the

[Deputy Michael Ring.]

end of it, we want to see some of them being placed in jobs. Something should be done for them in this respect. Some form of independent monitoring evaluation is required and it would be wrong if that does not happen. Last week, we saw what was going on in FÁS concerning qualifications.

I am glad the Minister said that, along with the job seeker's benefit, these people will also get €100 per week.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It will be €150 per week from the host organisation.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Will the Minister explain that?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: In order to participate in a programme, host organisations will have to pay €150 per week per participant for a 12-month period into a fund managed by FÁS. This contribution will be used to fund an upskilling bonus of €100 per week per participant over and above their normal FÁS training allowance. The sum of €50 per week will be the host organisation's contribution to the upskilling costs of the participant.

Deputy Michael Ring: It is unsatisfactory to provide this kind of information in this way. It is unfair to me, Deputy Shortall and other speakers who must pick it up off the cuff. It is unfair that we did not have this information before now. It is unsatisfactory and I am unhappy with the way the legislation has been handled. In dealing with every other Bill that has come before the House, we got briefings from officials. In addition, we were able to do research and could thus put time and effort into responding to the Government's proposals.

This is not satisfactory. I am disappointed because I do not like what is being put before us. I hope this will never happen again and that no Government will use its mandate to push through legislation at the eleventh hour of a Dáil session and the end of a Government's term in office. It is wrong to do so. We should be able to sit down with the Minister, as we did on Committee Stage, and discuss amendments. We may or not reach agreement on them, but at least we were able to discuss them.

The Minister is talking about sovereign annuities and associated bonds, but I know nothing about them. This legislation is being forced upon us and we are only now being told what is happening. I will not pretend that I understand it, because I do not; even my researchers did not have time to work on it. It is both unsatisfactory and unfair, and it is not good legislation. It is not good for the House or the Oireachtas generally.

A new section has been introduced concerning public office holders. I am glad to see that where some people, such as judges, are not making voluntary contributions, they will be caught in relation to this. Deputies and Ministers will also be making their contributions in this regard, and rightly so. Last week, we saw major cuts for the blind, carers, the disabled and others on social welfare payments. It is only right, therefore, that judges and every Member of the Oireachtas, including Ministers and Deputies, should also take their fair share of cuts.

The civil partnership legislation, which covers a complex subject, has gone through the House. We should have had more time to research the subject, however, to see what is being proposed in the legislation before us in that regard. What effect will it have on cohabiting couples and same-sex relationships?

It is wrong to bring this Bill before us at the eleventh hour. It is not a good way to do business and neither does it make for good legislation. I am disappointed to be back on Committee Stage and unable to discuss the Bill. We have already discussed the earlier Stages of this Bill. We

went on to discuss the measure that will oblige landlords whose tenants are in receipt of rent allowance to register from 1 January next. That is a good measure.

I am not supportive of people who come into the country and can be certified by telephone. I cannot and will not support that. We discussed the public service card at length in the select committee. The Minister undertook to return to this matter on Report Stage and explain exactly what was being proposed by the Department. We need this kind of security.

I waited for the Minister's explanation of the €20 million finger-printing machine that is lying idle. Has the Minister or the Minister for Finance had discussions with staff to see when that very expensive piece of equipment will be up and running to stop fraudsters coming in and out of the country? We should finger-print them when they come in and when they go out, so that we know if they are drawing social welfare benefits in every other European country. Has the Minister discussed this matter with the Ministers for Finance or Justice and Law Reform or with the unions to resolve this serious problem? It is a terrible thing to have an expensive piece of equipment and nothing being done with it.

I am disappointed that I did not know more about these amendments. It is difficult to discuss amendments one was handed an hour ago. This is not the way for legislators to do their business.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I join Deputy Ring in registering my objection to the manner in which the Minister has decided to handle this legislation. Last week, we saw rushed legislation following from the budget. We expected to have an opportunity to debate this Bill, which has been considered in committee, and to take our time in dealing with it and give it adequate consideration. It is not acceptable to circulate amendments at 10.40 p.m., which is when they were e-mailed to Members last night. Most people did not see the amendments until this morning. It was late morning before I had an opportunity to see them. We were given almost 30 pages of amendments. This is disrespectful of Members on this side of the House and of the House's role in legislation. We cannot give consideration to amendments when they are tabled at such a late hour.

Besides, the Minister made a serious error in respect of the procedures to be followed. Amendments seem to have been plucked out of the sky and no notice given to Members. As they are substantial and deal with new matters we are obliged to go through this convoluted procedure in the House, which amounts to a recommittal. An hour is being devoted to that, which must be taken from the short time allowed for Report and Remaining Stages of the Bill. This is a bad way to deal with legislation.

Rushed legislation is usually bad legislation because adequate time is not provided for scrutiny, consultation, taking legal advice, speaking with people who will be affected by the changes or — in this case — discussing the sovereign annuity proposals with the industry. The Minister is not doing his job properly if this is how he deals with legislation. One of his primary responsibilities is to legislate, as it is the primary responsibility of the House. Dealing with legislation in this manner represents a dereliction of the Minister's duty to provide adequate time for due consideration of proposals. For that reason, it is impossible to go along with what the Minister is proposing. Members on this side of the House have not had adequate time to consider the proposals.

Given that the Minister was not in a position to circulate the amendments until late last night, it is clear that he is not sufficiently briefed or *au fait* with the significant proposals he is making. For that reason, I have serious concerns about the potential for the implications of some of these proposals to be negative and flawed. That is the likelihood, given the rushed manner in which the Minister has dealt with them.

[Deputy Róisín Shortall.]

The civil partnership legislation has implications for the social welfare code. Amendments Nos. 3 to 24, inclusive, deal with civil partnership. These 22 amendments deal with legislation that came from another Department entirely. When that legislation went through the Oireachtas, we were promised corresponding and pursuant legislation in the social welfare and tax areas. I do not know why it was left to the last minute to circulate these detailed proposals. I also wonder when we will see the taxation legislation. Will those measures be ready in time for the finance Bill? Why could the full package not have been drawn up at the same time with the other Departments? Why were these amendments not included in the Social Welfare Bill proper last week so that they could be given adequate consideration on Committee Stage? We must take these 22 amendments on trust. I do not think anyone was in a position to look at them in any detail, read them, consider their implications or cross-reference or check them. We are being asked to vote for these amendments blind. We can only keep our fingers crossed and hope the Minister has some clue what he is doing. This is no way to treat Members of the House or for Members to be forced into dealing with legislation.

The proposal on sovereign annuities is potentially very good and something people working in the industry have been seeking. There are two aspects to it. One is the pricing of annuities. Given the current expensive nature of Irish bonds and their high interest rate, the measure provides an opportunity to assist many of the pension funds that are in difficulty at present by switching the pricing mechanism from German bonds to Irish bonds. That makes sense and has been requested for some time. It could have been done sooner and would have conferred a benefit, but I welcome it nonetheless. The other aspect of the proposal is that the NTMA will issue longer-term bonds in respect of retirement annuities. I welcome that. It makes sense.

I must include a caveat. I am not sufficiently *au fait* with what the Minister is proposing. Due to the rushed nature of the work he has done on the proposal, the Minister has not consulted with people in the industry who have been lobbying for this measure for some time. It makes no sense that the people who made the proposal to him in the first place were not paid the courtesy of being asked to respond to the Minister's proposal. Neither were they allowed to consider it and make further input. The Minister should have availed of that expertise, given the dearth of pensions expertise that has been displayed in Departments for some time and the Government's ill-advised approach to pensions generally. I hope we will have an opportunity to come back to this in the new year. However, I fundamentally disagree with what the Minister is proposing to do in the pensions area, particularly in respect of tax relief. What he is proposing will be extraordinarily damaging to the pensions industry and to the whole pensions area. What the Minister is proposing will completely remove any incentive for people to save for their pensions. Under his proposals, people would be much better off putting their money under the mattress rather than investing it in pension schemes. The proposals to which I refer are ill-informed and will do serious damage. I appeal to the Minister to reconsider them.

I am not sure that the Minister's proposal in respect of sovereign annuities is sufficiently tight to prevent any potential abuse. In the short time available to me earlier this afternoon to consult people who are familiar with this area, a number of concerns were expressed regarding the potential for abuse. For example, will any mechanism be put in place to stop people from investing in Greek bonds? There is a view that the proposal in respect of this matter is not sufficiently robust and could potentially be open to abuse. The proposal is substantial but, because it is being rushed through, there is a real danger that the Minister is going to get it wrong.

The other matter under discussion relates to the status of persons engaged in work experience pursuant to certain placements. Again, this is another area in respect of which there is major confusion. The principle underlying existing work placement schemes is fine. These

schemes have a great deal of potential and they provide opportunities for people who have good skills which they want to put to use or those who do not possess such skills but who want to acquire them. The schemes also ensure, at a time of high unemployment, that people can gain work experience.

As already stated, the position with regard to the existing schemes is fine. However, I am of the opinion that it is not possible to put in place a scheme such as that outlined in the legislation on a hurried basis. The Minister is operating on the hoof and the proposals relating to the new scheme appear to have been cobbled together in order that the Government could state, in the context of the budget, that it is taking action in respect of unemployment.

In the specific amendment relating to this matter, the Minister is seeking to deny those who either are or will be on work placements the normal protections to which employees are entitled. Those protections were hard won and were put in place through the enactment of labour laws. I have serious concerns with regard to what is proposed. Under the new scheme, some individuals will be working up to 40 hours per week for their dole payments. These people will not receive anything extra on top of their weekly payment of €188. In addition, they will not enjoy the same protections as those alongside whom they will be working and who will be earning perhaps twice or three times the amount they will receive by means of their dole payments.

The Minister is also denying the people to whom I refer any kind of common law protections. What will be the position, for example, in cases of unfair dismissal? If a person on a work placement is informed that the job they were doing is no longer available or that their performance is unsatisfactory, will he or she have any rights? Will he or she enjoy any protection at all? What will be the position with regard to data protection? From what is proposed, it appears that those to whom I refer will be denied the basic common law or specific employment rights enjoyed by full-time workers.

The existing work placement scheme has not been reviewed and little or no monitoring takes place in respect of it. Whatever about the graduate placement arrangements — in many instances these work well — there are other arrangements in respect of which obvious abuse is taking place. I browsed the relevant website recently and came across a case where a well-known shoe shop in the city was advertising for six assistants. That is complete abuse. It is inappropriate that those on work placement schemes would be obliged to work in shops of this nature as cheap labour. The owners of the shop in question were seeking six people to work a full week on the understanding that it would cost them nothing because these individuals would be working for their dole. I would have thought the Minister would be of the view that this represents an inappropriate use of a work placement scheme. However, it managed to traverse the very low threshold which appears to apply in respect of what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate.

The case to which I refer appears to involve an obvious abuse. The Minister must review the scheme in order to ensure that employers will not use it as a means to procure cheap labour. He must also ensure that displacement does not occur. I recently became aware of a case involving a State agency which was on the point of recruiting a fully-qualified person to fill a job vacancy on full pay when the new work placement scheme was announced last year. As a result, the agency in question postponed the appointment and later recruited two people from the scheme on work placements in order to fill the vacancy. Again, this cost the agency nothing but the two individuals who were recruited were obliged to work for their dole payments. It appears that they were abused in this instance.

Another point to which I wish to refer is the allowance that is to be paid. The Minister cannot expect people to take up work placements and be obliged to pay bus or train fares, buy

[Deputy Róisín Shortall.]

lunches and clothes for work and so on and then refuse to recognise the costs involved for these individuals. It is interesting that IBEC recently made this very point and stated that its members wanted to pay participants on the work placement scheme an allowance but, under the terms of the scheme, were precluded from doing so. What is happening makes no sense. The Minister should recognise how much it costs for people to go to work.

The Minister for Finance announced on budget day that there will be some 15,000 places available on the various schemes. The Minister opposite referred to one of the schemes whereas the *Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010* relates to all of them. The difficulty we face is that the Minister has only informed us about one scheme.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: This is the second scheme.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: What does the Minister mean?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Tús is the first scheme, that under discussion is the second and the scheme relating to the public service is the third.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: There are three different schemes.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Yes, and there will be 5,000 places on each.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: That is fine. However, the legislation relates to the three schemes.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It only relates to one.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: According to that with which we have been presented, it relates to all three.

The Minister stated that participants in the skills development and internship programme in the private sector will be disqualified from receiving social welfare payments. They will be paid, in a rather convoluted manner, via moneys channelled through FÁS. The placements relating to this programme will last for between two and 12 months. A person who partakes of this programme will have his or her social welfare payments discontinued when he or she takes up a placement, which might last for three months. As a result of the way in which the Minister's Department is operating at present, when the placement ends the person will be obliged to wait until his or her social welfare payment is reinstated. This does not appear to make any sense.

This matter has not been well thought out and there are no——

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It was well thought out.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: ——guidelines relating to the programme. I searched the website of the Department of Education and Skills earlier today and the guidelines I found are totally confusing and appear only to relate to people who are working in schools. What is proposed bears all the hallmarks of something that has been rushed and that was not thought through. We will pay a price for the latter in the future.

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: Ba mhaith liom mo chuid ama a roinnt leis an Teachta Finian McGrath.

As the previous speakers stated, this is not the way in which to conduct Dáil business. What is being done is an absolute disgrace. Some years ago, the Department of the Taoiseach produced a document entitled *Regulating Better — A Government White Paper* setting out six principles of *Better Regulation*. Everyone of the principles set out in that document was

breached when the relevant amendments were brought forward at a late stage last night. I object to the rushed nature of the debate on the motion before the House and also to the guillotine that will be imposed in respect of the Report Stage debate on the Bill.

The context relating to the introduction of the Bill must be borne in mind. The original legislation was rushed into the House and the debate on Committee Stage, for which, unfortunately, I was not able to be present, was also rushed and involved the introduction of major changes by the Minister. This brings me back to the time in office of the former Minister, Michael McDowell, who used to do exactly the same thing. He would produce a Bill and then, halfway through its passage, would produce a huge raft of amendments on Committee Stage and then would try to do the same on Report Stage. This is not the way in which to do business and if one substantially changes a Bill from its original intention, my recommendation would have been to start all over again. When tabling amendments, Opposition Members are continually told that if one attempts to change the focus of the Bill, one's amendment will be ruled out of order. However, the Minister evidently can do as he pleases because proposals have been included in this Bill that have absolutely nothing to do with the original intentions of the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill. I simply make this point.

In so far as possible, like other Members I wish to discuss some of the proposals that have been put before them in a limited fashion. However, this is difficult when one does not have sufficient time to go into major details and when the briefing document from the Department merely comprises a number of paragraphs. Although the consequences of the amendments with which Members will be dealing are the equivalent of another social welfare Bill, the explanatory memorandum is not huge. As everyone is aware, in legislation it sometimes is difficult to reach the normal working language of people. A note arrived yesterday evening to the effect that substantial amendments were forthcoming and which, as I noted, were outside of the original scope of the Bill. Moreover, other Members and hopefully the Minister, will be aware that Oireachtas Members have been receiving thousands of e-mails rightly protesting against the sell-out of Ireland. Buried among them, quite late last night, was an e-mail stating that these amendments had arrived. Although I had received an indication previously that these amendments were due, these are the consequences of rushing it through.

In the limited time available to me I do not have a major problem with the amendments pertaining to civil partnership. I welcome them and as I stated during the debate on the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, I would have gone further in that regard. If one considers the time that has elapsed since the Oireachtas passed the aforementioned Act and the preparation and so on, at this late stage I do not discern the reason these amendments have suddenly landed on Members' doorsteps today, as they should have been included in the first Bill. They would have been welcome and Members could have discussed them in a proper fashion, as they did on Second and Report Stages, even with limited time.

The amendment regarding the 4% contribution to the social insurance fund from public office holders also is welcome. I believe it falls far short of what is needed and that the proportion of the burden of recovery placed on Ministers, Deputies, judges etc. should be higher. Sinn Féin's pre-budget submission to the Minister for Finance made a number of suggestions on how to eliminate wasteful spending on exorbitant wages and it would have resulted in a greater degree of pain to those who are quite well-paid public servants and semi-State employees, as well as to those who charge exorbitant professional fees. Those proposals are available. Again, as I noted, I have not had sufficient time to examine the amendments with a fine tooth comb but I welcome the principle of these aspects of the amendments. It is better late than never and constitutes movement in the right direction.

[Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh.]

I have a number of concerns in respect of the lack of any principal legislation governing internships and workplaces. I refer in particular to the absence of legislation affording participants basic rights or legislative safeguards against worker displacement. I believe the previous speaker also mentioned this issue. Government amendment No. 25 pertains to the status of persons participating in work placement and internship programmes and provides for their disqualification from receiving benefits. It is written in the usual convoluted fashion in which legislation is put together and I wish Ireland had the same plain English campaign as obtains in Britain because it would make it easier for Members to get to grips with it. However, the gist of the amendment is that a FÁS training allowance will be paid to people. It will be equivalent to their social welfare entitlement and on top of this, they also will receive an up-skilling bonus of €100 per week.

The key component in this regard is whether the enterprises and employers are available to offer work. To date, a huge hunger on the part of the majority of those represented by IBEC to employ many more people has not been evident. Their hunger to date has been simply to reduce the minimum wage and I am concerned that this job placement initiative will be used as cheap labour by some unscrupulous employers or will be used to displace existing workers. This is a major concern that must be considered and whatever is done in this regard, there must be no possibility of existing workers being sidelined or removed from their position to facilitate an internship programme. Moreover, there must be a mechanism in place for those who consider themselves to be aggrieved in this manner to gain access rapidly to the Labour Court or whatever institution before this becomes a practice among some within the business community.

The language of the proposed section 298A of the Principal Act contains warning flags that point to the vulnerability of those who take up such positions. This section emphasises that participants, apart from the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, are deemed not to be employees of the person for whom they are working, because they are in an internship. However, it also is at pains to state that the Minister is not deemed to be the employer either. Who is the employer in respect of health and safety law in particular? Is it FÁS or who has the obligations in this regard?

As for the last major portion of the Bill, I welcome that for once, the huge volume of Irish private pension funds amounting to half a trillion euro, might be encouraged to invest in Ireland. They should have been doing so from the outset and perhaps the Oireachtas should consider introducing a levy on those pensions to gain an immediate fund for the State. For example, a levy of 1% would raise €5 billion but one could also consider setting a compulsory percentage of such funds to be invested in Ireland to ensure that huge structural projects that must be carried out are built and delivered.

Deputy Finian McGrath: I thank the Acting Chairman for the opportunity to speak on the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010. I share my colleagues' concern about the manner in which this debate has been handled thus far, regarding the notice given to Oireachtas Members, as well as the urgent need for an informed debate. This is unacceptable and it is important to put on the record my major concerns about what is happening in respect of this debate.

I wish to touch on three aspects of the Bill's contents. These are the civil partnership and certain rights issue; work experience for certain people; and public office holders.

On the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, one can see in its detail where it will also provide for changes to the social welfare code arising from the provisions of the Act. The changes will relate to the definition of "couple" and will

also provide for the entitlement for registered or cohabiting civil partners to various benefits and allowances to mirror those already available to married or cohabiting opposite sex couples. It is an important provision which we must recognise. Many people in such situations have contacted Members of the Oireachtas about this issue.

The changes to the social welfare code will affect all same sex cohabiting couples, not just those who opt to register a civil partnership. This is necessary from an equality perspective as the social welfare code already recognises opposite sex cohabiting couples. It is very important that this is recognised and I welcome the fact that during the debate on the Act we took a major step forward in the country to recognise these couples and new families in Irish society. We can go another step further on the issue of equality. There is broad consensus in the House on supporting these measures and protecting the rights of the people concerned.

On persons involved in the work placement programme, one notes that the Bill deals with this and it is described as a skills development and internship programme approved by the Government in November. The Bill provides for the purposes of any enactment or rule of law other than the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. Such participants shall be deemed not to be an employee and the Bill also provides that they are disqualified from receiving benefits when participating in certain employment programmes.

This is something which sounds very good in theory. I know from talking to many unemployed people, in particular over the past 12 months, that they are dying to get into some sort of work experience or placement. Many people have come to my clinics who said they would work for nothing in order to get experience. That is very positive and kills the myth that people on welfare will not work. The vast majority of unemployed people on welfare are dying to get into work and become involved in placements. However, I wish to sound a note of caution which has already been raised by a number of Deputies. I am concerned about the protection of workers' rights. We have to be very vigilant in ensuring that some people do not exploit the situation, which is linked to the debate on cheap labour. This is important.

A number of speakers touched on the issue of pensions. I ask everybody, in particular those involved in the investment of pensions, long-term bonds and pension funds, to invest in their own country. I ask people over 60 years of age, many of whom have money on deposit, to go out and spend a few extra euro a week. I understand in the region of €95 billion is on deposit in banks in this country. It is important to raise the issue in a debate on social welfare.

We have heard a debate on regulation and how it failed dismally. It always fascinates me that white collar criminals seem to get away with murder in scamming the system here, whereas people on welfare are hounded for every single euro. It was an absolute disgrace to take money from the blind and the poor while other people got away scot free. Unemployed people and those on welfare want to work.

We should be thinking of creative ideas and not running away from the issue of tax. The two Government parties are fudging the issue, in particular in regard to the budget. They seem to think that if one imposes some forms of tax it will kill employment and development. That is wrong; there is potential for an equitable tax system to develop the economy and bring it up to the same level of taxation as many other European countries.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: On a point of order, perhaps the Minister would respond to issue of the status of people on placements. The Minister referred to 5,000 places. Does it not relate to all persons on placement?

Acting Chairman: There is no provision for replies.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: It is an important point.

Acting Chairman: I will allow the Minister to make a brief reply.

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Many issues were raised. The issue of sovereign bonds was something that was introduced in the budget and we want to proceed with it immediately. That is why it is being discussed today.

On internships, many people, including some Deputies present, approached me and asked why an employer could not pay people who were willing to work for social welfare a few bob. It seemed like a simple idea. When we examined the issue, we found a number of legal issues had to be addressed. It is amazing that everybody wants everything done in a hurry but when one starts doing things in a hurry they ask one to do things slowly.

The internship program will be monitored by FÁS. People will be trained and FÁS will examine the abilities of the people concerned and make sure that the training is appropriate. It is not a question of us offering cheap labour; it will not work like that and there will be a large training element to the programme.

On civil partnerships, the legislation is due to come into force in January and we need the provisions in order that we can commence the social welfare provisions in parallel with that.

On public office holders, there would be an outcry if we did not put the PRSI provisions in place in parallel with all of the other impositions. People would say we were feathering our own nests. That is the reason that measure has to be passed. There is a good reason for each measure.

I would like to make a general point. This is the third Bill this year from my Department. There is an impression that there are limitless resources in Departments. Legislation is very detailed and I can confirm that the officials in my Department have burned the midnight oil to prepare the Bill, as Deputies will know because they received the information late last night. There have been months of work and they also have to prepare statutory instruments. The officials have worked as fast as they can.

We are introducing more Bills and making changes and the House in general has been putting pressure on us to bring in more reform and move forward faster. To a certain extent, we are victims of our own success in that we can introduce many important changes, which are needed, by 1 January.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: On a point of order——

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I have to move on.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Can the Minister confirm that the provisions relate to all work placement participants?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): The Deputy will have an opportunity to speak——

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I can confirm that they do not.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I have to move on.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I am trying to help. The Tús scheme is like the rural social scheme and is being run on administrative basis, therefore it does not form part of this Bill.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The existing work placement scheme is covered by this.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I must put the question on the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010: Order for Report Stage

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I move: “That Report Stage be taken now.”

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): Before we move on I would like to draw to the attention of Members that there are some typographical errors in the amendments list. In amendment No. 23(3) on page 19, it should read “Act of 2007”. In amendment No. 13 in the insertion of section 53(b)(3) at the end of page 23——

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I cannot hear the Acting Chairman and I cannot follow what he is saying. If he is proposing changes to legislation, which he seems to be doing, could the changes be circulated?

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): They are only corrections to amendments. Does the Deputy want a list of them?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: They are not corrections to amendments; they are corrections to legislation.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): We will get a list for the Deputy. Is that okay?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I again want to make the point that somebody calling out things in the House is no way to legislate. We are supposed to be circulated with proposals in writing. The Acting Chairman is referring to a Bill and he is reading something which we cannot hear.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I am sorry. Will I read it more slowly for the Deputy?

Deputy Róisín Shortall: No, perhaps the Acting Chairman will circulate it as he is required to do.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I am not required to circulate it.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: We cannot legislate by the Acting Chairman reading something out.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): It has been done before and I saw no objections to it. During my time in the Chair——

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I doubt if it has.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): ——I had to do the very same.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I doubt that it has been done before like this.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): Yes, I had to do the same on previous occasions and I saw no objections to it. Anyway, if the Deputy wants it in writing, we will do that.

Deputy Michael Ring: When changes of this nature needed to be made with previous Bills, all the information on the changes would have been circulated to Members. The problem on this occasion is that we have not received such information. The problem here tonight is that

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everything is being done on the hoof. We need to get this sorted out. It is not satisfactory. My colleagues and I are very unhappy about what is happening here tonight.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): It is being arranged. Deputies will have it in a few minutes. Is that okay? Can we move on in the meantime? Is that agreed?

Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh: The Acting Chairman has to read out the list for the record.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): I will do so. In amendment No. 30, which proposes to insert a new section 53B(3), the reference to “a policy or contract or assurance” at the end of page 22 should be to “a policy or contract of assurance”. In amendment No. 34, the reference to “5.(1)(c)” approximately nine lines from the bottom of item 24 in the table on page 26 should be to “5.(1)(b)”.

Question put and agreed to.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No.2) Bill 2010: Motion to Recommit

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I move:

That the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 be recommitted in respect of amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): Is that agreed?

Deputy Michael Ring: It is not agreed. I am unhappy with the procedure that has been adopted here this evening. I do not want to hold up this Stage of the Bill. I want to raise issues with the Minister on foot of amendments I have tabled. I am unhappy about what has happened here today. I have been in this House for a long time. I hope what has happened here this evening will never happen again. My colleagues and I have explained why we are not happy. I hope this kind of stuff will never happen in this House again. It puts us at a disadvantage. I accept what the Minister has said about his officials. Of course they work very hard. Some of the amending legislation that has been promised has been under preparation for months. That is not our problem. Our problem relates to what has been put before us on the floor of the House today at short notice. It is not acceptable.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: We have already voiced our concern about how we have been treated. This is a sloppy way of dealing with legislation. The material read out by the Acting Chairman earlier related to proposed amendments to amendments. We were not even shown the courtesy of having these changes circulated to us in writing. It makes a laughing stock of the efforts of this House to deal with legislation. It is a joke. I do not think the Acting Chairman or the Ceann Comhairle should have allowed the Minister to behave in such a disrespectful manner.

Question put and declared carried.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010: Report Stage

Bill recommitted in respect of amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

Acting Chairman (Deputy Johnny Brady): As amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 27 to 33, inclusive, are related, they may be discussed together.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I move amendment No. 1:

In page 5, line 23, to delete “ACT 2001;” and substitute the following:

“ACT 2001, THE PENSIONS ACT 1990, AND THE TAXES CONSOLIDATION ACT 1997;”.

The amendment to the Pensions Act 1990 that I am introducing arises from proposals from the Irish Association of Pension Funds and the Society of Actuaries in Ireland, under which a new type of annuity policy, which will make reference to euro-nominated bonds, will be available for purchase by Irish pension schemes and investors. In purchasing this new type of annuity and-or associated bonds, pension schemes will benefit from higher yields than are currently available from French and German markets, thereby reducing the cost to pension schemes in meeting their pension liabilities and the requirement of the funding standard. In an Irish context, the National Treasury Management Agency will issue long-term bonds with a period appropriate to match the funding needs of a typical pension scheme. These bonds will be available for purchase when the insurance industry issues annuities based on Irish yields. These annuities can be bought by pension schemes to match their pensioner liabilities. It is proposed to make these bonds available from 1 January 2011. They can, of course, be purchased in the normal course by pension schemes.

Deputy Michael Ring: We are all pleased that we will have our own bonds. Some pension companies in this country have a lot of money. Some of them have invested pensioners' money very badly. There is a great deal of concern among punters whose money has been spent by such companies. Many of them have lost a great deal of money. We were told not many years ago that the safest investment one could make in this country was in bank shares. The pension funds were very wrong in that regard. I would like to ask the Minister a straight question about Irish agencies, particularly pension funds, that may want to buy these bonds. I hope they will do so. Are these bonds safe for Irish investors? That is the question I want to ask. Are they safe for those whose money will be invested in them? We have had many bonds and many investment companies. They are like economists. One set of economists told us the boom would last until 2015 or 2016. Another set of economists said we would have a soft landing. As long as they are getting paid by the agency of the day, they will say what they are told to say. They got it wrong in the past. I want to know how safe Irish pensioners' money will be when it is invested in these bonds.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: As these bonds will be issued by the National Treasury Management Agency, they will be deemed to be sovereign debt. The Government's clear policy is that it will honour all sovereign debt.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I have had a chance to read the Minister's brief, which has just been circulated. I am a little surprised because I understood an opportunity would be provided for pension trustees to purchase Irish sovereign bonds. The Minister's brief says trustees of pension schemes will be given an option to buy sovereign annuities issued by EU member states. I am trying to figure out the implications of that. Does this mean trustees could buy Greek bonds? If another EU country was in serious economic difficulties and its bond yields shot up, could trustees switch their funds from Irish bonds to that country's bonds? I am a little taken aback in that regard. I did not think that was what the industry was looking for. A few months ago, there was a certain nervousness about the question raised by Deputy Ring. There was some concern about what would happen in the event of a possible default. I would like the Minister to outline the provisions that have been made in the event of such bonds not being secure at

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some future stage. What kind of underwriting is the Government or the State prepared to do on behalf of such pension funds?

Deputy Michael Ring: When we discussed the Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010 on Committee Stage, I asked the Minister to give some reassurance to those who have money and resources in this country. I have been told that over €96 billion is being saved in this country. People are right to be worried. I asked the Minister to reassure them in relation to the post offices, in particular. There was a great concern in that regard. Many elderly people, in particular, were worried. I am afraid that people will start to withdraw money and that, in turn, will lead to robberies and people getting beaten up. I want the Minister to be strong and to assure the people that this scheme is solid and their money is safe. When pension companies invest their money on their behalf, they should be assured that it is safe and backed by the State. I want the Minister to be strong. He should reassure the people that their money is safe, particularly in the post offices.

7 o'clock

Debate adjourned.

Private Members' Business

National Minimum Wage: Motion

Deputy Willie Penrose: I move:

“That Dáil Éireann:

- recognising that the national minimum wage is low, providing a full-time employee with less than €18,000 annually (with reductions for those under 18 or in their first job), and that amongst EU states it ranks as 12th highest when measured as a percentage of average monthly wages and 9th highest if measured in terms of purchasing power parity;
- accepting that:
 - the current minimum wage has not kept pace with average growth in wages or been increased since July 2007;
 - the 2009 income levy has already reduced the real value of the minimum wage; and
 - the new universal social charge will be payable on wages at this level;
- concerned that 116,000 workers, or 6.6% of the workforce, are living below the poverty line, that the working poor make up 24% of all those in poverty and 40% of all households in poverty, and that the minimum wage is especially relied upon for protection by women, migrants and other vulnerable workers;
- noting that only 4% of workers, and only 1.2% of industrial workers in export sectors, are on the minimum wage, with no major impact on competitiveness;
- acknowledging the role of a statutory minimum wage in protecting against unfair competitive advantage by unscrupulous employers who exploit their workers;

- further acknowledging the opportunity available through the Labour Court, which has yet to be invoked by any employer, to plead inability to pay the national minimum wage;
- reaffirming that a statutory minimum wage is a statement of core values, providing a threshold of decency under which society agrees that workers' wages should not fall, and that a reduction would signal a race to the bottom in which everyone — low wage workers, public and private sector workers, social welfare claimants and pensioners — will suffer;
- believing that a reduction in the minimum wage will only create a disincentive to work, will have no impact on the public debt or on economic recovery and makes absolutely no sense at any level;
- condemning the Government's logic that poverty wages will create more jobs and that welfare rates must be below even those poverty wages, which logic will in turn require major cuts in welfare payments; and
- appalled that the Government's four year plan has targeted the most vulnerable members of society and convinced that the proposed reduction in the minimum wage of one euro an hour will have the most profound impact on those who are poorest, deepen their poverty and draw more workers into poverty;

condemns the Government's unnecessary, unwise and unfair decision to reduce the national minimum wage and calls for a reversal of this cut."

With the permission of the House, I wish to share time with Deputies Tommy Broughan and Kathleen Lynch.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Deputy Willie Penrose: I am glad of the opportunity to table this motion on the floor of the Dáil this evening in my name and that of my Labour Party colleagues, on the question of the national minimum wage. I reaffirm the Labour Party's unequivocal and unambiguous long-standing commitment to the effect that we will not implement any reduction in the minimum wage. It is low enough. If legislation under which the Government proposes to cut the national minimum wage, section 13 of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Bill is enacted, we will reverse this particular measure, which in the event will effect an 11.6% reduction in the minimum wage from €8.65 to €7.65 per hour, or in excess of €2,000 per year. That is a commitment we shall give if we are part of any future Government.

In the event that the necessary commencement order is not in place, our commitment is then simple. We will not bring forward a commencement order to allow the provision of section 13 to take effect. I do not believe we can be any clearer in our commitment in this regard. For those who doubt it, it is time they started to believe, in accordance with the words as set out in this motion. The strength of the Labour Party's conviction in this regard may be gauged from the fact that notwithstanding that this matter was debated in Dáil on Thursday and Friday last, we are back here tonight with a clear and comprehensive motion that deals with all aspects of this crucial issue.

Cutting the minimum wage makes no sense at any level. Indeed, it is under the guise of dismantling barriers to employment that the Government is claiming a cut in the minimum wage will ensure the viability of small to medium-size enterprises, SMEs, and will support job creation in those sectors where significant unemployment has occurred. A closer look at the

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actual sectors where the minimum wage is being paid might well show, however, that these sectors are in a process of significant contraction. The Government's own reports for these areas, indeed, indicate the difficulties of creating jobs in these industries in future years and that the problem of survival in these sectors is one of over-supply in the markets they service.

What is vital from our perspective is the fact that the national minimum wage is a floor, not a comfortable standard of living measure. To put that in context it is equivalent to only 45% of average earnings in the private sector, or just more than half of the rate for manual, production, sales and clerical officers' hourly earnings in the second quarter of 2010. Let us ventilate the facts, articulate the reasons the Government is putting forward and let us rebut them, one by one, as I intend to do along with my party colleagues, Deputies Broughan, Kathleen Lynch and others who will contribute over the course of this debate.

Cutting the minimum wage makes no sense at any level. It undermines the social floor and it is proof positive that the least well off and most vulnerable are fair game as far as this Government is concerned. The minimum wage is one of a number of false explanations in relation to the current economic crisis, intended to deflect attention from the banks and Government mismanagement. The Government's claim that the Irish minimum wage is the highest in the EU is misleading, as I shall show in the course of my contribution. It should be noted that in countries where there are lower minimum wages, workers have access to excellent free medical care and cheap public transport, which improves their standards of living. It is likewise misleading to say that the budget leaves those on a minimum wage outside the tax net. While they may not pay any income tax, they have very high taxes on goods and services and user charges, amounting to a regressive social charge, as was pointed out to the Dáil last Wednesday, by my party leader, Deputy Eamon Gilmore. Taken together with the €1 per hour rate cut the weekly wage will be reduced, in effect, by up to €44 per week.

More than 60% of workers on the minimum wage are women, and many will no longer find it worthwhile to enter the workforce, which is contrary to the policy of encouraging women to do so, as was specifically alluded to in the four-year plan. Reducing the minimum wage will do little to improve competitiveness, as most workers affected are not in exporting industries. Evidence from the USA shows that states with a minimum wage have lower unemployment than those which do not. If there is no worthwhile minimum wage, there is no incentive for employers to train workers, or for employees to stay long enough to acquire skills. The result is higher labour turnover and lower productivity.

Reducing the minimum wage will lead to a large number of working poor, as in the USA where almost 20% of the labour force must have two or more jobs to survive, with negative effects on family life and social cohesion. It is clear that a net effect of reducing the minimum wage will be a reduction in the incentive for people to take up low paid jobs and ultimately result in higher social welfare costs. The most likely response of employers to a reduction in the minimum wage will be to cut the wages of their workers. The assurances the Minister gave workers that employers will not cut their wages does not stack up. Such assurances are either naive or cynical. They are certainly not based on a realistic assessment of the likely actions of employers. With a handful of honourable exceptions, employers will not be able to resist reducing existing wages, and the Minister has created more fear and uncertainty among workers.

The National Employment Rights Authority, NERA, has recovered literally millions from employers who defy the law and refuse to pay the minimum wage, and this cut will be a bonanza for them. Other employers will be emboldened by the cut and will simply reduce the wages for their workforce by diktat to the lower rate, and with the threat of NERA effectively now removed the workers will be powerless to defend their wages. More cynical employers will ask the workforce to agree to the cut, making them an offer they cannot refuse, for fear

of losing their jobs. Some employers will do exactly that, and cook up excuses to justify dismissal of their existing workforce so that employees may be replaced by “cheaper” workers on a lower minimum wage.

To ensure that workers were protected from these type of actions by unscrupulous employers, I tabled an amendment in the name of the Labour Party last Friday, that aimed to protect the existing situation of workers. It indicated that the amendment of the national minimum wage to be effected by section 13 would not affect any right, privilege, obligation or liability acquired, accrued or incurred under the Act or under any contract of employment entered into before the coming into operation of the 2010 Act, and any legislation to which it applied. It had the distinction of being widely agreed and argued for by Fianna Fáil and Green Party Deputies, but it was still voted against. As Deputy Shortall said, shame on every Deputy who knows that protection is needed but refused to support the Labour Party amendment.

The legislation that will cut the minimum wage has another sting in its tail. It allows the Minister to change the amount employers can deduct from wages in respect of board and lodging. The current situation is that if an employee is given bed and board as part of his or her employment, the employer can deduct this from the minimum wage. The deduction must be fair and reasonable, not just a sandwich at lunchtime, it must be stated in the employee’s contract of employment and he or she must be given notice of the reduction. The maximum that may be deducted is set out in SI 95 2000 and is currently: full board and lodgings — €54.13 per week or €7.73 per day; full board only — €32.14 per week or €4.60 per day; and lodgings only — €21.85 per week or €3.14 per day.

The fear is that employers will further reduce this provision to further reduce workers’ wages. The European Court of Justice has previously ruled that the cost of board and lodgings cannot reduce minimum wages. The Minister should, therefore, in accordance with the ECJ ruling use his order to rule that board and lodgings cannot be charged against minimum wages. In addition he should reduce significantly the amount that may be charged for board and lodgings. After all, Government logic for reducing the minimum wage is that there has been a decrease in the cost of living.

The minimum wage cut is a massive transfer from the poorest paid workers to their employers. It could take as much as €150 million out of the economy and more than €2,000 per annum from workers’ pockets. The figure of €150 million is based on a €2,000 per annum cut in the wages of 75,000 people in receipt of the minimum wage. If only half their employers implement this cut, this figure will be €75 million. At a time when working families are struggling every day to make ends meet and to put food on the table they are being hit with three cuts, namely, a cut in the minimum wage, a cut in child benefit and a cut in social welfare benefit. Cutting the minimum wage is counterproductive as it will destroy jobs and damage consumer spending. As I stated, the cut represents a possible reduction of as much as €150 million, which is all the more pointless when we know it is the lower-wage earners who spend proportionately more in their local area and have a higher marginal propensity to spend. Their marginal propensity to save is limited and currently stands at 1%. This figure exploded during the previous two years and increased from the normal 4.5% to 12% or 13%.

The Minister has presented the minimum wage cut as some sort of “job stimulus”. It is unfair and cruel to demand that low paid working people should subsidise their employment. This will not work as the impact of removing so much money from the local and real economy of shops and services will be the destruction of even more jobs. The majority of employers will simply pocket the savings. It is equally unlikely that employers will pass on the wage cut to customers. Even if they did, it would be minimal. For example, a wage cut of €1 in the hospitality sector is equivalent to a reduction of 0.61 cent in the price of a meal costing €60.00 or

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more. This cut is, therefore, unlikely to have any effect on demand. Big businesses will benefit more from the cut to the minimum wage. For example, an employer with ten employees will save €400 per week as a result of the cut whereas an employer with 100 employees will save €4,000 per week. This will advantage large employers and increase their ability to undercut small local businesses, destroying more jobs.

The Labour Party argues that the minimum wage cut does nothing to improve the public finances. It reduces income to the State from the universal service charge and increases the level of payments from family income supplement. The Government motion refers to the family income supplement, which is important for many people. However, I never understood it to be in place to indirectly supplement employers, to which this is tantamount. Cutting the minimum wage will take money from the public purse. This type of thinking has already got us into trouble.

There is no justification for a unilateral across the board cut in the national minimum wage.- The Minister's approach is based on a series of myths. The Irish minimum wage is not the highest in Europe. The Minister has stated that it is ranked sixth highest but this disguises the reality. In real terms, those earning the national minimum wage since the time of the last increase in July 2007 are worse off by almost 2.7% as compared to their position in July 2007. To suggest it is not the highest in Europe is to ignore the fact elucidated on numerous occasions by my colleague, Deputy Rabbitte, that in 2007 prices in this economy had reached an all time high. As well as making comparisons with other member states in terms of the minimum wage rate we must also, to validate this exercise and ensure it is accurate in all respects, make comparisons with the cost of living in those member states. We will then have a true measure of the wage involved. Bus fares here have increased by 22% since 2007. The cost of electricity has risen by 2.2 %, local authority rents have risen by 21.5 %, the cost of bread is up by 12.5 % and milk is up by 19 %. People on the minimum wage of €8.65 are being asked to meet these costs despite their not having received an increase in payment since 2007. This basket of basic necessities, which are important in the context of measuring CPI, have been significantly increased.

There is already in place a mechanism under section 41 of the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 which allows employers who have difficulty meeting the minimum wage to apply for a reduction under a claim of "inability to pay". If the rate at which the minimum wage is paid is the problem it is being made out to be, it would be realistic to expect there would be a long queue of employers at the door of the Labour Court. However, no employer has at this point made an application in respect of "inability to pay". This is, in my opinion, a case of do not waste a good crisis.

At €8.65 the Irish minimum wage is not the highest in Europe. As I stated, according to the Minister it ranks sixth. Well informed others, including the Irish Congress of Trade Unions rank it ninth. There is already a lower starting rate of €7.79 for adults, highlighting just how unnecessary is a unilateral across the board cut in minimum wage. Existing rates are €6.06 for under 18s, €6.92 for first year adults and €7.79 for second year adults. Therefore, rates significantly lower than € 8.65 are already built into the minimum wage regime. There is a sting in the tail: the new minimum wage rates will be as low as €5.36 for under 18s and €6.12 for first year adults. Arguably, this impacts disproportionately on women, young people and migrant workers. 25% of workers in the hospitality industry and 12% of workers in the retail sector are on the minimum wage. These are sectors where women and migrant workers dominate. When it comes to the first in line to be kicked by this Government, it is a case of women and children first.

I question the legal underpinning for this approach. This wage cutting exercise is contrary to the approved wage-setting mechanisms established by the International Labour Organisation, a sister organisation of the IMF, which has confirmed that it has not sought this reduction. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Deputy Gormley, went on the public record to confirm that a cut in the national minimum wage was insisted on by the EU Commission. The National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 contains a provision requiring consultation with the Commission on low sectoral wage setting mechanisms. How is this intervention by the Commission consistent with the objectives for social inclusion as set out in Article 3 of the Lisbon Treaty? Pay policy is not an EU competence. How then can the Commission be involved in these issues? The Labour Party sees this cut in the minimum wage as mean spirited and counter productive. All it does is inflict hardship on a significant number of people and households who rely on minimum wage employment. As I stated earlier, it will act as a disincentive to work.

People on the national minimum wage have not been immune to the fiscal adjustment. In real terms, those earning the national minimum wage since the time of the last increase in July 2007 are worse off by 2.7%. The income levy imposed a de facto cut of 2% and consumer prices, excluding mortgage interest, is 0.7% higher than in July 2007. Relative to our trading partners, Ireland's national minimum wage is lower than in the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. This is important. In terms of the purchasing power of the national minimum wage in competitor EU countries, Ireland ranks sixth. Expressed in terms of the prevailing cost of living in each country, the purchasing power of the UK's minimum wage amounts to €7.33 compared to €6.78 for Ireland. Notwithstanding a significant fall in consumer prices in Ireland last year, the cost of living remained 34% dearer than in the UK in 2009 due to a combination of a fall in UK consumer prices and a depreciation of sterling during 2009.

During the course of 2010, this differential is likely to have narrowed due to UK inflation running at 3.2% in October and Irish inflation running at just 0.7%, along with a strengthening of sterling. The UK rate is, in purchasing terms, expected to be higher than in Ireland due to a 2.2% increase in the UK national minimum wage rate in October 2010 to bring the rate to £5.93, which is €6.93 in nominal terms. The impact of the national minimum wage on the cost of services in the Irish economy is grossly exaggerated. Some 5.1% of those employed in private sector services in the Irish economy were earning the national minimum wage as of the second quarter of 2010 and while a larger number of workers were receiving sectoral wage levels, which are calculated as a premium over the statutory minimum wage, just one quarter of the total basket of goods and services is made up of services regulated by EROs and REAs.

The Labour Party is strongly of the belief that we must reaffirm and confirm that a statutory minimum wage is the very minimum and it is a statement of a core value of our country. It provides a threshold of decency under which society agrees workers' wages should not fall. A reduction would signal a race to the bottom, in which everyone, including low wage workers in the public and private sectors, social welfare claimants and pensioners, will suffer. We will not condone this cut and, at the first opportunity if this legislation is enacted, we will reverse it. If it is not and a commencement order is required to ensure the reduction is introduced, we will not bring into operation the relevant and necessary order. That is a clear and unambiguous commitment from the Labour Party and every Member should support working class people who work in the minimum wage environment, particularly women, who comprise 60% of those on the minimum wage.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: I strongly commend my colleague, Deputy Willie Penrose, for using Private Members' business this week to highlight the appalling decision by the Government to cut the national minimum wage from €8.65 an hour to €7.65 an hour under the Finan-

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cial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Bill. The campaign to introduce a national minimum wage in Ireland was a long, difficult struggle led by the labour movement and by the Labour Party. One of the key figures in the campaign for a minimum wage was Mr. Peter Cassells, who prioritised this important campaign during his tenure as ICTU's general secretary.

I was honoured to be involved in the minimum wage campaign and I was delighted, as Labour's then spokesperson on enterprise, trade and employment, to support the introduction of the national minimum wage of IR£4.40 per hour under the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 — more than 100 years after the first minimum wage was introduced in New Zealand in 1896. I argued strongly at the time that the existence of a national minimum wage is a “statement of core values, providing a threshold of decency under which society agrees that workers' wages should not fall” and this is reiterated in our motion. However, it is also clear that since the introduction of the national minimum wage, it has operated in an effective way and has not been a disincentive to work. However, the appalling proposal to reduce the minimum wage will clearly have the opposite effect.

The experience in the US and the UK, for example, has proved that the introduction of a minimum wage is overwhelmingly positive in protecting the pay and conditions of the lowest paid, reducing the cost of social welfare payments and encouraging consumption. It has also been found that the existence of a minimum wage does not have a negative effect on job protection or creation. Landmark research in two US states by economists David Card and Alan Krueger in the 1990s found that an increase in the minimum wage did not lead to job losses. In general, they concluded that the existence of minimum wage regulations have negligible negative effects. This research has been supported by other Nobel Prize winning economists such as Paul Krugman and Joseph Stiglitz. In the UK, the impact of the minimum wage has been monitored since its introduction by Tony Blair and Gordon Brown in 1999. Various studies by the low pay commission and other bodies have found the minimum wage and increases in the hourly rate to have had a positive impact.

However, even in the face of all of this evidence to the contrary, the Minister for Finance and his colleagues continue to insist that they are reducing the minimum wage to address our high unemployment rate and fall in competitiveness. The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation said two weeks ago in the debate on the IMF/EU bailout: “On labour costs, we will reduce the minimum wage by €1 per hour...(based on) research showing that a reduction in the minimum wage would result in an increase in employment in the medium term.” There is no such research and slashing the national minimum wage by a euro an hour and by €40 per week will simply not achieve this objective.

The Government and, especially, our delusional Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, have also tried to argue that cutting the minimum wage was forced on us by the ECB, IMF and EU as the cut in is included as part of the “structural reforms” to facilitate a so-called “adjustment in the labour market” in the EU/IMF programme of financial support for Ireland. This is clearly untrue and the Minister was clearly lying——

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy cannot make the accusation that a Minister has lied.

Deputy Thomas P. Broughan: He was clearly misleading his colleagues, as was pointed out by Mr. David Begg in his analysis of an interview with Mr. Ajai Chopra of the IMF on “Morning Ireland” on 29 Nov 2010, which clearly showed the proposal to slash the minimum wage

came from the Ministers for Finance and the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and all their colleagues.

However, this shameful cut in the national minimum wage is being used as a trigger to produce an internal devaluation following the banking guarantee catastrophe of September 2008. This means that the lowest income families and households will have incomes cut and social welfare benefits slashed. The reduction in the minimum wage is, therefore, part of a wider ideological policy of this Government. Fianna Fáil and the Green Party are cutting the minimum wage and targeting the lowest paid workers in order that social welfare benefits, in turn, can be further slashed and burned.

I welcome Fine Gael's support for the Labour Party's defence of the minimum wage, which we worked so hard to introduce, but the party also wants to achieve an internal devaluation by crushing the most vulnerable in our society and slashing social welfare rates. The identical proposal for €3 billion in social welfare cuts by Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and their €6 billion austerity packages show that they continue to be the Jedward of Irish politics. Fine Gael also wants to slash core public services with almost 50,000 redundancies planned. However, while an internal devaluation is the Fianna Fáil-Green Party-Fine Gael aim, as Deputy Penrose outlined, prices have not dropped to match the decrease in wages and conditions.

In October 2010, it was reported that consumer prices as measured by the consumer price index, CPI, had increased by 0.7% in the year since October 2009. The CPI for November 2010 was also 0.6% higher than in November 2009. Deputies who do a weekly groceries shop — and I am one of them — will acknowledge that the cost of food remains relatively high, especially for families with children. The Central Statistics Office also recorded in November 2010 that housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuel costs increased by 9.2% compared to November 2009. There were decreases in clothing and footwear of 5.5% and of 3.3% in alcoholic beverages and tobacco but they are dwarfed by the increases in fuel and housing costs alone. There were also increases in the prices of prescribed drugs and medication and house and motor car insurance and the ongoing costs of rents, petrol, hairdressers, GP fees, entertainment and leisure services remained high. “Rip-Off Ireland” is clearly alive and well, yet our poorest working families will have €40 per week less to cope with relentless rising prices.

Crucially, the Government has made no effort to control or lower prices for basic goods or services which is what most of the income of low paid workers is spent on. Why, for example, has it not tackled cartels in the liquid fuel, motor, medical and legal sectors that keep prices artificially high for these goods and services? Why are we slashing the minimum wage while actions against these outrageously sheltered cartels are long-fingered? One will not find them in the four year plan or next year's budget. They will be dealt with down the line, but the Government is prepared to cut the income of our poorest people while leaving our richest people escape.

It is grotesque, however, that the Government should use the device of an internal devaluation to allow Ireland to stay within the euro area by crucifying citizens living on the minimum wage and social welfare who are bearing the brunt of the so-called adjustment. As my colleague, Deputy Róisín Shortall, eloquently highlighted in this Chamber last week, who among us could survive on €297 a week on the minimum wage? How do we expect minimum wage workers to adequately feed and clothe their children when their already low wage has been cut by €40 a week and they have to pay the new universal social charge, one of the most shameful actions of the Government?

There has been no increase in the minimum wage since July 2008 and its real value over that period has been significantly reduced through the introduction of the 2009 income levy. For most minimum wage workers, a simple trip to the cinema is an unattainable luxury. One would

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have little or no change out of €50 after bringing a few children to the cinema and buying a few bags of sweets or an ice cream for them. However, the Minister of State is prepared to stand over this hypocrisy and madness. The Society of St. Vincent De Paul has reported a surge in calls for assistance since January with the number of calls up 35% across the country. The number is higher in urban areas, including by more than 50% in Cork and more than 40% in Dublin. The calls have been from low income and minimum wage earner families.

The Labour Party has continually highlighted — and does so again in this motion — that 116,000 workers or 6.6% of the total workforce already live below the poverty line and the working poor make up 24% of all of those in poverty. Cutting the national minimum wage also targets workers who have perhaps the strongest work ethic in the country. Minimum wage workers get paid a pittance for doing tough, grinding jobs, for example, cleaning, security and restaurant service that many in our society simply will not do. In the context of health care costs and the medical card, for example, these minimum wage workers would in many cases be better off not working and the Government is giving them such an incentive through its shameful performance on this measure. As the Society of St. Vincent de Paul has stated, “These are workers who pay for everything and qualify for nothing.”

Many businesses and their representatives also agree that a reduction in the national minimum wage will not enhance competitiveness or create new jobs. The chief executive officer of Retail Excellence Ireland, Mr. David Fitzsimons, sent a briefing note recently in which he stated that he supports the Labour Party position that a reduction in the national minimum wage is “not necessary”. Some of the loudest calls for reductions in the minimum wage came from elements within the fast food industry. Yet this is one of the sectors that is performing very well and making significant profits during the recession as people choose cheaper eating-out options.

The savage cut in the minimum wage contrasts strongly with the ongoing refusal of the Government to reform outrageous and unjustified high pay in the banks, semi-State bodies and particularly in the private sector. This week there was the fiasco of the proposed bonuses in AIB. It is grotesque that senior management in an organisation can earn hundreds of times the salary of the lowest paid worker in the same organisation. As Polly Toynbee noted long ago, the cancer of outrageous pay and bonuses comes directly from the private sector, and especially from the financial services sector.

Our sister party, the Labour Party in the UK, has proposed the establishment of a new high pay commission to overhaul the dysfunctional compensation system. There also clearly should be a maximum rate for public sector and semi-State salaries, perhaps set at €150,000. On a number of occasions in the past year I have called on the Minister, Deputy Brian Lenihan, to establish a high pay commission for Ireland to review compensation across the economy, not just in the public sector but also throughout the private sector. Of course, a high pay commission that examines and regulates pay in the public and private sectors could be a mechanism for curbing excessive salaries that may discourage dynamic and effective people from leading public sector positions.

In conclusion, the €1 cut in the national minimum wage is appalling and shameful, and must and will be reversed. It is designed to make the poorest workers in the country bear the brunt of the Government’s crazy banking policy through an internal devaluation mechanism, which the Labour Party opposed from the start in September 2008. However, the Government has taken little or no cognisance of its implications for the poorest and lowest income people in this country. I commend Deputy Penrose once more on bringing forward this motion.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I congratulate Deputy Penrose on introducing this motion. Most of us were shocked and amazed at the details of the budget. When the Minister for Finance made his Budget Statement there was no detail in it, but when the details emerged we were shocked. I am not sure why we were. After all, we have had 13 years of Fianna Fáil rule and we know at this stage that members of the Fianna Fáil Party are masters at protecting their friends.

The budget ultimately resulted in the Government removing just under €5 billion from the economy, not the €6 billion it had announced. I do not believe one can include the sale of State assets, because it is a once-off event that will never happen again. It will not have that option next year. When it comes to adjusting our finances there is nobody like Fianna Fáil for exposing the type of class ridden society we have. If others were drawing up this budget, they would have started at the top. They would have provided that those working at the top in semi-State companies who are earning sums in excess of €200,000, €300,000 and €400,000 per year would have their salaries halved. That did not happen. Anybody else would have ensured all the consultants who are employees in the State sector would have their wages reduced. That also did not happen. It is as if the woman who cleans the hospital is a lesser being than the consultant. She is not. She is as important and pivotal to the health of the patients as the consultant. Fianna Fáil does not recognise that because, ultimately, the only people that party has any kinship with are those with great wealth.

One wonders who put together this budget. Clearly, the people who did so are so far removed from the everyday lives of ordinary people that they do not realise its consequences. I met three women yesterday afternoon when I was walking through town. One was a widow, one was a lone parent and the third was on the minimum wage. I believe that when the first two left, they walked away feeling sorry for the woman on the minimum wage because she was going to lose €41 per week of her income. Nevertheless, the widow has been impacted twice while the lone parent has been also impacted. These were three average women out walking during the afternoon, two of them seeking work, and this Government had done that to them.

They had one message, "Get rid of this awful Government. It does not realise what the rest of us have to put up with." Christmas is approaching and people on the minimum wage will be left with less than €300 per week on which to live. That money is needed to put food on the table and to buy toys for their children. Believe it or not, the poor still celebrate Christmas, although this year they will have less with which to celebrate it. Instead of starting at the top, this Government started at the bottom again, as it has always done.

The last two speakers are correct that good employers are not seeking this reduction in the minimum wage. Thankfully, there are some very good employers. They know a happy workforce means a more productive company. What worries me desperately about this move is that it is not about the minimum wage, but is directed at social welfare. It is about driving down social welfare and ensuring the gap between what one gets paid for work and what one gets from the State will be even greater. People who are on social welfare through no fault of their own, who have worked for the past ten years and have never been unemployed previously and who now find themselves at the mercy of this awful Government must sit up and take notice.

People on the minimum wage will not be able to afford the increased costs in health, education and their utilities. They will not be able to afford to put food on the table for Christmas. When the general election is held in January or February I hope the reaction will be like that of a woman to whom I spoke recently. When a Fianna Fáil canvassers came to her door last weekend she said, "Not only have you blighted my life, you have darkened my door. Get out of my house." That is exactly what Fianna Fáil will be told on the day of the general election, and it cannot come too soon. People on the minimum wage will not forget this. It is the most dramatic drop in income that any group in this country has absorbed.

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The Minister of State, Deputy Conor Lenihan, and his colleagues will defend it through the amendment to the motion. Until now I believed that the Minister for Social Protection had some compassion for people who are dependent on the State. I now believe he does not. No Minister with that portfolio should have allowed this to happen. When the Minister is having his dinner on Christmas Day, he should think of the people to whom he has done this, the people whose lives he has destroyed. They will be waiting for him, but not in the long grass. This time, they will be in full view, standing at their doors waiting for him. They will tell him not to darken their doors and to get out of the driveways, as one canvasser was told last week.

The Minister knows this cut is awful and should not happen. He must reverse it.

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Conor Lenihan): I move amendment No. 1:

To delete all words after “Dáil Éireann” and substitute the following:

“endorses the national recovery plan as a strategy for economic recovery with the aim of restoring stability to the public finances, improving Ireland’s cost competitiveness, stimulating enterprise growth and job creation; and in particular recognises that:

- the national recovery plan identifies how Ireland’s national minimum wage, NMW, has increased six times since its introduction and is now 55% higher than its original level — by the end of 2010 the consumer price index is forecast to have increased by approximately 28% since 2001;
- research states clearly that a reduction in the national minimum wage will result in an increase in employment in the medium term;
- the reduction in the minimum wage is one element of the labour market reforms outlined in the national recovery plan which also includes the review of sectoral agreements, new labour market activation policies and welfare policy;
- NMW workers are concentrated in sectors badly hit by the downturn including retail, hotels, restaurants and horticulture;
- the State must act to remove any legislative and policy obstacles to job creation;
- even after the reduction to €7.65 per hour, Ireland’s NMW remains in the top tier of EU minimum wage rates and the new rate will remain about 12% higher than the UK;
- individual employment rights in Ireland have a sound legislative foundation, active compliance systems and robust institutions for adjudication on rights and resolving disputes together with broad social support; and
- the Government is providing support for lower income families particularly through the family income supplement.”

I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to the motion.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I understand the Minister of State is sharing time with the Minister, Deputy Batt O’Keeffe, and the Minister of State, Deputy Billy Kelleher. Is that correct?

Deputy Conor Lenihan: That is correct.

I am always amused when I hear Labour Party Deputies promising to reverse things that this Government has done, given that the Labour Party leader, after two minutes on “The Late Late Show”, blindly and blithely asserted that he would not reverse a single cut that we had imposed.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: No, he did not. That is incorrect. The Minister of State is repeating the untruth his brother stated last week.

Deputy Conor Lenihan: So much for turning the clock back.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister of State to speak.

Deputy Willie Penrose: This is not a budgetary measure.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: The Minister of State is misleading the House.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Allow the Minister of State to speak. All Members should be allowed to speak without being shouted down.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: I simply wanted to tell the Minister of State Deputy he is not getting away with it.

Deputy Conor Lenihan: Auberon Waugh complained that the problem with conservatives was that they never actually turned the clock back. It seems that the Labour Party is in the same category.

Deputy Michael D. Higgins: Auberon Waugh is a prime Fianna Fáil source.

Deputy Conor Lenihan: The National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 is a strategy for economic recovery with the aim of restoring stability to the public finances, improving Ireland’s cost competitiveness and stimulating enterprise growth and job creation. Reducing the budget deficit is necessary but it will not, by itself, solve the economic difficulties. Continued export growth will protect and expand high-value employment and stimulate domestically traded sectors of the economy.

Ireland has regained competitiveness over the past two years as wages have adjusted and costs have fallen, helping to price ourselves back into global markets. The frontloading of structural reforms to increase competitiveness and to improve labour market flexibility is central to the strategy outlined in the national recovery plan. Building on the progress already achieved by this Government, it includes extensive measures to underpin our ability to compete in international markets by reducing the costs facing business, but also by increasing competition in sheltered sectors of the economy and supporting sectoral enterprise policies.

I am glad to say that there is now clear evidence that wage and other costs are adjusting throughout the economy, and are expected to continue improving relative to trading partners. The fall in the live register in each of the last three months is a welcome sign that these changes are beginning to bear fruit. The latest research shows that a reduction in the national minimum wage will reduce the cost of doing business and support an increase in employment in the medium term.

It is clear that there are significant labour market bottlenecks that we have to tackle. These include the access to opportunities for up-skilling and re-skilling, especially in the case of those who were employed up until recently in sectors that have been most affected by the impact of the recession; the challenge — in the face of tight fiscal conditions — of targeting cost-effective

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activation programmes to those most at risk of losing contact with the labour market and of drifting into long term unemployment; and developing a more effective and streamlined response to the needs of the unemployed and removing disincentives to participation on training, education and employment opportunities.

In order to target better our activation measures, the national employment action plan, or NEAP, supports activation measures for job seekers and provides for a systematic engagement of the employment services with unemployed people. It has been in operation since 1998 and is currently being re-invigorated to ensure deeper engagement with those at risk of long-term unemployment. The Minister for Social Protection has set out his plans for the rationalisation of the NEAP towards greater capacity and efficiency. These measures will include more frequent and intense intervention with priority clients; the development of a profiling and case management system in 2011; sanctions in the case of unemployed persons on the live register unreasonably refusing to co-operate with the plan and-or with appropriate training, education and employment interventions; and changes to provision for one parent families to alter the passive nature of income maintenance that currently prevails.

In 2009, job search support measures were put in place to double the capacity to cater for the rise in referrals from the national employment action plan, increasing the annual referral capacity to 154,000 persons in 2010, which is almost double the referral capacity that existed in 2008. Despite the difficult fiscal situation, the number of training and employment programmes for the unemployed has increased significantly from 66,000 in 2008 to over 160,000 in 2010.

The labour market activation fund aims to assist in the creation of training and education provision for the specific priority groups among the unemployed. A total of 60 organisations have been successful in securing funding. These organisations encompass the private, not-for-profit and public sectors and are providing approximately 12,000 training places for priority groups of the unemployed at a cost of €32 million.

In addition to the training and employment provision for the unemployed, the Government has indicated in the national recovery plan and in the 2011 budget that it will be introducing several new measures to strengthen the framework of labour market activation supports for the unemployed. These will include a skills development and internship programme with provision for up to 5,000 places; an expansion of the number of placements available on the work placement programme from the current figure of 2,000 to 5,000 in 2011; and a new community work placement scheme, which will provide up to 5,000 additional places in the community and voluntary sector.

An estimated 166,000 learners, including the unemployed, will benefit from full-time and part-time further education opportunities. Almost 1,800 unemployed people were supported to embark on part-time undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from September 2009 in areas that support the goals of the Smart Economy. Over 70% of these were between six and 12 months on the live register and 55% indicated that their motivation for undertaking the programme was to enhance their career prospects.

The labour activation measures I have outlined are being complemented by measures to generate employment opportunities, including the extension of the employer job PRSI incentive scheme to the end of 2011 and by the transformation of the business expansion scheme into a new employment and investment incentive. The family income supplement scheme provides income support to families with children that have employees on low earnings. The payment effectively preserves the incentive to take up or remain in employment in circumstances where the employees might only be marginally better off than if he or she was claiming other social welfare payments.

The FIS applies equally to one and two-parent families. The payment amount is based on a fixed proportion of the gap between the assessable income — net of income taxes and social contributions — of the household and prescribed FIS income thresholds. Currently this fixed proportion is 60% of the difference between the weekly income and the income threshold for the family size. As these thresholds are linked with the number of dependent children in a household, FIS provides an important policy instrument in reducing child poverty in working households, as well as improving incentives to work. FIS was paid to 25,963 families last year, in respect of 55,724 children.

By implementing these measures over the past two years, we have radically transformed the nature of our skills-based economy. All is not lost and many of the people who previously worked in our boom economy are now getting the opportunity to re-skill, retrain and to re-educate themselves. This is happening in line with a situation where the economy is expected to grow in the future. It is no accident that we have responded swiftly to this challenge, doubling the number of places in a very short timeframe. The minimum wage reduction has to be seen in the context of making ourselves more lean, more competitive and more ready to adopt the export led growth that will grow with greater intensity once we climb out of our current situation. I thank Members opposite for their patience.

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate. The national recovery plan presents a detailed strategy to drive economic recovery, restore stability to the public finances, improve our international cost competitiveness and provide the necessary support to our enterprise sector. The Government’s priority is to ensure that the business environment continues to be supportive of enterprises, large and small, promotes export growth and encourages growth in all areas of the economy. The Government’s four year plan has a particular focus on structural reform. The measures to tackle high input costs for businesses, action to remove barriers to employment, and the enhanced activation measures are all critical to improve our competitiveness and underpin economic growth and job creation over the next four years.

Our plan seeks to support the private sector by removing potential structural impediments to competitiveness and employment creation, and by pursuing appropriate sectoral policies to encourage export growth and a recovery of domestic demand. Labour costs represent a relatively high proportion of the total input costs across a range of locally trading sectors. They are a significant input into the cost of domestic services, and they also affect our ability to sell abroad. In addition, they are a significant influence on foreign direct investment decisions. Let me be clear, labour market reform is a prerequisite for Ireland’s long-term economic recovery. Unless steps are taken now to address labour market inflexibility, it is likely to inhibit employment growth in Ireland and lead to a loss of competitiveness in the coming years.

The national recovery plan outlines how Ireland’s national minimum wage has increased six times since its introduction; it is now 55% higher than its original level. It is forecast that by the end of 2010 the consumer price index will have increased by approximately 28% since 2001. The hourly rate of the national minimum wage is the third highest in the EU, after Luxembourg and France, and, at its current rate, is 30% above the average national minimum wage level in the EU 15.

Minimum wage levels vary widely within the EU, from €123 per month in Bulgaria to over €1,683 per month in Luxembourg. The countries with relatively high minimum wages are Luxembourg, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland and the United Kingdom, in all of which the minimum wage has been close to or above €1,000 per month. Another five member states — Portugal, Slovenia, Malta, Greece and Spain — comprise a second group with intermediate minimum wages, from nearly €550 to €900 per month. A third grouping of nine coun-

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tries with the lowest minimum wages — between about €100 and €400 per month — consists of Bulgaria, Romania, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Estonia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland.

When assessing compensation across the economy on an hourly basis, the Central Bank found that per-hour economy-wide compensation levels were 12.8% higher in Ireland than the euro area average in 2008. It is interesting to note that the OECD has emphasised the importance of wage flexibility as a means of boosting demand for Irish workers and preventing unemployment from persisting at high levels. According to the latest figures from the CSO for the second quarter of this year, the minimum wage rate now applies to about 3.2% of the workforce and has a disproportionate effect on employers in the hospitality, retail, manufacturing and horticultural sectors, which are suffering from extremely difficult trading conditions. Labour costs are a high percentage of operating costs in these sectors.

The latest advice available states that the minimum wage sets a baseline for wage negotiations. It is assumed that wages up to 1.5 times the minimum wage are affected by changes in the rate, and up to 30% of wage rates may be affected by a change in the national minimum wage. In addition, it is estimated that anywhere between 170,000 and 300,000 workers are covered by either employment regulation orders or registered employment agreements which set out minimum wage rates on an hourly or weekly basis for specific categories of employees. Our four year plan commits to reviewing these.

I will state clearly that financial benefit to the Exchequer is not the rationale for the proposed reduction in the minimum wage. The four year plan states that, given the scale of the unemployment problem, any legislative and policy obstacles to job creation must be removed. It is essential to strike the right balance among the minimum wage, labour legislation, social welfare rates, taxation and activation of the labour market to avoid disincentives to returning to work. The programme of activation measures being implemented by the Government, as mentioned by my colleague, Deputy Conor Lenihan, will keep workers close to the labour market so they are ready to take up the jobs that will arise as the economy recovers.

Recent research published by Forfás, and advice following from it, clearly stated that a reduction in the national minimum wage would result in an increase in employment in the medium term. The challenge we all face is to work to restore economic growth, maximise employment and prioritise the needs of the most vulnerable so that the progress we have made in tackling poverty in recent years can continue.

I wonder where Deputy Shortall will get her savings. She spoke about not accepting reductions in the minimum wage and in social welfare benefits. It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Labour Party and Fine Gael are becoming the alternative collision rather than the alternative coalition.

Deputy Kieran O’Donnell: That is a tongue twister.

Deputy Batt O’Keeffe: Fine Gael wants a 3:1 ratio of spending cuts to tax increases, while the Labour Party favours a 50:50 split. While the Labour Party set out a €6 billion target in its pre-budget submission——

Deputy Willie Penrose: Four point five.

Deputy Batt O’Keeffe: ——the Labour Party favours a net adjustment of €4.5 billion. Fine Gael has produced a four year plan but the Labour Party has plans only for next year. Fine Gael wants to cut public sector numbers by 30,000, which is twice the Labour Party target. If the parties opposite cannot agree on these fundamentals, their ability to form consensus and

take tough decisions in government is at best questionable and at worst laughable. Despite the many criticisms from the Opposition, the Government is taking the difficult decisions and the necessary action to return Ireland to economic growth.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: It has put €40 billion into the failed banks.

Deputy Batt O'Keeffe: For that reason, I commend the Government's motion to the House.

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Billy Kelleher): I welcome the contributions in the House, although many economic theories are being turned upside down. The Labour Party's proposal, if taken to its logical conclusion, suggests that in times of crisis we should increase wages unilaterally across the broader economy. That would certainly dig us out of a hole. Any economic study would suggest that in times of high unemployment and problems with competitiveness, wage restructuring across the broader economy is essential. This is particularly the case in view of the fact that wage restructuring is taking place across the eurozone and, more importantly, across the globe in general. It is important that we consider this in a broader context, making sure there is competitiveness in the economy, that we can sustain the current wage rates and that we can trade our way out of our present difficulties.

The purpose of the minimum wage is to protect people on low wages and ensure they have a proper and decent standard of living. It was introduced in 2000 by a Fianna Fáil Government. Successive Fianna Fáil Governments have increased its level to €8.65 and, more importantly, established a strong corpus of legislation to protect workers' rights. It is disingenuous for people to come to the House and point out that this Government is unilaterally throwing away all the gains made by workers in recent times. It is simply not a credible argument. We must have an honest debate in the House about the difficulties that are being experienced. It is true that no Government likes to reduce the minimum wage, but we must be honest with people, particularly those who are on social welfare and would love an opportunity to work but, because the economy cannot sustain a minimum wage rate of €8.65, cannot obtain employment. A reduction is essential to provide a stimulus in that area.

The Minister, Deputy O'Keeffe, referred the areas of wages, taxation, social welfare and labour activations measures which must be taken as an overall package. Let us consider the areas which are struggling and under great pressure, including the hospitality, retail and the horticultural sectors. It is not a credible argument for people to suggest they can sustain the present rates. Shops, supermarkets, retail outlets, restaurants and bars are closing throughout the country as we speak. Were we to take on board the Labour Party policy, then we would increase the minimum wage even further above €8.65. In his opening remarks, Deputy Penrose stated that those on the minimum wage spend proportionately more in the local economy and that they contribute more to central services in the immediate economy.

Deputy Willie Penrose: That is correct.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: If that is the case then an increase should further help local economies. Unfortunately, economics does not work that way. We live in a real world, something that will dawn on people who are flirting with and considering the policies of the an alternative Government across the House. It is like playing leapfrog with a unicorn in that it may sound like a good idea in the beginning but it gets progressively painful as one continues.

Let us consider what the Government has done in recent times. I refer to the four year plan to ensure funding is available to the State during the next four years. This deal involves the

[Deputy Billy Kelleher.]

IMF, the EU and other organisations and states throughout the European Union. This is an indication that there is no short-term, quick-fix solution to the issues we face. We are in a difficult situation. The country is on a precipice. We must bring forward policies that are difficult, which may be painful and will cause a certain amount of distress to people. We accept as much on this side of the House. However, at least we are honest enough to point out that this is necessary. This applies not only to the reduction of the minimum wage but throughout the public sector, the readjustment of pension contributions, the embargo in place, the seeking of further efficiencies from the public sector and in the private sector as well.

People are faced with harsh realities on a daily basis. Employers with up to nine employees may have to look one of them in the eye and explain that they cannot be kept on. Employment rights are in place to deal with employers who abuse their workers and seek to undermine workers' rights. A body exists and is available to inspect, enforce and prosecute people who infringe on workers' rights. Equally, many employers throughout the country are keen to retain as much employment as possible. That is not possible at present in the economic cycle. Certain people have consistently highlighted that this is an attack on the poor and those on low pay. It is not an attack on low pay. This is about attempting to ensure that more employment is generated for people with low skills or people in part-time work.

Deputy Penrose referred to the reduction in the minimum wage and people using the minimum wage and the family income supplement as a subsidy for employers. The same argument could be made in the case of a person who is employed for two days per week and who draws social welfare for three days per week. That is the same argument. Is that a subsidy to employers? No, it is simply that the employer cannot afford to pay such a person for two days per week or only needs that person for two days per week. We must be honest. Those in positions of leadership, regardless of which side of the House, should be able to stand up and clearly state that this is done out of necessity because of the need to ensure we are competitive and can generate more employment at the lower end of the economy. This is the purpose of it.

Those of us on this side of the House have been proud in recent years to consistently increase the minimum wage as part of the social partnership agreements. The agreements set out clearly, in statute under the National Minimum Wage Act, how we arrive at increases in rates of pay. One could argue that further rates of pay in the economy may not be sustainable in the longer term. We must be honest about this as well. For example in construction, people are not being paid according to registered employment agreements and are moving to C2 forms. People are now working as self-employed persons and undercutting the rates of pay because, one could argue, the rates of pay in the current climate are not sustainable. There is a haemorrhage of jobs throughout the construction sector. To suggest we are attempting to undermine all protections in this House does not represent a fair debate.

Regarding the four year plan, the Minister, Deputy O'Keeffe, outlined the commitment to review the registered employment agreements, REAs, and the employment regulation orders, EROs, which is essential. Even before the advent of the IMF this was something we discussed in the House on Committee Stage and Second Stage debates on employment rights. There is a need to streamline these agreements and bring cohesion to these areas and to collective bargaining. This is a matter on which we must bite the bullet. We must ensure the system is in place which responds to market needs.

Market need is not about putting profit in employers' pockets. It relates to the demands of the market and what it can sustain at a given time. At present, we cannot sustain the existing arrangements across the board as suggested by certain people opposite because it is popular and it provides a good soundbite. Some of the wages in our economy are unsustainable at present. We are competing against other eurozone members and the UK. Some have suggested

we should follow the UK but we must be more competitive than the UK. If we are not more competitive than the UK our people will be working in the UK. This is something about which we must get real. We have no wish to force people abroad but if we try to sustain the current rates of pay in some areas that is where people will end up. We cannot sustain the existing numbers in employment without a lower rate of pay.

This debate is an opportunity to outline that an employment rates body exists, that is, the National Employment Rights Authority, a body much criticised and maligned from time to time. When I was Minister of State with responsibility for labour affairs, I took part in several debates in which people urged me to reduce the number of inspections and to ensure certain industries would not be inspected because they were under pressure, which speaks volumes. The National Employment Rights Authority exists for a definite purpose. It ensures workers' rights are protected and that rates are agreed in a competitive situation, either through the legislation in place to deal with the minimum wage, or through the enforcement of EROs or REAs.

We must accept there is a need for an urgent discussion in this Chamber and elsewhere on the setting of wage rates throughout the economy. There is merit in the motion but it indicates a certain amount of populism propagated in certain quarters. It has been suggested this is an attack on the poor and on people on social welfare. It is nothing of the sort. The Government is making difficult decisions to at least ensure that competitiveness is sustained in the economy. For example, students have not been able to access work in recent times as everyone is aware because many of the businesses employing people on the minimum wage cannot survive.

Only when an order is signed will the minimum wage be reduced. Employers should be conscious that they would be in breach of employment legislation if they unilaterally reduced the minimum wage without discussion or consultation with their employees, a fact which must be highlighted. While the minimum wage is €8.65 per hour, employers must pay €8.65. People should not be shy about reporting instances of abuse to the National Employment Rights Authority.

No Government is keen to come to this House and reduce the minimum wage. However, it has been done for the reasons I have outlined and for the reasons outlined by my colleagues on this side of the House. We must be honest. This process is to ensure that people can find work at the lower rate of pay in very difficult times in this economy and for their families.

Deputy Kieran O'Donnell: I wish to share time with Deputies Clune, Damien English, Paul Connaughton and Richard Bruton.

I support the motion and I commend Deputy Penrose for bringing it forward. The Minister of State, Deputy Kelleher, spoke of making decisions with regard to competitiveness. Government's role is to strike a balance and find a fair solution. Competitiveness for the small employer can be dealt with in two ways. First, there is the crude measure of cutting the minimum wage. The other is to eliminate the employers' PRSI contribution of 8.5% on employees' earnings which would save €30 a week per employee on the minimum wage for each employer while the Government would save €40 per employee a week. Both measures benefit the employer; the first penalises the employee.

How can the Minister of State expect someone to live on €297.62 a week? Under the old minimum wage rate of €8.65 an hour, an employee on a 40-hour week would earn €346 a week, €17,992 a year. On top of that, he or she would pay an income levy of €359.84 a year. The new rate will see a reduction in weekly pay of €41.46, or €2,080 a year, with the gross wage coming to €306 per week, €15,912 a year. In addition, a minimum wage earner will pay €435.76 on the

[Deputy Kieran O'Donnell.]

universal service charge and an extra 21%, €75.92, in tax. Not only has the minimum wage been reduced, the amount of tax minimum wage earners pay has increased.

There is a contradiction in the Minister of State's claim that those on the minimum wage will not remain on that wage level. Many of them are women in temporary employment in cleaning and the hotel trade. They will not come off the new minimum wage quickly.

We all agree employers have difficulties with rising costs. I had that experience over many years as a self-employed accountant. A measure, however, must be found that does not penalise the less well-off. A single person on the minimum wage will more than likely not qualify for either a medical card, rent supplement, because they work more than 30 hours a week, or fuel allowance. Under the old rate, the margin between jobseeker's allowance and the minimum wage averaged at €143 a week. Under the Government's new rate, the difference will be €110 a week. The Government should be putting in place measures which will encourage people to go into employment. Instead, it has come up with a proposal that if a jobseeker gets a job that pays the minimum wage, he or she will actually lose many social welfare supports which may not be to his or her benefit with little difference in income rates.

The Minister of State pointed to minimum wage rates in other countries. However, Ireland has its own standards. Would the Minister of State be able to live on €297 a week? It would be a good effort if all Members, once a year, tried to live on the minimum wage for one week. If that happened, I am sure the Minister of State would not be introducing this proposal.

The Minister asked where the Opposition parties would find budgetary savings. The reduction in the minimum wage actually makes no savings for the Exchequer. All it does is further penalise the less well-off and create a greater social wedge. Yet, the Government had no problem putting €40 billion into the two failed entities of Anglo Irish Bank and Irish Nationwide Building Society. We also need to know when the Minister for Finance first learned about the €40 million AIB bonus package. His road to Damascus conversion yesterday to get the AIB board off the hook does not ring true.

I commend the motion to the House. I hope the Government will see some rationale and common sense on this matter and reverse its decision on the minimum wage.

Deputy Deirdre Clune: Considering there was not much time last week to discuss the reduction in the minimum wage rate, I am glad to have a further opportunity to focus on this measure. It makes no sense for the Government to reduce the minimum wage by €1 per hour as it does not save the Government any money for balancing the budget. Decisions in this area should always be taken to encourage people into work and off welfare, as they will always be better off in employment.

Fine Gael proposed in its budget submission that the minimum wage should not be cut but the 8.5% employer's PRSI contribution should be abolished, a more cost effective measure for employers. Such a measure would be more imaginative than taxing the 4% of workers on the minimum wage. Those budget cuts last week that focused on the lower paid will only take money out of the economy, leaving less discretionary income to be spent on activities such as going to the cinema or going out for a bite to eat. Instead of providing an economic stimulus, the Government has provided a disincentive for people to spend money.

Fine Gael also proposed the reduction of the VAT rate from 13.5% to 12% to encourage more consumer spending or for people to make home improvements such as house extensions. These kinds of imaginative and creative measures will get the economy going again and keep people in work. The Government, however, has done the opposite.

I was disappointed there was no focus on the joint labour committee's employment regulation orders. This is an area that needs urgent assessment rather than a nodding commitment to tackling it some time like that given to dealing with nursing home regulations. We have heard all the arguments against these orders but they actually make it expensive to employ people and run a business in sectors including agriculture, hotels, retail groceries, security, tailoring, shirt-making and contract cleaning. The JLCs and employment regulation orders are making it difficult to operate businesses and employ people, not the level of the minimum wage. The focus has been on the wrong area. It should have been on the JLC and employment regulation orders in an effort to get business costs down.

Deputy Damien English: I welcome this important motion and thank Labour Party colleagues for tabling it. The key message is that it is a statement of core values. What a legacy the Government will leave behind. First of all it breaks the country and then it leaves people in dire straits. Families are panicking and wondering how they will pay their weekly food bills. On top of all that, as a final stroke, the Government hits the minimum wage. It had done well on that previously, with our support because we all bought into this statement of core values. The minimum wage is about fairness and setting a mark in order to make it worthwhile to work. If the minimum wage is cut by another euro per hour, however, it will not be worth working. People also face the cost of getting to work, even though the Government has failed in many areas of public transport. Deputy Penrose and I represent rural areas where many people cannot just hop on a bus to work. Even where buses are available there are no free travel passes, so it costs money to get to work. The Government should make it worthwhile to work and thus, wages must cover costs as well as providing a decent amount of money to live on. That will not happen if the minimum wage is cut further, however. The cost of living in Ireland is not as cheap as in other countries.

Groups that attended Oireachtas committees to seek a reduction in the minimum wage never proved their case. We asked them to tell us honestly whether this was about trying to drive other wages down, because the minimum wage is often used as a benchmark, but they never came back to us with any answers. Last week, Ministers quoted documents which showed that if the minimum wage was increased by a certain amount there would be a corresponding loss of jobs. There is no conclusive proof that jobs will be lost by leaving the minimum wage as it is, however. If there were, we would have a proper discussion about it, but there is no proof. It is not good enough to make such incorrect statements.

What is the real history of this matter and who made the decision to reduce the minimum wage? Fianna Fáil TDs will be campaigning in the next couple of months saying that Europe or the IMF did this. They will say: "Sure, those boys in Europe are awful. We'd no choice". They will blame everybody else but that is not true. When we met Commissioner Ollie Rehn one of the first things he mentioned was the minimum wage. I found that very strange and wondered what relevance it had to our meeting with him. He said: "We'll have to address the minimum wage and will have to look at that". I asked him why he was singling out the minimum wage and he said it was not his call but something that we would have to look at. He said it had been discussed within the Government's plans. He said it was not his idea but it had obviously been put into his head by the Minister for Finance and other Ministers. It was the Government's idea to do this because it failed to tackle the cost of business across the board.

Deputy Michael Ring: Yes.

Deputy Damien English: It failed miserably. I thought the Minister of State, Deputy Kelleher, would make a change on this. He said he would tackle it. On many occasions during Question Time, we discussed red tape, insurance costs, banking charges, telecommunications and PRSI,

[Deputy Damien English.]

all of which are heaped onto businesses. All of these costs were discussed with promises to cut them by 25%, but it never happened. The four year plan contains more wishy-washy statements about tackling competitiveness, while all the Government is doing is driving down the minimum wage. Fine Gael presented an alternative option — if the Government really wanted to reduce business costs while protecting employees, it should be done by reducing PRSI. It is the same difference because it reduces the cost to business of employing staff. Seemingly, that is what the Government wanted to do, but I do not believe it.

In other budgetary measures, the Government proved that it comprises a mean bunch of people. Who else would go after a blind person or hit carers, another group the Government failed to address during the good times? The same logic flows from the minimum wage cut, which is a mean attempt to take money from people at the lowest end of the jobs market. They do not have much money, yet they are working in some of the toughest jobs: behind a bar or in a restaurant, working weekends, as well as split shifts and double shifts, just to make a living. Nonetheless, they get whacked by this Government at the last minute. It is very wrong.

Deputy Michael Ring: The Government has made a serious mistake in reducing the minimum wage. I compliment Deputy Penrose on his speech. He is correct in saying that this does not make any political or economic sense. It is wrong to attack people on low incomes. I am afraid that the Minister will push more people onto social welfare because it will be better for them than to work. We cannot have a situation where it will not pay those on very low incomes and in receipt of rent allowance to work. Work should pay in this country. What is the thinking within the Minister of State's Department? Approximately, 465,000 people are unemployed.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: According to the recent CSO figures, there are 299,000.

Deputy Michael Ring: There are more than 400,000 people unemployed.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: The live register is different.

Deputy Michael Ring: On the live register they are still unemployed.

Deputy Billy Kelleher: I am just trying to be helpful to the Deputy.

Deputy Michael Ring: That is grand but I will be helpful to the Minister of State also. The Minister of State, Deputy Conor Lenihan, said earlier that this seems to be very good news for the Government because the figures are down. He forgot to mention the number of graduates and others who have emigrated. In my own county and town, I have noted the number of young people who will not be home for Christmas. This is the first time in recent years that we have seen young people having to leave the country because there is no work for them. More young people will be graduating in June, yet there will be no work for them either. I hope there will be places for them to go to because there will be no work in this country.

I would like the Minister of State to answer this question — with that number of people on the live register, why did more than 5,000 people receive work permits to enter this country last year? Was that done to push down the minimum wage? Even if the Minister of State's unemployment figures are correct, why do we need to bring in people to do work which can be done by Irish workers? The Department should examine this matter.

Deputy English is right to refer to stealth taxes, which have been discussed by Opposition Members as well as Fianna Fáil TDs. The Government has lost control of local authority regulation. There has been no respect for business for the past 20 years because the Government thought builders and bankers would keep the country running, but that was never going

to happen. We forgot where we started in small businesses, which constitute the backbone of the economy. Nevertheless, small businesses have been attacked by the Government through over-regulation and attacked by local authorities through stealth taxes. Every time local authorities wanted an increase in water charges, rates or other levies, they thought they could impose it on the business community and they did so. I am surprised that over the years the national chambers of commerce did not take a case against the Government and local authorities because that section of the community was paying rates yet getting nothing for them.

Small businesses pay rates, water and refuse collection charges. A new regulation now seeks to control where publicans put their empty bottles. There are to be more levies and regulations over where bottles are to be disposed of. Publicans are hardly able to keep the pub doors open, not to mention pay their staff and taxes, yet somebody comes along with a new regulation stipulating that empty bottles must be disposed of in bags and buried for Deputy John Gormley and the Green Party. The sooner we get rid of this Government, the better because it has destroyed business and the country generally. The sooner the Government leaves office, the better because this green energy campaign is costing jobs and money in rural Ireland.

Debate adjourned.

Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010: Report Stage (Resumed) and Final Stage

Bill recommitted in respect of amendments Nos. 1 and 2.

Debate resumed on amendment No. 1:

In page 5, line 23, , to delete “ACT 2001;” and substitute the following:

“ACT 2001, THE PENSIONS ACT 1990, AND THE TAXES CONSOLIDATION ACT 1997;”.

—(Minister for Social Protection).

Deputy Michael Ring: Will the Minister confirm that people who pay the universal social charge, which is paid into the social insurance fund, will qualify for a contributory old age pension? This charge is to be levied on judges and politicians and it is going directly into the social insurance fund. Will they be able to draw out of the fund? Payments to the social insurance fund have always entitled those who make the payments to a contributory old age pension. Will this entitlement apply to those who pay the universal social charge?

What interest rate will be charged on the bonds it is proposed to offer? There is a massive amount of money in savings accounts. Could these bonds not be offered to people who have savings? We will be paying the IMF and the EU 5.8% interest on money borrowed. Why not ask Irish people to buy bonds? People who have money in savings accounts might be prepared to invest if they got a fair return for their investment. If we are prepared to pay 5.8% to the Germans, the British or others, why not give 6% to Irish people and let them assist the country and make a profit at the same time, rather than have brokers in Germany or Britain making a profit.

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Questions have been asked that are not relevant to the amendment. There will be no benefit to judges or public representatives.

Sovereign bonds are issued by the Government and are perfectly safe. The Government has been at pains to state that there is no circumstance under which we will renege on sovereign debt. That is the right policy because that certainty allows us to do things such as we are proposing here today.

[Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív.]

Pension funds do not have to buy into this. Deputy Shortall asked if pension funds could buy Greek bonds. In theory, one can buy whatever one wants, but there are rules in relation to the Pensions Board, insuring good practice and so on. Pension funds can buy European bonds and they have been buying German and French bonds. They can buy non-Irish bonds.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: German bonds have a lower yield.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Yes, but there is nothing to stop anyone buying them.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: The whole purpose of this was that Irish bonds had a high yield, so there was a win-win situation.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: That is the whole attraction.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Why did the Minister not limit it to Irish bonds?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I understand that would not be legal under EU competition law.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Under the existing rules, annuities must be priced against German bonds.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: That is exactly what we are changing. Until now, there was not the same attraction in buying Irish bonds.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I am saying that under the current rules Irish annuities must be priced against German bonds. Why can the Government not simply change that regulation to allow them to be priced against Irish bonds? It does not have to be EU bonds.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Irish pension funds can buy non-Irish bonds.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: That is why I am saying the measure will not necessarily achieve what it is intended to achieve.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I think it will. It is up to the industry to avail of the scheme once we bring it in. One could buy blended bonds, for example, which are a mixture. Many products could be made available.

It seems to be to be a no-brainer that people should be encouraged to buy Irish bonds. The money stays in the country, there is a better return and pension funds become more solvent. Adjustments will be made to the funding standards to reflect this. It is a very important step in the right direction and will give us a good return.

Deputy Michael Ring: The Minister says there will be no gain from paying the universal social charge. The social insurance fund is used to pay carers, pensioners and people with a disability. Is the Minister saying those who will pay the charge for the next 20 or 30 years will not have a contributory pension at the end of their working days?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: As the law is written there is no gain.

Deputy Michael Ring: Is that legal?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: If we make it the law it is legal.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: Is it fair?

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I will put it another way. What would have been said if we had awarded ourselves a 4% payment? For example, civil servants employed before 1995 make a contribution and get a very marginal gain. They get a *pro rata* State pension and that depends on whether one has ordinary contributions. If we had said we were to get an A rate pension in return for a payment of 4% it would be said we had done it for our own gain, that we always look after ourselves very well and why should someone get a Deputy's pension and a State pension.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I am not talking about Deputies. It applies to other people.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: It mainly applies to people who hold public office. Given the age profile of judges, the vast majority of them will have made enough contributions during their years as self-employed people to qualify for a State pension, as will many people in this House. Paying the universal charge does not confer any advantage.

Amendment agreed to.

An Ceann Comhairle: Amendment No. 2 has already been discussed with amendment No. 1.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I move amendment No. 2:

In page 5, lines 28 and 29, to delete all words from and including "Social" in line 28 down to and including "2010" in line 29 and substitute "Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010".

Amendment agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

An Ceann Comhairle: Amendments Nos. 3 and 4 are related to and consequential on amendments Nos. 13 to 24, inclusive, and No. 34. All may be discussed together.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I move amendment No. 3:

In page 5, line 31, to delete "Schedules 1 and 2 " and substitute "Schedules 1, 2 and 3".

Amendment agreed to.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I move amendment No. 4:

In page 5, line 34, to delete "12 and 13 " and substitute "12, 13 and 15 to 26".

Amendment agreed to.

An Ceann Comhairle: Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 are related and are alternative to each other. They may be discussed together.

Deputy Michael Ring: I move amendment No. 5:

In page 7, to delete lines 15 to 49, to delete page 8 and in page 9, to delete lines 1 to 27.

I raised this concern on Committee Stage and I raise it again tonight. I am very concerned about people signing on for job seeker's allowance by electronic means or telephone. We have enough fraud and I am worried about it. The Minister did not convince me during the debate on Committee Stage. Social welfare fraud is not acceptable. During the weeks of the volcanic ash cloud, 2,500 fewer people signed on.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: The Deputy has been given the correct figures many times.

Deputy Michael Ring: I am only saying what I read in the media.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: My Department gave the Deputy the information. It is time that myth was put to bed. The Deputy knows the facts.

Deputy Michael Ring: The Government saved almost €600 million by pursuing fraud last year. We have seen what can happen to someone's credit card.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: The majority of people who did not sign during the week of the ash cloud were Irish.

Deputy Michael Ring: That does not matter. If they were supposed to sign on and did not do so, then there is something very wrong.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: That is what happens every week.

Deputy Michael Ring: I could understand why people might not have been in a position to sign on if the weather was bad.

Neither I nor my party are satisfied with the proposal contained in the Bill. I accept what the Minister stated with regard to staff within the Department being freed up to do other work. However, I am concerned with regard to what will happen. Credit cards are not foolproof and we have all witnessed the fraud that has been perpetrated in respect of such cards. The Minister tried to convince me of the position on Committee Stage. I could not accept his assurances then and I intend to oppose what is proposed in this regard.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: In general, I have an open mind in respect of this matter. If it is possible for the Department to use electronic means of operating in order to save money, that is fine provided the proper safeguards are put in place. However, the Department has not distinguished itself in the context of adopting modern technologies. In the past, it proved to be incapable of even collecting the PPS numbers of landlords. At that stage, we were informed that the relevant form was set out in a certain way which could not be changed and that the computer system could not cope with it as a result.

In several reports relating to fraud and overpayments within the Department, the Comptroller and Auditor General made the point that one of the main reasons for the latter is that while the Department has a great deal of information at its disposal in respect of the circumstances of different claimants and their families, the relevant systems cannot communicate with each other. The Department has the information but it does not necessarily possess the technology that will allow it to use this properly. In light of the Department's poor performance in respect of such technology, I would be sceptical with regard to the proposal to allow people to sign on or whatever by way of mobile telephone.

The Minister referred to a system which could recognise people's voices and identify whether they were in the country. The theory behind that is fine but I find it difficult to believe that the Department would be in a position to operate such a system. I do not have a closed mind about this matter. If it can be done and if the system is secure, then well and good. However, I am concerned that in light of the pressure on budgets, the Minister is trying to save money in the context of staff resources and that, in doing so, the Department would ease up in respect of putting the proper controls in place.

Amendment No. 6 proposes that the new system should be put on trial on a limited basis for a specified period and that its effectiveness should then be assessed and evaluated. The

amendment also proposes that the new system should be introduced on a pilot basis and that, following a period of two years, the performance of the Department's controls relating to the tackling of fraud and overpayments would be reviewed. I suggest that the Department should try out the new technology but that it should tread carefully in doing so.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: The Department's IT systems are continually being upgraded. What happens is that what is now the newest system will be the oldest system in five years time. At that point, what is now the oldest system will have become the newest again in light of the constant circle of upgrades that obtains. The Department has very good IT systems. People tend to underestimate the scale of what the Department does each week, particularly in the context of the delivery of payments to 1.5 million recipients of social welfare. In addition, it is continually gathering information as a result of people seeking their entitlements through the system. In light of the actual limitations of IT systems and the fact that technology has a limited shelf life, I am of the view that the Department has a good record.

Let us ignore the issue of mobile telephones for a moment and concentrate on Deputy Ring's amendment. What the Deputy is opposing is the Department being given power under the law to put in place electronic signing pads in its social welfare offices. Such pads can verify people's signatures, thereby obviating the necessity for them to present at a counter in order to sign on in front of an official. If a person's signature is not recognised by the pad, he or she will then be obliged to present to an official. However, the system will work for those who sign on their own behalf. Deputy Ring is stating that he does not want this to happen even on a trial basis. I am surprised by that.

Deputy Michael Ring: There is a Member who used to occupy the seat in which the Minister is now sitting and who did not have a bank account at one point.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: That is correct.

Deputy Michael Ring: The individual in question never put money in the bank. He was probably 20 years ahead of his time in that regard.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Nothing should surprise anyone anymore.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Deputy Ring and I live in the west. In the area in which I reside, people are more advanced than that. The Deputy is not opposing the specific technology proposed in the Bill, he is opposing the use of any electronic technology for signing on, regardless of how simple it is to operate. I am of the view that he is wrong in opposing this measure but I accept that he has a right to do so. However, what the Deputy is actually opposing is the installation of electronic signing pads in social welfare offices and I want him to be aware of that fact.

Deputy Michael Ring: On the night before my party's Ard-Fheis last year, I attended a wedding in Portugal. I carried out one transaction with my credit card in a restaurant. One month later, I discovered that an amount of either €2,500 or €4,500 — I cannot remember which — had been debited from my account. As already stated, the wedding was held in Portugal but the transaction to which I refer was carried out in the Netherlands. That is why I do not trust electronic systems. The bank was obliged to pay out the money in question because I was not at fault for the fraudulent transaction and had done everything above board. We are all aware of the scams that have been perpetrated in this country in respect of credit cards.

Deputy Shortall is correct, if the Minister wants to operate the new technology on a trial basis then he should by all means do so. However, the pilot project should be quite small in

[Deputy Michael Ring.]

order that we can assess how the system works. I am opposed to the use of this type of technology at present and the Minister has not convinced to alter my views. The Minister stated that the Department has a good record. However, he recently informed a meeting of the relevant committee about the amount of money the Department had overpaid as a result of errors made either by computers or staff. I am concerned about the use of this technology and I will not be supporting its introduction.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: I agree with Deputy Ring. The presumption that computers will be able to read and verify people's signatures is not a fair one. There are those who have no difficulty copying the other people's signatures and who have been very effective in doing so. I will not refer to specific instances in that regard but I am aware of a number of them. I can state without any shadow of a doubt that the system the Minister is proposing is not foolproof.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: If the people to whom the Deputy refers are that good, would it not be possible for them to forge signatures just as well in front officials?

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: No. There has been a great deal of discussion in respect of fraud and there is a presumption that massive fraud is taking place. All of the cases with which I have dealt in recent times involve instances where people's payments were cut off. These individuals did not receive their payments for a considerable period thereafter. The position with regard to deliberate fraud is different. I accept that a minority of people are probably involved in such fraud.

The presumption that all new technology is good and that we should automatically put it in place does not stand up to scrutiny. Let us recall what happened with regard to the electronic voting machines. There were those of us who were opposed to the introduction of such machines because we were aware of what they could be used to do. It was proven beyond doubt that the technology to be used for electronic voting was not reliable. The PPARS system used by the HSE was also not reliable and did not do the job for which it was intended.

Deputy Shortall is correct. If new technology is to be introduced, this should be done on a very small scale and in such a way that it will not give rise to enormous costs. In addition, contracts which would commit us to massive investment during the next ten years in respect of technology that might not work at all should not be entered into.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: I assure the Deputies that is not what is intended. All of the systems the Department uses are electronic. Consequently, it is necessary to have the legal ability to use electronic signing and one cannot even try anything without it. It always amuses me when people speak of their lack of trust in electronics. I often ask them whether they are willing to sit in a modern aeroplane because half the time they are landed by electronics. One element that has made modern flight so safe is the use of technology. It is not that the pilots are so much better but that the aeroplanes are so much better.

Deputy Michael Ring: A fair few of them have gone down.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: Aeroplane electronics have become so much better that they can land in a fog.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: Some of them did not make it.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: A lot fewer. As the Deputy is aware, it is one of the safest forms of travel because human error has been removed. It is the reason that it is relatively safer to get into an aeroplane than into a car because there is less human input involved. Therefore, while

I do not believe that electronics cannot be tampered with or that they are foolproof, in many cases they provide a better result. In industries throughout the world, it is evident that electronics provide a more consistent result than does human intervention. This measure should at least be tried and I need this section to do so. However, if the Opposition is opposed, it must be put to a vote.

Question, “That the words proposed to be deleted stand”, put and declared carried.

Amendment declared lost.

Amendment No. 6 not moved.

An Ceann Comhairle: Amendments Nos. 7 and 8 are related and will be discussed together.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: I move amendment No. 7:

In page 10, line 35, after “number” to insert “and a tax clearance certificate”.

These two amendments and the following couple all relate to the payment of rent supplement. Rent supplement probably is the area of social welfare that is crying out most for reform. The manner in which it operates at present poses the greatest poverty trap to people in receipt of social welfare. There has been much loose talk recently about the welfare system, people being incentivised to remain in receipt of welfare and how it does not pay them to take up work. However, this is not the case as the vast majority of people would be better off moving from welfare to work. Approximately 7% of jobseekers are in receipt of rent supplement and for people in such circumstances, it is not worth their while to take up a job. This is because of the manner in which rent supplement is withdrawn if someone goes to work. Consequently, if the Minister was serious about removing the disincentives and encouraging people from welfare to work, this issue should have had his immediate intention. It certainly appears as though he probably will not have a chance to do anything about that now——

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: One never knows.

Deputy Róisín Shortall: —— but this must be the number one priority for the incoming Government.

A number of steps could be taken to remove this poverty trap. It works against both the recipient and the State and the more such traps that mean people will remain in receipt of social welfare are in place, the more it costs the State to provide such welfare support. Moreover, the individual recipient obviously is caught in a trap and while the vast majority of such people would like to be in a position to go to work, it simply is not worth their while financially to do so. In addition, there is much leakage in respect of tax compliance. A total of €420 million in rent supplement is being paid to private landlords at present but there is no system in place to ensure that those landlords who are recipients of rent supplement are tax compliant. This has been very loose down through the years and although the Committee of Public Accounts recently has drawn attention to this issue a number of times, we still are a considerable distance from this. The Minister now is talking about collecting PPS numbers but it is known that this has not been successful in the past. In addition, it is known that there is a time lag whereby approximately 18 months elapse before any kind of follow up or checking is carried out on the PPS numbers that have been provided. This system simply does not work.

The Labour Party proposes that rent supplement would not be paid to any landlord unless that landlord could produce a tax clearance certificate. As I noted on Committee Stage, this is

[Deputy Róisín Shortall.]

a basic requirement. If anyone is doing any kind of work for a council, Department or State agency, he or she is required to produce a tax clearance certificate. As Deputies, Members are obliged to provide such a certificate after election. Similarly, in respect of grants that are paid to small builders to carry out bathroom conversions and similar work, they always are required to produce a tax clearance certificate. It makes eminent sense that landlords, who are in receipt of such vast amounts of public money, should be required to produce a tax clearance certificate because it is known that the level of tax avoidance among landlords is considerable. As Minister for Social Protection, the Minister is responsible for the transfer of such large amounts of money from the public purse into the pockets of private landlords that he really should be absolutely vigilant about ensuring that those people are tax compliant and that the State gets back what is due to it in respect of taxes.

The other amendment under discussion proposes that not only would landlords be required to have a tax clearance certificate but that the payment of rent supplement would be made directly to landlords and there are many reasons this would be a good idea. First, bodies such as Threshold and others that work in the area have been seeking this change for several years. There are significant savings to be made, were the State to negotiate directly with landlords, including switching to a retained deposits system. At present, approximately €7 million is lost to the Exchequer every year through expenditure on deposits. This could be saved on an annual basis, were the Minister to move towards a direct payments scheme and a deposit retention scheme. In addition, this measure would work better from the tenants' perspective because at present, difficulties exist in this regard. In some cases, irresponsible tenants do not pass on the rent or the deposit. Similarly, some irresponsible landlords fail to return the deposit and some landlords insist that tenants make a top-up payment. Many highly vulnerable tenants are caught in a situation in which they are fairly powerless. Their options are limited as they are at the lower end of the scale, very often in substandard accommodation, and often are caught by unscrupulous landlords.

For all kinds of reasons, it makes absolute sense to have radical reform of the rent supplement system. It should have been done long ago and money is being lost to the State by the failure to do it. Most important, however, not only are tax receipts lost to the State but tenants would be much better off were this rent paid directly to the landlord and were they to go on a differential rent, thereby removing the existing poverty trap. It is regrettable that the Minister has not done this but if the Labour Party is in government after the next election, this will be its number one priority when dealing with the disincentives that exist within the welfare system.

Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív: As I stated on Committee Stage, I believe there must be rolling reform of the rent supplement scheme and I have been involved in this since I came into this Department. I do not have a particular objection to the Deputy's proposal in respect of the tax clearance certificate and it should be considered in the ongoing review. However, it does not actually deal with the problem because if one has a tax clearance certificate before one takes on a tenant, it does not prove that one subsequently paid tax on the income one thereby receives. At present, the Department already informs Revenue of all the people who receive rent supplement from it in order that Revenue can conduct a data match to ensure that those people are actually *post factum* paying tax on the rent they receive. The Department now is adding to that system by stating that such people must provide it with their PPS number. Consequently, when the data match takes place, it will be much quicker and much easier to identify who are those people. I cannot disagree with much of what the Deputy said on the need to reform rent supplement.

9 o'clock

It has to happen. It is happening and we are working on it. It is a step in the right direction. I and the Minister of State, Deputy Finneran, have had a number of meetings and will pursue our reform agenda. Regardless of how long we spend in our respective Departments it is our intention to push this agenda forward.

However, I am still not convinced that paying rent supplement to the landlord on a mandatory basis is a good idea. The tenant is the person with whom we have a relationship. He or she has the choice to nominate a landlord or anybody else to receive the payment. The amendment proposes to take that choice away from a tenant but there are very cogent reasons why that would not be a good idea.

An Ceann Comhairle: As it is now 9 o'clock I am required to put the following question in accordance with an order of the Dáil of this day: "That the amendments set down by the Minister for Social Protection and not disposed of, including those in respect of which commitment would in the normal course be required, are hereby made to the Bill; Fourth Stage is hereby completed and the Bill is hereby passed."

Question put.

The Dáil divided: Tá, 75; Níl, 62.

Tá

Ahern, Bertie.
 Ahern, Dermot.
 Ahern, Michael.
 Ahern, Noel.
 Andrews, Barry.
 Andrews, Chris.
 Ardagh, Seán.
 Aylward, Bobby.
 Behan, Joe.
 Blaney, Niall.
 Brady, Áine.
 Brady, Cyprian.
 Brady, Johnny.
 Browne, John.
 Byrne, Thomas.
 Carey, Pat.
 Collins, Niall.
 Conlon, Margaret.
 Coughlan, Mary.
 Cowen, Brian.
 Cregan, John.
 Cuffe, Ciarán.
 Curran, John.
 Dempsey, Noel.
 Devins, Jimmy.
 Dooley, Timmy.
 Fahey, Frank.
 Finneran, Michael.
 Fitzpatrick, Michael.
 Fleming, Seán.
 Flynn, Beverley.
 Gogarty, Paul.
 Gormley, John.
 Hanafin, Mary.
 Harney, Mary.
 Haughey, Seán.
 Healy-Rae, Jackie.
 Hoctor, Máire.

Kelleher, Billy.
 Kelly, Peter.
 Kennedy, Michael.
 Killeen, Tony.
 Kitt, Michael P..
 Kitt, Tom.
 Lenihan, Brian.
 Lowry, Michael.
 Mansergh, Martin.
 McEllistrim, Thomas.
 McGrath, Mattie.
 McGrath, Michael.
 McGuinness, John.
 Moloney, John.
 Moynihan, Michael.
 Mulcahy, Michael.
 Nolan, M.J..
 Ó Cuív, Éamon.
 Ó Fearghail, Seán.
 O'Brien, Darragh.
 O'Connor, Charlie.
 O'Dea, Willie.
 O'Donoghue, John.
 O'Flynn, Noel.
 O'Hanlon, Rory.
 O'Keefe, Batt.
 O'Keefe, Edward.
 O'Sullivan, Christy.
 Power, Peter.
 Power, Seán.
 Ryan, Eamon.
 Sargent, Trevor.
 Scanlon, Eamon.
 Treacy, Noel.
 Wallace, Mary.
 White, Mary Alexandra.
 Woods, Michael.

Nil

Allen, Bernard.	Lynch, Kathleen.
Bannon, James.	McCormack, Pádraic.
Breen, Pat.	McGrath, Finian.
Broughan, Thomas P..	Mitchell, Olivia.
Burke, Ulick.	Naughten, Denis.
Burton, Joan.	Neville, Dan.
Carey, Joe.	Noonan, Michael.
Clune, Deirdre.	Ó Caoláin, Caoimhghín.
Connaughton, Paul.	O'Donnell, Kieran.
Coonan, Noel J..	O'Dowd, Fergus.
Costello, Joe.	O'Keeffe, Jim.
Coveney, Simon.	O'Mahony, John.
Crawford, Seymour.	O'Shea, Brian.
Creed, Michael.	O'Sullivan, Jan.
D'Arcy, Michael.	O'Sullivan, Maureen.
Deasy, John.	Penrose, Willie.
Deenihan, Jimmy.	Perry, John.
Doherty, Pearse.	Quinn, Ruairí.
Doyle, Andrew.	Rabbitte, Pat.
Durkan, Bernard J..	Reilly, James.
English, Damien.	Ring, Michael.
Feighan, Frank.	Shatter, Alan.
Ferris, Martin.	Sheahan, Tom.
Flanagan, Terence.	Sheehan, P.J..
Gilmore, Eamon.	Sherlock, Seán.
Hayes, Tom.	Shortall, Róisín.
Higgins, Michael D..	Stagg, Emmet.
Hogan, Phil.	Stanton, David.
Howlin, Brendan.	Tuffy, Joanna.
Kehoe, Paul.	Upton, Mary.
Lynch, Ciarán.	Wall, Jack.

Tellers: Tá, Deputies John Curran and John Cregan; Níl, Deputies Paul Kehoe and Emmet Stagg.

Question declared carried.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Bill will now be sent to the Seanad.

Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill 2010 [Seanad]: Order for Report Stage

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I move: “That Report Stage be taken now.” Question put and agreed to.

Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill 2010 [Seanad]: Report and Final Stages

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I move amendment No. 1:

In page 5, between lines 28 and 29, to insert the following:

“(c) The references in this subsection to a designated centre shall include any other suitable place of treatment specified by the Minister for Health and Children.”.

I believe the Minister of State has considered this amendment. I would like to know whether he is prepared to accept it. We need to ensure that centres other than the Central Mental Hospital can be designated under this legislation. The Central Mental Hospital is not always the best place in which to detain people. I refer to those who are very young, for example. Perhaps a different treatment centre could be designated for someone from the other end of

the country. I would like the Minister of State to say whether he is prepared to consider this proposal.

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): During the previous debate on this amendment, I made the point that it would have certain effects. I would like to reiterate what they would be. First, it would allow the District Court to send people charged with minor offences to centres other than the Central Mental Hospital for examination when an issue of fitness to be tried arises. I recognise that is in line with the spirit of what the Deputy is saying. Second, it would allow higher courts to send people charged with serious offences to other centres for examination where an issue of fitness to be tried arises. Third, it would allow the District Court to order people who are unfit to be tried for minor offences to be detained in centres other than the Central Mental Hospital. I understand the spirit of what the Deputy is suggesting. She is alluding to the stigma associated with people being referred to the Central Mental Hospital. I have taken up what she said on Committee Stage about the need for other centres to be designated. Finally, it would allow higher courts to order people who are unfit to be tried for serious offences to be detained in other centres.

Deputies will appreciate that this amendment would have far-reaching consequences. I accept the principle of trying to ensure people with mental health problems are treated in less restrictive settings, if possible, as envisaged in the commitments and aspirations of A Vision for Change. I introduced an amendment in the Seanad to give the Minister for Health and Children the power to designate centres other than the Central Mental Hospital to be used for the purposes of examining persons referred by the District Court when a question of fitness to be tried arises. More serious difficulties arise, however, with regard to offences that are tried in the other courts. As criminal cases before the higher courts can involve serious offences, certain security issues might arise. Higher courts, by their nature, have an extra level of security activity. This amendment would involve a far-reaching change to the current situation and would require careful examination by way of referral to the higher courts. I am totally at one with the spirit of what the Deputy is suggesting by way of the lower courts.

Similarly, sending persons who are unfit to be tried to centres other than the Central Mental Hospital for detention, care or treatment raises difficulties which cannot be resolved within the timescale envisaged for the enactment of this Bill. I made the point to the Deputy on Committee Stage that the whole issue would be dealt with in the context of the planned review of the 2006 Act. Again, we must remind ourselves that the purpose of this Bill is to make a small number of amendments to the Criminal Law (Insanity) Act 2006. Amendments to the 2006 Act are being kept to a minimum because this Bill is required urgently to deal with the whole issue of the conditional discharge of patients from the Central Mental Hospital.

In a nutshell, in terms of the spirit of what Deputy Kathleen Lynch and other colleagues have mentioned in relation to the need for patients to be referred to centres other than the Central Mental Hospital, it must be recognised that there are enormous difficulties involved in the higher courts. That is my stated position. The broader issues raised by the amendment would be more suitably considered in the context of the planned review of the 2006 Act. The last day we discussed this there was no talk of a general election and quite clearly people were wondering whether this would happen. Obviously, I gave a commitment to the effect that if I was here it would happen, and I presume that when somebody else is here it will definitely happen.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I thank the Minister of State. I do not intend to prolong the debate. I know he has taken on board what I have said and people are anxiously awaiting this legislation as well. Therefore, I will not press the amendment.

Deputy John Moloney: I thank the Deputy because clearly there has been widespread debate on this issue. I fully recognise what the Deputy said on Second Stage and also on Committee Stage. I acknowledge, too, her appreciation of the fact that people are awaiting the enactment of this legislation and I thank her very much for that also.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I move amendment No. 2:

In page 9, line 12, to delete “A person is in material breach of his or her” and substitute “The clinical director may revoke a”.

Again, I will be very brief as we already discussed this on Committee Stage. This amendment is by way of ensuring that the director of the Central Mental Hospital would not, on a whim or based on his or her view of what might constitute a material breach of normal behaviour, recall someone who might not usually be based in the Dundrum hospital for something just a little outrageous. It is as simple as that, to ensure that patients would not suffer from someone’s whim of the moment or misinterpretation of the legislation.

Deputy John Moloney: Again, I fully appreciate the Deputy’s concerns, and I do not say that purely for the sake of window dressing regarding where Deputy Kathleen Lynch is coming from. This matter was also raised in the Seanad and, again, Deputy Lynch raised it on Committee Stage. I cannot accept the amendment, however, and I will explain why.

Section 13 of the 2006 Act, as amended by this Bill, and the new section 13A will give the Mental Health (Criminal Law) Review Board the power to order the conditional discharge of patients. We all welcome that. The point at issue is that it will be for the judgment of the clinical director — it is important that the House is given clarity from my side on this — whether a person should be returned to the designated centre for further review by the review board. To be fair, the problem appears to lie in the terminology to be used in effecting this reality.

It is important to note that section 13B(2) requires the clinical director to have reasonable grounds for his or her belief that the person is in breach of a condition of the conditional discharge and either there is a likelihood of the person causing serious harm or the person is in need of inpatient care or treatment. That is the kernel of this part, I believe. In accordance with section 13B(1), the conditional discharge is deemed to be revoked where the person is in material breach of the order. In other words, the review board will subsequently decide, after the person is returned to the designated centre, whether to again discharge him or her conditionally or detain the person. It is important to make the point that the latter initiative is a safeguard to ensure the protection of the person in material breach of the conditional discharge.

The difficulty with the amendment is that it would actually remove the definition of the term “material breach”. The clinical director must determine on foot of such a material breach whether there are sufficient grounds for detaining a person or if a conditional discharge may again be allowed.

If the amendment were to be accepted, it would unravel the structure of the section as a whole. In other words, if the terminology were to change, this would be the effect. Section 13B can and will work effectively in its current form and for that reason I cannot accept the amendment. Clearly, the Deputy made a very strong case on Committee Stage. We consulted the Attorney General and that is the advice we got, which I am prepared to accept.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

An Ceann Comhairle: Amendment No. 3 is in the names of Deputies Dan Neville and Kathleen Lynch and arises out of Committee Stage proceedings. Amendment No. 4 is related. Amendments Nos. 3 and 4 may be debated together, by agreement.

Deputy Dan Neville: I move amendment No. 3:

In page 11, line 31, to delete “(Insanity)” and substitute “(Mental Disorder)”.

We discussed this on Committee Stage as well. The legislation is called the Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill and I have difficulty with the word “Insanity” being used as a title. Language is very important in terms of the way we look at mental illness and those who suffer mental ill health. The stigma surrounding the whole area of mental illness is something which the Minister of State is very concerned about, and I compliment him on the sea change initiative he has taken. I believe our society has cruelly failed many who are suffering from mental illness.

This failure has a direct involvement in suicide as well because people do not seek help as a result of the stigma. We do not get the same pressure in relation to the psychiatric services and the need to resource this area as we do with regard to other social difficulties. As politicians we are faced, day in day out, with the need to resource the general health services, but rarely is the political system challenged about the resources it allocates to mental health. Those who suffer from mental illness feel stigmatised by these attitudes and views from a time when psychiatry was not as well developed as it is today, and we must change those views.

We are dealing in this legislation with only a very small percentage of patients, but there is a belief that 50% of people are in that category, which of course is ridiculous. However, that is unfortunately the opinion of the general public in many instances. As we have often said here, one in four persons suffers a psychiatric illness at some time in their life and such people are stigmatised by language; I want to highlight this aspect. Using such words as “lunatic”, “being mad”, “deranged”, “crazy”, “daft”, “barmy”, “crack-brained”, “nut cases”, etc., reinforces such prejudices and the misunderstandings many people have about mental illness.

The stereotyping of mentally ill patients allows fun to continue to be made of people who are suffering and facilitates continued discrimination. We must rise above this type of abuse of language and attitudes. Those in leadership positions must make every attempt to educate people who do not understand the pain of mental illness. Only then will people come forward, admit the pain of the illness and seek help, similar to mainstream help in the general health service. Only then will we demand action from Government to acknowledge the scandal of the neglect of the psychiatric services. Until there is a watershed change of societal attitudes, many will hide their illnesses because no one wants to be referred to as “crazy”. The word “insanity” also has connotations of stigmatisation. It is a word historically used when institutions were known as hospitals for the mentally ill or mental asylums, in which straitjackets and various other types of approaches were used. We have advanced from that and the Bill should recognise that the word “insanity” is not appropriate. The proposal put forward by Deputy Lynch and I seeks to amend the Title of the Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill 2010 to read Criminal Law (Mental Disorder) Bill 2010.

I take this opportunity to highlight the approach of See Change, the National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership, which was launched by the Minister of State but which is not getting the attention it deserves by the media or public general, although the public in general may not be aware of it, which is the problem. We must raise awareness of this issue. That is the challenge facing us in terms of mental illness and the provision of mental health services. See Change states that while anyone might experience a mental health problem at some in life, many of us are frightened of the idea of mental health problems. The various diagnostic titles such as psychosis, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and depression are seen as lifelong labels

[Deputy Dan Neville.]

which mark a person as different from the rest of society. The stigma and discrimination associated with significant mental health problems is for some people almost as difficult to manage as the experience of being unwell.

A recent study on mental health attitudes in Ireland found that while 94% of people in Ireland believe mental health problems can affect anyone, only one in two would not want anyone to know if they had a mental illness. There are people who say that one cannot change attitudes to mental illness but I do not believe that. While the position in this regard has changed in recent decades it has only marginally changed. In this regard, I always give two examples of where one can change attitudes in terms of discrimination. We changed attitudes to tuberculosis in the 1940s, at which time no one would visit the house of a person who had TB and families of persons with TB were ignored and stigmatised. Cancer is no longer the big “C”. One can have cancer of the throat or skin and so on. We campaign for and demand services for cancer. I recall, as I am sure does the Minister of State, when cancer was referred to as the big “C”. It was almost the unmentionable.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: People would say a person had “the other thing”.

Deputy Dan Neville: Yes, that is correct. The word “insanity” in this legislation should be amended. I await the Minister of State’s reply. Like Deputy Lynch I do not wish to delay this Bill as it is important legislation.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: People are waiting on this legislation to be enacted. We are all conscious of this having been lobbied by and met with the people involved who, while not a large group, are a sincere group of people whose relatives, perhaps sons, husbands, wives and so on could, but for a lack of legislation, be at home with their families at Christmas.

As Deputy Neville correctly said, language changes attitudes. When speaking down through the years about language and how it affects different groups of people, I recall being told that one cannot change attitudes. That may be true. However, Jack Straw once said: “I cannot change your attitude but I can ensure that your attitude doesn’t detrimentally affect someone else”. That is the kernel of the problem. If our language contributes to someone’s attitude then we need to change it. Language does change attitudes.

We can all recall a time when children born outside of marriage were referred to as “illegitimate” and worse but we changed the language and in doing so we changed attitudes. The big issue in regard to mental health is fear. The fear is not that someone who is mentally unwell will jump out of a press and attack us but that mental illness could strike any of us. The fear is that anyone could end up among this group of people who are stigmatised.

We are producing new legislation and must surely ensure we get this right. This is good legislation, which Deputy Neville and I are anxious is passed in the House tonight. However, we must ensure we get it right. To continue to refer to people as they are referred to in this legislation is wrong. We should not refer to people who commit crimes while suffering a mental illness as “insane”. What we are seeking does not change the terms of the legislation or how we treat these people and so on. What it will do is change attitudes towards people who find themselves in this position. If my next-door neighbour has a mental illness or is insane, how I say or react to that matters. Language is a powerful tool. It is said that the only thing that truly changes the world is an idea. Language is something of which we should be conscious and in regard to which we can do something in this instance.

Like Deputy Neville, I do not wish to hold up this legislation. I am interested to hear the Minister of State’s response.

Deputy John Moloney: This is possibly my second last time to speak on the issue of mental health. I hope to get an opportunity to speak on the introduction of the mental capacity Bill. It has been a pleasure listening to and debating reform of mental health services with Deputies Lynch and Neville during the past two and a half years. I will give my response to the amendment later.

I recall on an early occasion Deputy Neville making the point that there are no votes in mental health and that is where the difficulty lies. It is not an issue on the doorsteps when we are canvassing. I regret I was unable to, as requested during Committee Stage some weeks ago by Deputies Neville and Lynch, seize the moment and accept the change to the Bill. While I was tempted to do so, clear advice was that I could not.

This Bill is legislation to enable people to have recourse as quickly as possible. There are wider issues to be dealt with. I recall Deputy Shatter saying that while Fianna Fáil has been in government for the past 15 years, it has not done much up to now. However, there has been a change in thinking on this issue and regardless of what party will next be in government, this item will be on the agenda. This issue has been highlighted in the major review promised. Changing attitudes to mental health is a huge challenge. I compliment those who have been trying to do so for years. I acknowledge the See Change campaign which seeks to change peoples' notions. I have also stated publicly that there is no big deal in terms of mental health illness and in this regard spoke about my own private issue. If we want to change attitudes, we must take a lead role in this regard. I do not blame the media but a concerted attempt has been made by us all to change attitudes nationally through See Change. The launch of the campaign in the Mansion House generated little interest. People who are used to pushing the boat out retained their interest to drive the campaign, the media's interest was disappointing. When I returned from a See Change campaign meeting in Donegal, I bought a copy of *The Irish Times*. I was startled to read in an editorial that See Change was regarded as nothing less than a cynical pretence on behalf of the Government. I always open public meetings by saying there are two issues — the capital programme and the need for additional finance for mental health services. I always say I am present as a Fianna Fáil Deputy taking full responsibility for the need for further resources but I always highlight that the stigma issue is separate because all the funding in the world means nothing if people are reluctant to present for support.

I acknowledge reference to changing attitudes sounds hollow. I am the Minister responsible and the question can rightly be posed: Why can I not do that? I ask Members to bear with me. On Second Stage, I explained that the purpose of the Bill is to deal with two issues that have arisen in the operation of the 2006 Act, which require urgent attention. I took the opportunity to seek the co-operation of the House and I thank Members for confining amendments to strictly what was necessary to achieve that purpose. I also explained that the other issues were being tabled for examination in the context of the major review of the 2006 Act planned to commence following the enactment of this legislation. This is a serious commitment for whoever who takes up my seat and it will be followed up on to take into account the need to move from the language issue and the connotations involved.

I understand why the amendments have been tabled and I have sympathy for them because these issues have been raised on the floor of the See Change meetings throughout the country. People talk about the notion of the tags that attach and the fact that when they apply for a mortgage or a loan, they are asked for their medical history and are reluctant to divulge details lest it might create a difficulty for them. I accept the spirit of the amendments and I should say I will go with that but there are implications for criminal law. I do not hang my coat out to say that.

[Deputy John Moloney.]

I have sought and received the agreement of the Minister for Justice and Law Reform that this issue will be examined in the context of the planned review. “Examined” might be a loose word but it will be considered in the context of how the legal implications can be removed. The rejection of the amendments must, therefore, be seen for what it is; it is a deferral of the matter for consideration in a more suitable context and I ask the Deputies to accept that. I hope they can appreciate this because this will allow us to examine this issue in the context of the 2006 Act as a whole and to ensure that suitable consideration is given to the legal issues involved before we move to accept a change to the terminology, which has a long-standing meaning in criminal law. These are complex issues associated with replacing the term “insanity”. The provisions relating to the specific verdict of not guilty by reason of insanity under section 5 of the 2006 Act were drafted on the basis of the decided judicial authority on the precise circumstances in which persons with mental illness would be excused from criminal liability.

Some of us had been under the impression that the word “insanity” is defined in the 2006 Act but this is not the case. Section 5(1)(b) provides for the special verdict of not guilty by reason of insanity and the requirements of this verdict are not only that the accused person is suffering a type of mental illness but also the mental disorder is such that he or she ought not to be held responsible for the act alleged by the person for the reason that he or she did not know the nature and quality of the act or did not know what he or she was doing or he or she was unable to refrain from committing that act.

The issue for the court is fundamentally one of legal responsibility and that is where my difficulty lies. If there was no legal implication whatsoever, we would go with the amendments because it would give a sense to the notion of removing the stigma. The plea of insanity in law is an excuse rather than a condition. It is a factor that excuses liability from the commission of a crime. Our law places the matter firmly within legal parameters directly related to personal responsibility for one’s actions. In this scenario, medical evidence is influential but not decisive and this means that an accused person who has been diagnosed as suffering from a mental disorder in the medical sense may fail to satisfy the criteria for insanity under the criminal law. I must rely on this advice because this has implications.

We have to be careful we do not let a situation develop where a jury would arrive at a view that any mental disorder, regardless of how trivial it may be, could provide grounds for acquittal. The 2006 Act laid down a high threshold and we have to be careful that substituting the word “insanity” with “mental disorder”, for instance, would not send a signal that the threshold is being significantly lowered. Criminal law is the main focus of this Act. It could be misleading to change the title to refer to “mental disorder”, the term primarily used to decide if a person is in need of care and treatment in a psychiatric hospital and which is the primary focus of the Mental Health Act 2001. While an aspect of that is a focus of the 2006 Act, it is not the primary focus. We, therefore, have to be careful not to introduce any doubt or uncertainty.

I assure the House the name changing issue is firmly on the agenda but I cannot be any stronger than that. I fully accept what the Deputies said and I fully support the case they have made but because of the legal implications, I cannot give the nod to the amendments. I would dearly love to be the Minister of State who makes the change but I cannot do so on the basis of the advice I have.

Deputy Kathleen Lynch: I will not press the amendment.

Deputy Dan Neville: On the basis of the Minister of State’s commitment, I will not press the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment No. 4 not moved.

Bill received for final consideration and passed.

Adjournment Debate

Health Services

Deputy Joan Burton: I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the important issue of the reorganisation and restriction of emergency services at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The hospital is situated beside the M50 and it serves a vast hinterland, including most of Dublin 15 and north county Dublin up to the Ashbourne Road, the Navan Road, Finglas, Cabra in the city and large tracts of counties Meath and Kildare. The hospital is at the centre of Ireland's key population growth over the past 15 years. People from all over the region have come to depend on the hospital for primary medical care and staff at all levels have striven to develop the hospital over the years in face of different and constant pressures.

The hospital was starved by the Minister for Health and Children of critically important investment in infrastructure such as modern diagnostic equipment, which is taken for granted in hospitals the world over. I have waged a long campaign to secure an MRI scanner for the hospital. However, that type of up-to-date diagnostic equipment was referred by a ministerial order of the Minister, Deputy Mary Harney, to the private hospital that was due to be co-located in the grounds. Like the Celtic tiger economy and the bubble, that co-located hospital has vanished into the mist.

The issue about the hospital that most concerns local people and those in the Blanchardstown hinterland is the suggestion that 24-hour accident and emergency cover is to be withdrawn and consolidated within other hospitals. In particular, there have been suggestions about a partnership between Beaumont Hospital and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland teaching centre of excellence which would mean a shift to Beaumont Hospital being the primary hospital in the new arrangement. According to a memorandum circulated to staff at James Connolly Memorial Hospital on 29 November last, the HSE intends to progress a full impact assessment, cost-benefit analysis, detailed planning and initial engagement regarding the phased reduction in 24-hour emergency departments in north Dublin from the current three sites to two sites. The three sites are James Connolly Memorial Hospital, the Mater Hospital and Beaumont Hospital.

Given the critical position of the James Connolly Memorial Hospital on the M50 and the fact that, unfortunately, gunshot injuries are a large issue in west Dublin and the hospital has developed a specialisation in this area which is recognised throughout Europe and the world and that these incidents tend to happen at night, what is happening in this review is worrying people in the area. The HSE memorandum states clearly that no decisions have been made with regard to the emergency service in James Connolly Memorial Hospital. I received a reply from the public affairs division of the HSE which indicated that the HSE is merely considering these issues at present.

While the notion of a co-located campus definitely has the possibility of introducing many savings, nonetheless certain key services are important. How advanced is this process? When is a final decision expected to be made? Will hospital staff and local people be consulted about the changes or are they to be presented with a *fait accompli*? Will the Minister publish the capacity study completed this year on the development of emergency services based at James

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Connolly Memorial Hospital? When they are completed will the Minister publish the impact assessment and the cost-benefit analysis for any new arrangements? Can the Minister give a commitment that the people who depend on the emergency services based at James Connolly Memorial Hospital will not suffer any diminution in these services that would put lives or the quality of patient care at risk in any way?

The staff in the hospital have been extremely co-operative with the change management process that is currently ongoing. As I said, the hospital serves a very large hinterland, including large parts of Dublin 7 and Finglas, the Dublin 15 area, north Dublin through to the Ashbourne Road and very large areas of both Meath and Kildare given what has happened to hospitals in Meath. People and the staff in James Connolly Memorial Hospital, where there is an exceptionally positive environment, deserve a considered response from the Minister.

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): I will make every effort to give a considered response and to answer the questions posed by the Deputy. I apologise for the fact that my colleague, Deputy Mary Harney, cannot be here to respond.

The HSE has recently been considering how best to reform the way services are provided in Dublin North while reducing costs, maintaining a clear focus on patient safety, allowing people to be treated in more effective ways and protecting access to appropriate services. The way in which accident and emergency services are delivered in the region has recently been considered by the HSE in this regard. No decisions relating to the potential impact on any of the sites, including at James Connolly Memorial Hospital, have been made.

International trends point toward the provision of fewer emergency departments, based within larger hospitals that are focused on acute care services. There are potential advantages to having hospitals that specialise in elective, non-emergency care. Having protected beds for non-emergency care can eliminate the cancellation of procedures and operations which frequently occur when emergency patients have to be admitted to the beds. Reduced cancellations means that medical staff can schedule more patients, confident in the knowledge that beds will be available as planned. This allows the emergency hospital to focus primarily on acute care and so provide a better care experience to emergency patients.

However, such advantages must be weighed against the needs of the local population. The HSE intends to undertake a full impact assessment and cost-benefit analysis of any change to emergency department services. This will require detailed planning and engagement with a wide range of interested parties. The HSE has stressed that this project is at a very early stage and no decisions have yet been taken on the future of any particular service.

I do not have the specific information sought by the Deputy. I will respond to her within a few days.

Deputy Joan Burton: Does the Minister have an indication of the timeframe?

Deputy John Moloney: No, because the HSE response is that it is at a very early stage. I will respond to the Deputy with the specific detail as quickly as possible.

Hospital Services

Deputy Joe Carey: I thank the Ceann Comhairle for giving me and Deputies Breen and Dooley the opportunity to raise this important issue.

As late as last May at a Western Regional Health Forum meeting, the HSE stated that there was to be no change to the services currently offered at Ennis General Hospital. The re-

organisation of acute services in the mid-west came about as a result of both the Teamwork and the Health Information and Quality Authority, HIQA, reports into the breast cancer misdiagnoses of the late Ms Ann Moriarty and the late Ms Edel Kelly. At the launch of the HIQA report, Dr. Alan McKinney, a member of the HIQA Ennis investigation team, stated: “Before transferring a hospital service, it must be ensured there is a safer, better alternative available. There is no point making things worse than they are now”. However, hospital services are being closed on the cheap without adequate resources being provided in the major centres or so-called centres of excellence, in this case in Limerick. This questionable practice presents us with the dangerous scenario of ultimately ending up with nothing at both county and regional level and endangering the patient, according to Dr. McKinney’s hypothesis.

What has the Minister done about the major capital works outlined in the Teamwork report with regard to Limerick Regional Hospital? She has done very little. Why are there regularly up to 50 patients on trolleys in Limerick Regional Hospital? Why must patients wait for months for MRI scans in that hospital? Where is the better cardiac service for Limerick? Is there a 24-hour emergence cath lab service in Limerick Regional Hospital? There is not. Why strip the service in County Clare and replace it with nothing?

Prior to accident and emergency services reconfiguration in April 2009, I vividly recall the Minister for Health and Children and the HSE ploughing ahead with their strategy without even putting in place a proper ambulance service for the people of County Clare. They were happy to pursue this course until Dr. Paul Burke appeared on a “Prime Time Investigates” programme and outlined the reality. That is the level of commitment displayed to date — try to do things on the cheap, unless one is questioned.

The reconfiguration process has been ongoing for more than 18 months. It is time to have an independent evaluation of the process.

I am asking that HIQA officials be called in to evaluate where we are on reconfiguration. Has the Government delivered on patient care? I do not think it has. It has delivered on saving money, but it has not delivered on the patients.

Deputy Timmy Dooley: I also wish to thank the Ceann Comhairle for facilitating the Clare Deputies in what is an important issue for us. I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this debate tonight. Concern has been raised with me and other public representatives in the past number of days regarding the possible downgrading of cardiac services at Ennis General Hospital. As the Minister of State here tonight is aware, Ennis General Hospital has seen significant change in services provided in recent years. It has been always based on patient safety and the quality assured service that should be delivered at any particular time. The core of this whole reconfiguration process has been the necessity to ensure the service is quality assured and is in the best interests of the patient.

The transfer of acute surgery to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick was brought about by a number of misdiagnosed cases at Ennis that had tragic outcomes for patient safety and the quality of the service. All of us have recognised the importance of that. However, as part of that reconfiguration process, it had been always recognised that many services could be delivered at Ennis General Hospital in the best interests of patients and in a safe environment. In particular, it was recognised that Ennis would play an important role in the delivery of medical services, and that included some acute services. In my view, cardiology is one such medical service that can and should remain at Ennis. Nobody has put forward to me any case for moving the service.

I accept that interventional cardiology is by necessity delivered at a hospital such as the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick, where CAT labs and other enhanced technologies are

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available to provide that service. However, I see no reason the current service in Ennis should be in any way diminished or removed. It does not make sense from a cost point of view, from a patient safety point of view, or from any other point of view.

The Minister for Health and Children met with me and the Minister for Defence this evening. She gave us a fair hearing. She allowed us to put forward a very strong case for the retention of the service, and she recognised the necessity to continue to build on the services that are delivered in Ennis, so that the reconfiguration process can continue. It will not be possible for Limerick to manage the entire services of the region. It is just not physically possible to do it, and it is important that services are maintained in both Ennis and Nenagh, and enhanced rather than reduced. I look forward to what the Minister has to say this evening, given that she has had the opportunity to hear the three Clare Deputies this evening, and more particularly, given that she had a face to face meeting with the Minister for Defence and myself where we put forward the case on behalf of the people we all represent.

Deputy Pat Breen: I welcome the opportunity to speak tonight on this important issue for County Clare. We all know that when the Government made the decision to reconfigure services to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick, it signed the death warrant for the future of Ennis General Hospital as an acute medical hospital. I am delighted to see Deputy Dooley raise his concerns tonight, like the two of us on this side of the House. When the €14 million upgrading work started in the hospital earlier this year, I recall reading Deputy Dooley in the newspaper saying it was a vote of confidence for the retention of Ennis as an acute medical hospital. How could that be so? Ennis has been stripped of acute surgery. The 24 hour acute accident and emergency service is gone, as is intensive care. We are told that on 1 February, the cardiac services, including the high-dependency unit, will be transferred to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital as part of the HSE's plan to centralise cardiac services.

It is very easy to forget the €30 million promised by the former Taoiseach, Deputy Bertie Ahern, when he breezed into County Clare during the general election campaign in 2007. What happened the other €25 million? Did it disappear into a black hole?

The transfer of cardiology services was contained in the small print of the HSE's action plan for acute and community health services published in 2008 and supported by the Government. However, this was not supposed to happen until facilities at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital were put into place. This clearly has not happened. The sod has only just been turned on the new critical care unit. The CAT scan laboratory, which was supposed to operate at the hospital on a 24 hour basis, is operating from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. only. Clearly, the logic for centralising cardiac services depends very much on this system being put in place, so that a CAT scan can be read within two hours. Those of us who visit the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick can see it is like a building site at the moment, and there is a very serious shortage of parking spaces there. There is also a huge shortage of beds and severe crowding in the accident and emergency department. This evening, there were 24 patients waiting on trolleys in Limerick, while there were nine patients waiting in Ennis this afternoon. The ambulance personnel are doing an excellent job, but they will not be able to cope when this change comes into place without being given additional personnel and resources. They are already overstretched.

I understand that 1 February is the date set for the transfer of these services. The Minister for Defence, Deputy Killeen, and Deputy Dooley had a meeting this evening with the Minister for Health and Children. It looks like that may be put on hold until after the general election. Maybe that is being done so as not to hurt the Government Deputies in the constituency.

When will the 24 hour CAT scan laboratory be put in place at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick? Galway already has the facility. What plans has the Minister in place for

Ennis General Hospital? What is the future of inpatient services at the hospital? Will it be just a day surgical hospital? I fear that when the cardiac services at Ennis General Hospital are transferred to Limerick, it will be the nail in the coffin for acute services at Ennis. We want these questions answered tonight in the interests of patient safety, as we are all concerned about that in County Clare.

Deputy John Moloney: I am taking this Adjournment debate on behalf of the Minister for Health and Children.

Patient safety is central to the delivery of health services. People must have confidence in the care they receive and have the best possible outcomes. The way in which we deliver acute hospital services to our communities and their wider regions is changing.

The HSE has made significant progress in re-organising acute hospital and related services in the mid-west region since April 2009. While this has involved the relocation of some more complex services to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital at Dooradoyle, in the interests of patient safety and quality, Ennis General Hospital, as part of the regional hospital network, now undertakes an expanded range of day case surgery and diagnostic work. The Minister is anxious that the range of such services provided in Ennis General Hospital should continue to be expanded, so that people can have most of their health care needs met as close as possible to where they live.

All the cardiology services currently available in Ennis General Hospital will continue. The future of these services at Ennis General Hospital is secure and they will continue to be provided by a specialist cardiology team. In fact, these services will be expanded further, with the addition of cardiac failure clinics and cardiac rehabilitation services for patients who have had the acute phase of their illness managed in the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick.

In deciding on the best model for the provision of cardiac services in the region, the unanimous medical advice is to centralise acute cardiology to the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick. This is in line with the model being developed in the region, whereby services are organised on an integrated regional basis, delivered in a range of locations and settings. To facilitate this, a fourth cardiologist is being appointed. This will facilitate a separate cardiology rota, giving patients access to a cardiologist on a 24-hour basis for emergency cases in the region.

Interventional cardiology will be performed in the designated cardiac catheterisation laboratory in the Mid-Western Regional Hospital in Limerick, thereby enabling patients to receive the best possible care in the event of an acute cardiac episode. Six additional inpatient cardiology beds will be designated in the Mid-Western Regional Hospital to support this service. These developments will be brought on stream in the course of 2011, after the fourth cardiologist has taken up duty. General medical services will continue to be provided at Ennis, and the majority of medical patients, including respiratory patients, will continue to be treated at the hospital.

Ennis General Hospital has recently been a recipient of significant investment, with the installation of a CT scanner at a cost of €900,000, which became operational in 2009. In addition, an endoscopy suite for day medical procedures, at a total cost of €2.5 million, is under construction and is due to be completed by April 2011. The HSE has received planning permission for a new ward block containing 50 replacement beds. It is estimated that the construction of these facilities, which will cost €8 million, will be completed by the end of 2011.

The Minister and the HSE recognise the importance of Ennis General Hospital and the contribution it has made and will continue to make to the provision of hospital services in the region. Ennis General Hospital is a pivotal component in the provision of acute services in the

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mid-west. I assure the House on the Minister's behalf that there will be no reduction in the level of cardiology services provided at Ennis General Hospital and that it will continue to play an important role in the provision of health services to the population of the mid-west region.

Deputy Pat Breen: I thank the Minister of State for that reply. Obviously, the pressure by Deputy Carey and myself this evening——

Acting Chairman (Deputy Cyprian Brady): Sorry, Deputy, there is no provision for a reply on the Adjournment.

Deputy Pat Breen: Pressure was put on our two local Deputies to deliver this service. I am happy with the reply.

Care of the Elderly

Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin: The Taoiseach today tried to minimise what was revealed in the “Prime Time Investigates” programme showing the neglect and abuse of older people by private home care providers under contract to the HSE. He spoke of four cases, as if it concerned only four older people. This is a total misrepresentation. The programme covered two major home care providers which were given the task of caring for a large number of older people. It also investigated the cases of a number of individual older people whose experience is clearly representative of others who have experienced the gross inadequacy of the home care being provided by some agencies and individuals in the State. People were justifiably appalled by these revelations, and the Taoiseach's response to them is totally inadequate. Among those appalled at the revelations are the many genuine and professional carers in both the public and private sector, who should be fully recognised and acknowledged.

An important first step in response to this scandal would be for the Government to admit that this has come about as a direct result of Government policy and HSE negligence. As far back as 2004, an evaluation of home care in the then Eastern Regional Health Authority area was carried out by Dr. Virpi Timonen. In his report, published by the ERHA itself, Dr. Timonen recommended that there should be more careful monitoring of the quality and adequacy of the services. His report highlighted the lack of national standards for any form of home care service. Dr. Timonen stated in his report:

Inadequacy of basic home help services, due to funding constraints, recruitment difficulties and lack of adequate structures, is causing a problem. Large numbers of older people in need of help experience problems accessing services. Lack of adequate day care and respite care services, and the uneven distribution of these services across the country, also poses a problem.

One of the main motives behind the introduction of the home care grants was responding to unmet care needs resulting from the absence or inadequacy of other services. The lack of comprehensive services, the uneven distribution of services and the structural problems identified in 2004 were not fixed. They have still not been fixed. Instead, Government and HSE policy has become increasingly reliant on putting public money into the private for-profit home care sector, which has now grown to some 150 companies across the State.

Is the Government proud of the fact that last week it reduced the minimum wage, putting more money in the pockets of the type of shark we saw on the “Prime Time Investigates” programme — people posing as care providers who exploit untrained and unqualified care workers, many of them immigrants, by paying minimum or below-minimum wages? In one case a person was illegally paid €4.88 per hour; another was paid €300 for a month's full-time work.

This surely exposes the disgracefully low value placed on the work of caring for our older citizens. It is at one with the shameful decision in last week's budget to cut carer's allowance and carer's benefit by another €8 per week. There has been a total reduction of more than €16 per week in each benefit since 2009.

We should all be greatly concerned at the standard of care for older people in general and at some — but by no means all — of the people who have got involved in it as a profitable business rather than as a caring profession. We must ask what will be done to ensure that HIQA and the HSE have the ability and the resources to prevent such abuse either in nursing homes or in people's own homes.

To give but one example, the HSE has coerced all but a few of the residents of Loughloe House in Athlone to leave, despite their desire to remain and a community campaign to keep this public facility open for current and future residents. HIQA did not recommend that this facility close, but the HSE, pursuing Government policy, is determined that it will. Home care packages were offered to the residents as one of their options.

The home care scandal exposes the abject failure of this Government's policy of privatising health and personal social services. These private for-profit companies are receiving millions of euro every year from the HSE. Apart from the pittance paid to care staff, this public money is going into the pockets of the owners. Therefore, I call on the Government to take four steps as follows: it must put in place, without further delay and on a statutory basis, regulations for the home care sector; empower and provide the resources for HIQA to monitor compliance with these regulations; establish proper qualifications, pay and conditions for home care workers; and change Government policy from privatisation to direct provision of home care by the HSE.

Deputy John Moloney: I am responding on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Áine Brady, who cannot be here this evening. I thank Deputy Ó Caoláin for raising the matter.

I am sure all Members of the House will join with me in expressing concern at the incidents highlighted in the "Prime Time Investigates" programme last night. The central focus of Government policy for older people who need care is that they should be able to receive high-quality care and they should be at the centre of all decisions regarding their care. The key element that must exist between the provider of care, whether public or private, and the recipient of that care is trust. This is fundamental to any service, but particularly health or personal social services, whose recipients are likely to be vulnerable. As an immediate response, the HSE is investigating the cases raised in last night's programme and is now reviewing all service delivery under its auspices to ensure that proper standards of care are being met. The executive will terminate contracts and change providers in cases in which this is necessary.

I emphasise, however, that in the vast majority of cases the HSE works in a close and beneficial partnership with high-quality home care providers in the non-State sectors. The HSE also has complaint mechanisms and an elder abuse network. In responding to referrals, the HSE provides a discreet and confidential service which may include counselling, mediation and anger management, as appropriate. Anyone who encounters elder abuse or inadequate care should report it to a GP, a HSE social worker, a public health nurse, a member of the Garda Síochána, or anyone they trust. The introduction of the nursing homes support scheme and the bringing into force of new regulatory standards for the long-term residential care sector demonstrates the priority the Government places on high-quality services for older people. Notwithstanding the severe financial pressures of recent times, there has been an expansion of the home care package initiative nationally through the provision of an additional €10 million in 2010 and a further €8 million in budget 2011. This year we protected the levels of other

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community-based supports for older people, such as home help, meals on wheels and day or respite care, and we also intend to do so in 2011.

With regard to the possible regulation of home care services, the July 2008 report of the Commission on Patient Safety and Quality Assurance recommended, among other things, the extension of any licensing systems in health care to the primary, community and continuing care sector. More recently, in July 2009, the Law Reform Commission published a consultation paper entitled *Legal Aspects of Carers*. This considers the legal issues surrounding home care and makes several provisional recommendations in the area of standards and regulations generally.

The Department of Health and Children accepts the need for a more standardised approach to the regulation of home care generally, whether by statutory or non-statutory providers. The HSE and the Department have progressed various improvements in home care provision overall during 2010, especially relating to the governance of services. These measures will be published and implemented in 2011 and include national guidelines and procedures for standardised implementation of the home care packages scheme, quality guidelines for home care support services for older people and national guidelines for the home help service. In addition, the HSE published its public procurement framework for home care services on 22 October last and is progressing this important measure, in conjunction with the other measures I have outlined, to ensure best provision to clients. Approved providers must meet and be monitored on a range of standards such as vetting, training, elder abuse protocols, supervision and client feedback.

As indicated to the House in a reply to a parliamentary question on 22 June last, the question of possible changes to legislation, including regulation and inspection, for the area of home care for older people generally is under consideration. The Department is examining the regulation of this sector in the overall context of the licensing of health care providers. Legislation is currently being prepared in this regard, taking into account the recommendations of the Commission on Patient Safety and the Law Reform Commission. The Government is determined to do everything possible to protect all older people in care. Our approach is to progress the various initiatives I have outlined, while examining the options and implications of introducing statutory regulation. I assure the House that the Department of Health and Children will work closely with relevant statutory and non-statutory organisations to take all measures necessary to ensure quality standards for all people receiving home care.

Message from Seanad

Acting Chairman (Deputy Cyprian Brady): Seanad Éireann has passed the Social Welfare Bill 2010, without amendment.

The Dáil adjourned at 10.20 p.m. until 10.30 a.m. on Wednesday, 15 December 2010.

Written Answers.

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

Questions Nos. 1 to 9, inclusive, answered orally.

Questions Nos. 10 to 27, inclusive, resubmitted.

Questions Nos. 28 to 37, inclusive, answered orally.

National Drugs Strategy

38. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the roll out of the new Dial to Stop Drugs campaign; if there have been any reports on its success to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46046/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Based on the positive evaluation of the original Dial to Stop Drug Dealing campaign, the ongoing support of the Gardaí and positive community feedback, I decided to relaunch the campaign with a more national focus. In this regard, on 6 October last I announced a two week national promotional campaign, to be followed by local campaigns at Drugs Task Force level. All the local campaigns have run, with the final one just having started on 13th December.

My belief in the campaign has been justified with a new record being set in October last for the number of calls received since the phone line opened in September 2008 — over 800 calls and 285 reports to the Gardaí. Calls in November totalled 553 with 179 reports, also a very high level. From September 2008 to date, a total of 8,684 calls have been made to the phone line with 2,485 reports generated. Calls received have been spread right across the country, including areas that that have not run a campaign.

I believe very strongly in the notion that communities should be empowered and should feel enabled to make a stand in a way that they need never fear will impact negatively on them. The Dial to Stop Drug Dealing Campaign is one measure to support local communities in this regard.

A full evaluation of the current phase of the Dial to Stop Drug Dealing campaign will be carried out on its completion at the end of the year.

Rural Development

39. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he has formally requested permission from the European Union to channel Leader funds through county enterprise boards; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46087/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The main objectives of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) are to improve the quality of life in rural areas and facilitate the diversification of the rural economy, and the individual measures under the Programme, including indicative allocations, are as follows:

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities for farm families — €16.66m;
- Support for business creation and development — €48.26m;
- Encouragement of tourism activities — €45.4m;
- Basic services for the economy and rural population — €49.61m;
- Village renewal and development — €54.2m;
- Conservation and upgrading of the rural heritage — €51.7m;
- Training and information on adapted and new skills — €29.45m; and
- Implementing co-operation projects — €10.7m.

I am pleased with the progress to date under the RDP, which continues to facilitate access to significant financial resources for rural communities since it started in 2009. This has resulted in the proliferation of innovative and sustainable development projects all over the country, which are providing invaluable support to rural communities in these difficult times and there is no question of funds being diverted away from the RDP. The Deputy will appreciate, therefore, that the issue of requesting permission from the EU to channel funds through County Enterprise Boards does not arise.

The RDP currently has registered project activity of €80m, with almost €30m at an advanced stage of development. Expenditure to date amounts to over €50m, which includes funding for a diverse range of projects from support for micro-enterprise in rural areas to the build and maintenance of community infrastructure and the provision of training in a variety of disciplines for rural dwellers. I am confident that the activity funded under the RDP to date is contributing to the creation of the right conditions for the generation of sustainable, long-term job opportunities in rural areas.

I can assure the Deputy that my Department will continue to work with all relevant Departments, agencies and rural communities, through their Local Action Groups, to maximise all possible funding opportunities under the RDP.

Inland Waterways

40. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the number of applications for funding received under the recent grant announcement by Inland Waterways; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46049/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I am informed by Waterways Ireland that the 2011 Sponsorship Programme was advertised the week beginning 1st November 2010. The Waterways Ireland Sponsorship Programme aims to increase

participation levels and frequency of use of the waterways under its remit by supporting a wide range of events.

By supporting events through the Sponsorship Programme, Waterways Ireland assists in bringing tourists to the waterways and their hinterland and thus provides an economic stimulus to the communities living along the waterways.

Support is provided to events on the basis of:

- location and nature of the event (which must be water-based on one of the seven waterways under the remit of Waterways Ireland);
- potential of the event to introduce new users to the waterways in an active capacity, i.e. not merely as spectators;
- development of non-established events;
- encouraging cross-border participation;
- even distribution of sponsorship across all activities and all waterways; and
- inclusion of participants from specified groups (such as people with dependents, people with a disability and members of the Traveller community) and from people of different ages, political opinion, race, religious belief, gender, marital status, and sexual orientation.

The closing date for receipt of completed applications for sponsorship was Monday 13th December 2010 at 3.00 p.m. and assessment of received applications will take place in the coming weeks. I am arranging for the Deputy to be advised in due course as to the number of applications that were received in total.

Question No. 41 answered with Question No. 33.

National Drugs Strategy

42. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs further to Parliamentary Question Nos. 141, 143 and 144 of 24 Samhain 2010, his views regarding the data supplied by the Health Research Board showing the high level of drug use here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46043/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As indicated in my previous reply, the data to which the Deputy refers is primarily drawn from the 2010 annual report of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), with the Health Research Board being the national agency through which the Irish input is channelled.

For the reasons outlined, I again stress the need for caution when using data to derive cross-European comparisons. Also, the Irish input on heroin is based on a study published by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (NACD) in December 2009. As indicated at the time, due to a number of technical factors associated with the capture/recapture methodology used, the figures were regarded as an overestimate of the opiate-using population here. The NACD are currently undertaking research aimed at identifying an appropriate estimate model for use in Ireland, taking the data sources available into consideration.

I accept that heroin use remains a major problem in our country. All the indications are that, while the use of heroin is relatively stable in the Dublin region, it has become more widely dispersed around the country, particularly in the major cities and in towns across Leinster. The data under reference also emphasises the welcome increase in the number of people who are

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in receipt of treatment to deal with their drugs problems. As I pointed out previously, new opiate substitution services have opened this year in Cork, Tralee and Wexford, and these will be followed shortly by facilities in Kilkenny, Waterford, Limerick, Dundalk and Drogheda. Expansions of needle exchange services, detoxification facilities and rehabilitation services are also being implemented.

While the Drugs Prevalence Survey 2006/07 showed an increase in cocaine use, the data is being updated at present with fieldwork for the Drugs Prevalence Survey 2010/11 being undertaken. The initial outcomes from that survey will come to hand towards the end of next year. Ireland ranks in the mid-range among the EU countries for cannabis use, while the use of ecstasy is considered to be at a low level.

I am confident that the steps being taken across the supply reduction, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and research pillars of the National Drugs Strategy will continue to impact significantly on problem drug use in Ireland.

43. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding the development of the strategy under the supply reduction pillar of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 to develop a framework to provide an appropriate response to the issue of drug related intimidation in communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46042/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): An Action was included under the supply reduction pillar of the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 — *develop a framework to provide an appropriate response to the issue of drug-related intimidation in the community* — with An Garda Síochána taking the lead role and also involving the Family Support Network and the Department of Justice and Law Reform.

An Garda Síochána have developed such a framework in co-operation with the other parties. The implementation of the framework on a pilot basis in the Dublin Metropolitan Area was announced at the Annual Work Conference of the Family Support Network, which I attended in October. The framework has been well received by the family representatives and its implementation in 2011 will be monitored with a view to possible expansion to the rest of the country.

Meanwhile, the Dial to Stop Drug Dealing Campaign, which I recently relaunched, is a further measure to support local communities in dealing with drugs problems in their midst. The campaign was devised as a safe and anonymous way for concerned citizens to pass information to the Gardaí who see it as an effective means of helping in the effort against drug dealing and the associated suffering in communities. Information given through the confidential line has led to a number of seizures, and has contributed greatly to Garda intelligence in the drugs area.

The issue of drug-related intimidation is something that is associated with the drugs trade on an international level. It is a most difficult issue to address in a comprehensive way but I am confident that the steps being taken will lead to improvements in the lives of many families. Meanwhile, I will continue to monitor the situation through the quarterly meetings of the Oversight Forum on Drugs.

Irish Language

44. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the discussions he has had with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources in regard to the electronic media and the Irish language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46054/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy may be aware, the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language was approved by Government recently and will be published shortly. My Department is in regular contact with the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on issues of mutual concern in relation to the Irish language and, indeed, the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources was involved in the formulation of the Strategy as a member of the Cabinet Committee on Irish and the Gaeltacht.

Issues regarding the Irish language in the media, including new electronic media, are addressed in the Strategy.

Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge

45. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Brian O'Shea** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta cathain a beidh an dréacht deiridh den Straitéis Fiche Bliain don Ghaeilge ag dul os comhair an Rialtais le haghaidh cinnidh; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [46056/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Rinne an Rialtas an Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge a fhaomhadh ag a gcruinniú ar 30 Samhain 2010. Tá sé i gceist an cháipéis chríochnúil a fhoilsiú go luath agus beidh tuilleadh eolais ar fáil ansin maidir leis na céimeanna atá le glacadh chun an Straitéis a chur i bhfeidhm.

Community Development

46. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the steps he is taking to facilitate the expansion of the role of integrated development companies; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45965/10]

56. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the position regarding the various community development projects here; if he has had further meetings with their representative; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46051/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 46 and 56 together.

As the Deputies will be aware, my Department has, over the past number of years, been pursuing a process of cohesion of local delivery structures in order to simplify and enhance the effectiveness of the delivery of a range of local development programmes.

The realignment of local delivery structures has reduced the overall number of local development bodies from 94 to 52. These comprise 15 Local Development Companies (LDCs) in urban areas and 37 integrated LEADER/LDC bodies in rural areas. These entities are all independent companies limited by guarantee.

The current phase of this work, which is now well advanced, is focused on integrating the various Community Development Projects across the country with the LDCs and this process, which has been the subject of extensive engagement with the various stakeholders, is due to be completed by the end of this year.

In this context, the Deputies may be aware that a national model involving full integration was set out by my Department. However, it was made clear that other options could be considered as long as they meet a range of criteria, including reduced structures, better integrated delivery of services, supporting efficiencies and reducing company law compliance requirements for CDPs. To date, I have approved four alternative models put forward by HSE South, the Limerick City CDPs/Paul Partnership, the Women's Sector CDPs and Northside Partnership.

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A small number of other alternative models remain under active consideration by my Department and the groups involved will be advised of the outcome shortly.

In terms of the work of the LDCs, my Department has extensive and ongoing engagement with the companies and provides funding to them to implement a number of programmes which enhance their capacity to be key facilitators of development in their respective areas. These programmes include:

- The Local and Community Development Programme (LCDP) which superseded the Local Development Social Inclusion and the Community Development Programmes from the beginning of this year. As part of its overall goals, the LCDP supports individuals into employment and self-employment through education, training, work experience, job placement, enterprise and the social economy in urban and rural areas. Funding of €67.5m has been made available in 2010 for the Programme.
- The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 under which funding of the order of €425m is available. The main objectives of the Programme are to improve the quality of life in rural areas and facilitate the diversification of the rural economy. Funding is available under a number of specific measures, which include, for example, the encouragement of tourism activities, support for business creation and development, village renewal and development and basic services for the economy and the rural population. The Programme has facilitated access to significant financial resources to rural communities since it commenced. This has resulted in the proliferation of innovative and sustainable development projects all over the country, which are providing invaluable support to rural communities in these difficult times.

My Department will continue to work closely with the companies over the coming years to assist them in achieving positive outcomes for the communities they serve. As I have said in the past, my primary concern is to make every effort by minimising overheads and ancillary costs to ensure that the front-line services provided by — or supported through — my Department, especially those focused on the needs of the most disadvantaged communities, are protected.

Seirbhísí Trí Ghaeilge

47. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta an bhfuil sé sásta go bhfuil go leor oifigeach ar fáil sa Státseirbhís a bhfuil a ndóthain Gaeilge acu lena gcuid seirbhísí a sholáthar trí mheán na teanga sin; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [46058/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I dtús báire, ba mhaith liom a rá go n-aithním an dúshlán mór a bhaineann le dóthain oifigeach le hinniúlacht sa Ghaeilge a bheith ar fáil sa státseirbhís agus sa tseirbhís phoiblí go ginearálta le seirbhísí a sholáthar sa teanga sin. Ar ndóigh, mar is eol don Teachta, thagair an Coimisinéir Teanga do scála na faidhbe sin le gairid.

Ní miste a rá go bhfuil beartas leagtha amach ag an Rialtas le dul i ngleic leis an bhfadhb seo sa Straitéis 20 Bliain don Ghaeilge a fhoilseofar go luath. Faoin mbeartas sin:

- Ceapfaidh an Roinn Airgeadais agus an tSeirbhís um Cheapacháin Phoiblí socruithe cuí chun cur leis an gcohort seirbhíseach poiblí atá in ann feidhmiú go dátheangach. Bunófar na socruithe sin de réir a chéile ag aithint na srianta atá faoi láthair ar earcaíocht san earnáil phoiblí.

- Déanfar forbairt ar chóras creidiúnaithe caighdeán-bhunaithe neamhspleách d’inniúlacht Ghaeilge sa tseirbhís phoiblí laistigh den chreat oibre cáilíochtaí náisiúnta foriomlán atá ann faoi láthair. Dearfar agus tairgfear Dioplóma Náisiúnta sa Dátheangachas agus i gCleachtas Teanga d’fhonn cuidiú le seirbhísí ar ardchaighdeán a sholáthar don phobal i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge. Léiríonn sé seo an tábhacht a bhaineann le hoiliúint sa Ghaeilge a sholáthar d’oifigigh atá ag obair cheana féin sa státseirbhís agus a bhfuil fonn orthu forbairt a dhéanamh ar a gcumas Gaeilge le seirbhísí a sholáthar trí mheán na teanga sin don phobal.
- Tá glactha ag Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla leis an ‘scéim teanga’ mar an lár-ionstraim trína soláthrófar seirbhísí dátheangacha an Stáit don phobal. Sonróidh scéimeanna teanga amach anseo na poist laistigh d’eagraíochtaí a mbeidh cumas sa Ghaeilge riachtanach dóibh.

Social Inclusion Initiatives

48. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is satisfied with the number of events that were organised for social inclusion week; if the list of events met the criteria as set out in the national strategy; the number of local authorities who organised such events; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46038/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Two social inclusion weeks were organised under the Irish programme to mark the 2010 European Year Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The main week took place from 17th to 21st of October and was led by the local authorities. The objective was to showcase best practice in local social inclusion initiatives and the work of the Social Inclusion Units that are in place in many local authorities, and to highlight the role of active citizenship in promoting greater social inclusion. Funding of €47,600 was made available by my Department to support the work. Twenty eight local authorities received €1,700 each to assist with their arrangements for the week.

I was impressed by the range of activities that took place and the way in which they sought to meet the principal objectives of the Year, which include involving every level of society in the work against social exclusion. Events included community competitions, exhibitions, workshops and projects to raise awareness about the impact of social exclusion in communities. There were also information initiatives about Traveller culture, ethnic diversity, homelessness and the work of the local authorities to bring about an inclusive society. Events aimed to reach out to older people, youth, and people with disabilities and promote their participation in their local community. Initiatives involved all levels of the community and included local schools, libraries, childcare providers, family resource centres, local businesses and sports clubs.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking the local authorities, community groups and local voluntary organisations for their response and their commitment to the success of the Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

Tourism Industry

49. **Deputy Kathleen Lynch** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans to develop rural tourism in view of the need for support in this area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46048/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, my Department operates a range of programmes and schemes to assist and

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support community, local and rural development. This includes programmes and activities supportive of rural tourism and the rural recreation agenda.

In particular, the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP), which my Department administers, represents a substantial investment in rural areas and indeed will play a significant role in terms of sustaining and developing rural tourism over the coming period. Under the programme, an amount of €45.4m is available for the *Encouragement of Tourism Activities* measure, which aims to encourage rural tourism built on the sustainable development of Ireland's natural resources, cultural and natural heritage. The objective of this measure is to maximise the sustainable, regionally balanced, tourism potential of all rural areas through the provision of necessary infrastructure and the development of the countryside as a recreational resource for all. The measure currently has registered project activity of €11 million, with almost €8 million at an advanced stage of development. This activity has the potential to leverage in excess of €9 million in private matched funding.

My Department also co-ordinates the work of Comhairle na Tuaithe, which oversees the implementation of the National Countryside Recreation Strategy. The investments in this area also contribute significantly to the rural tourism product, especially activity tourism.

The implementation of my Department's Walks Scheme, as the first managed maintenance scheme for our walking trails, has seen a great improvement in the facilities and standards in this area. There are now nearly 40 trails covered by the Scheme. It should be noted that my Department has also contributed to a number of other rural recreation initiatives such as the development of certain disused railway lines as cycle/walkways, the Mayo Greenway being a recent such example.

My Department also supports the Irish Summer Colleges, which provide Irish courses in the Gaeltacht each year and are central to the promotion of rural cultural tourism in those areas. In 2010, over 24,000 students attended courses in the Gaeltacht and were accommodated in over 600 households throughout the region. Activities associated with the colleges, as well as various local events centred around them, and visiting parents, relatives, etc, provide a tremendous boost to the local Gaeltacht economy each year, as well as assisting in strengthening the Irish language in the Gaeltacht, the most important natural resource of the area. Údarás na Gaeltachta, which comes under the remit of my Department, has also made a significant contribution to rural tourism and the rural economy in the Gaeltacht regions.

I should add that Waterways Ireland, a North/South Implementation Body, which is co-sponsored by my Department, is also engaged in the promotion and development of rural tourism within the context of its particular mandate in relation to the development of our inland waterways, which are a valuable and precious tourism resource. Waterways Ireland is currently formulating a new Marketing Strategy for the inland waterways, which will build on the many successes of previous marketing activities and will strengthen the relationships built up over the last decade with tourism agencies, local authorities, product providers and the private sector.

My Department will continue to contribute to rural recreation and tourism and will work with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport and other key agencies, such as Fáilte Ireland, in this regard over the coming period. In this regard, I anticipate that the significantly increased funding available for tourism development under the RDP will be a considerable support to the development of rural tourism over the coming years.

Social Inclusion Initiatives

50. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if

he is satisfied with the progress made to date in regard to the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion; the number of social inclusion projects or strategies reached since this Government took office in 2007; the number of projects or strategies put on hold; the number that has had their conclusion deadlines extended due to the economic crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46037/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Combating poverty and building an inclusive society are key priorities for the Government. The overall goal of the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, published in 2007, is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty in the population to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. The plan prioritises 12 high level goals in relation to children, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities and communities. It identifies some 150 actions across Departments and agencies with a remit in social policy, as part of a strategic approach to make a decisive impact on poverty over the period to 2016.

CSO data from the annual *Survey on Income and Living Conditions* (SILC) shows that in 2008 the consistent poverty rate was 4.2%, having fallen from 5.1% in 2007 and 8.2% in 2003.

The report on the implementation of the National Action Plan to the end of 2008 shows a similar pattern of progress in the actions of Departments to achieve the goals in the plan. This involved significant State investment in education, employment and training for lone parents and for people with disabilities; in health and community care for older people; in local and community development; and in integration initiatives for migrants.

The CSO figures for 2009, published on 25 November last, highlight the continuing importance of social transfers as a stabiliser for people in difficult economic circumstances. In 2009, social transfers reduced the 'at risk of poverty' rate from 46% to 14.1%. This is a 'poverty reduction effect' of 70%.

The rise in consistent poverty to 5.5% indicated in the 2009 figures is a cause for concern and reflects the increase in unemployment. In meeting the challenges that face us in the immediate years ahead, the Government is committed to prioritising those who are the most vulnerable and to protect as far as possible the frontline services in marginalised communities. The overriding objective now is to restore economic growth and maximise employment so that the recent progress made in tackling poverty can be continued and the goals in the National Action Plan for an inclusive and fair society can be achieved.

Ministerial Responsibilities

51. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he has any new plans or supporting programmes to existing plans to further promote a fair, tolerant and caring society; if he has, through our membership of the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN and the International Labour Organisation, initiated any new programmes or been involved in any negotiations, consultations and so on that can improve such a society; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46039/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): As the Deputy will be aware, the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs was established in March 2010. When announcing the decision to assign new responsibilities to the Department, the Taoiseach stressed the importance of social development and highlighted the continued importance of supporting the most vulnerable members of society and those working to make a difference right across our communities

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Against this background, my Department operates and manages a range of schemes and programmes, which support the development of communities, urban and rural, and which tackle disadvantage and promote a fairer, tolerant and more caring society.

A key programme in this regard is the Local and Community Development Programme, which was launched in 2010, and under which funding of €63.5m will be provided in 2011 to communities across the country to tackle local issues, promote community development and encourage a more caring society.

My Department also operates schemes and measures which directly promote the equality and human rights agenda and which my colleague, Ms. Mary White, TD, Minister of State for Equality, Human Rights and Integration, has responsibility for. Details of all the schemes and programmes operated by my Department can be accessed on my Department's website at www.pobail.ie.

In relation to new plans and initiatives to promote a fair tolerant and caring society, I can advise the Deputy that Minister of State White has initiated a review of the legislation, structures and arrangements involving the Equality Authority, the Equality Tribunal and the Irish Human Rights Commission in order to enhance equality structures in an effective way. A scoping exercise to identify issues to be addressed in the review is underway.

In the context of the development of a fair and caring society for women, my Department continues to oversee the implementation of the National Women's Strategy, of which a triennial review is currently under way. Following completion of the review, it may be necessary to bring new proposals to Government to take account of changing priorities, including the requirements of Europe 2020.

The content of the all encompassing Strategy has been informed by the UN-Beijing Platform for Action to address gender discrimination and by a range of policy recommendations from the EU and the Council of Europe.

In addition, under the European Social Fund-supported Human Capital Investment Operational Programme, a new Equality for Women Measure, promoting equality of opportunity for women, was launched earlier this year. The total amount of funding identified for the Measure over the period 2008-2014 is approximately €11.5m and projects being currently funded under this Measure assist disadvantaged women preparing for training, education or employment; develop female entrepreneurship or support initiatives which help women advance their careers within employment.

My Department also has responsibility for promoting and co-coordinating the integration of legally resident immigrants into Irish society. In this regard, I might mention the Ministerial Council on Migrant Integration, which was recently established by Minister of State White and which consists of 74 immigrants from throughout the State who will advise on issues facing them.

Finally, as the Deputy will know, Mr. John Moloney, TD, Minister of State with responsibility for Disability and Mental Health, continues to work to support and create a fairer society for people with disabilities. In this regard, considerable work has been undertaken on the drafting of a National Disability Strategy Recession Plan, which I envisage will be finalised shortly.

Departmental Expenditure

52. Deputy Thomas P. Broughan asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the total budget by his Department, for each of the past three years, for the Traveller

policy division; if all funding was drawn down in each year; the headings under which it was drawn down; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46040/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Mary Alexandra White): The Deputy will be aware that the Traveller Policy Division became part of my Department in June 2010. Prior to this, the Division formed part of the then Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Funding for the Traveller Policy Division forms part of the Equality Monitoring/Consultative Committees subhead. The portion of this subhead allocated to the Traveller Policy Division for the past three years is as follows:

2008 — €1.010m;

2009 — €826,000;

2010 — €417,600.

Of this funding, €860,000 was drawn down in 2008 and €763,000 was drawn down in 2009. The Deputy will appreciate that I am not yet in a position to give a final figure for 2010. However, I am informed by officials in my Department that it is expected that the majority of the funds allocated will be drawn down this year.

In addition, an allocation of €1.4m in dormant accounts funding was approved for Traveller projects, to be drawn down over the period 2009/2010. Of this allocation, a balance of €496,044 remains to be drawn down.

I am informed that the savings I have outlined were primarily as a result of slower than anticipated drawdown of funds for local projects administered by Pobal and also a reduction of 8% in Pobal administration fees.

My Department's Traveller Policy Division is responsible for coordinating policy in relation to Travellers. Funding from this Division is used principally to support interagency working through the City and County Development Boards and the work of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee. Funding support for local projects is administered by Pobal through the Traveller Interagency Fund.

The Traveller Policy Division also funds mediation and related initiatives, especially in the light of certain serious situations which have arisen around the country in recent years. Funding is also provided for positive communications measures such as Traveller Pride Week, in line with a commitment in *Towards 2016* from all of the social partners to give "concentrated attention" to achieving progress on Traveller issues, including "...measures to improve communication between Travellers and the general population".

53. **Deputy Jim O'Keeffe** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the basis on which he proposes to have administrative efficiencies in his Department leading to savings of €10 million in 2011 and €18 million in a full year; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47125/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I assume the Deputy is referring to the savings outlined in section B.17 of the Summary of 2011 Budget Measures. The basis for these efficiencies is set out in greater detail in the recently published National Recovery Plan 2011-2014. For the Deputy's convenience, I have reproduced the relevant table from the plan below.

As can be seen from the table, the achievement of the necessary savings is a matter that extends broadly across my Department's Vote. To the maximum extent possible, the savings

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will include efficiencies, which will be sought not only in my Department itself, but also within the agencies and groups that it funds.

	Yield 2011	Yield Full year
	€m	€m
<i>Community, Equality & Gaeltacht Affairs</i>		
The key adjustments include reduced programme allocations particularly in community schemes, payroll savings and efficiencies in administrative non pay costs.		
Developing Communities	8.7	8.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced allocations across community development programmes / projects • Adjustments in supports for the community & voluntary sector and volunteering 		
<i>Other programmes</i>		
Tackling Problem Drug Use	0.4	0.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings across community based drugs projects 		
Rural Development	0.6	0.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced funding for rural recreation 		
Gaeltacht & Island Development Reduced funding for Gaeltacht schemes/ services	1.4	1.4
Promotion and Maintenance of the Irish Language	0.6	0.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings across Irish language support programmes 		
Equality	0.9	0.9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in funding for equality and integration projects 		
Disability	0.6	0.6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in funding for disability projects 		
Other Services	1.8	1.8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reductions in other programmes and administration. 		
<i>Other</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payroll savings: 	1.0	6.0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-pay Administrative Savings: 	3.1	5.5
Total CEGA savings:	19.0	27.0

Community Development

54. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which he has put forward proposals likely to positively impact on the present economic situation or assist in a national recovery programme; if he will set out the principles of any such proposals and the likely net impact on the economic situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46035/10]

62. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his proposals for any changes in legislation or emphasis on any perceived need for legislation which might have the effect of the creation of opportunities for those throughout the urban and rural communities who are anxious to offer assistance towards economic resurgence; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46034/10]

352. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his priorities and objectives to support and encourage community based effort through-

out the country in view of the likely need arising from the economic situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46436/10]

353. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his priorities and objectives under the RAPID programme for 2011 and subsequent years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46437/10]

354. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his spending intentions under the CLÁR programme in coming year and over the next four years having particular regard to the needs of the economy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46438/10]

355. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans to utilise community effort to generate economic revival over the next four years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46439/10]

356. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the main areas of expected expenditure by him over the next four years with particular reference to the need to generate economic growth; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46440/10]

357. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which he has carried out an assessment of the emerging needs of urban and rural communities with a view to how best to address such issues in the ongoing economic situation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46441/10]

361. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the way he proposes to assist community groups involved in local employment generating projects; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46446/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 54, 62, 352 to 357, inclusive, and 361 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department operates and administers a range of schemes and programmes that support the social and economic development of rural and urban communities across the country. Details of these schemes, including funding available to assist community groups involved in local employment generating and economic revival projects can be accessed at my Department's website at www.pobail.ie

Key measures that my Department will promote in 2011 to support and encourage community-based effort throughout the country in the current economic situation and to utilise community effort to generate economic revival include the following:

- The Local and Community Development Programme, under which a total of €63.5m will be made available in 2011, will assist communities to tackle poverty and social exclusion and encourage local employment opportunities through partnership and constructive engagement between Government and its agencies and people in disadvantaged communities nationally, in both urban and rural settings.
- The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP), with funding of €425m available for the delivery of LEADER-type activities, will continue to be critical to rural communities during the current difficult economic times and will be key to achieving sustainable economic growth and stability in rural regions. To date, the RDP has leveraged

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private/community funding of approximately €43 million which also aids in the development of strong rural communities as well as economically viable business activity, all of which contributes to the creation of the right conditions for the generation of sustainable, long-term job opportunities.

- In Gaeltacht areas, Údarás na Gaeltachta, which, over the two year period 2009-2010, has been provided with some €70m in Exchequer funding, will continue to play a major role in supporting local enterprise through the range of supports it provides to existing and start-up businesses and to local community initiatives.
- In terms of promoting rural tourism, my Department provides supports not only through the tourism measure of the RDP, but directly through the work of Comhairle na Tuaithe, the implementation of my Department's Walks Scheme and other rural recreation initiatives. My Department also provides support for the Irish Summer Colleges, which in 2010 catered for over 24,000 students attending courses in the Gaeltacht while being accommodated in over 600 households throughout the region, and are central to the promotion of rural cultural tourism in the Gaeltacht. Waterways Ireland, which is co-sponsored by my Department, is also engaged in the promotion and development of rural tourism within the context of its mandate in relation to the development of our inland waterways, which are a valuable and precious tourism resource.

In the current economic circumstances, we are faced with difficult decisions. The Government has considered a number of measures in the context of the National Recovery Plan 2011-14 and Budget 2011 to provide the basis for a sustainable approach to the current financial situation. Across Government, our approach has been to do this in as balanced a way as possible.

However, as the Deputy will be aware, allocations to most subheads in my Department's Vote have been reduced by varying amounts in the Budget, as is the case in all Departments. Within this context, my primary concern is to make every effort to ensure that the daily front-line services which are being provided with funding from my Department are protected, especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities. In the prevailing financial circumstances, it is clear that objectives will have to be pursued with less resources than previously. However, we will continue to strive to achieve good outcomes and value for money, notwithstanding these constraints. In the case of a number of my Department's capital programmes, such as CLÁR, the focus in 2011 will be on meeting existing commitments, rather than initiating new measures or projects.

Clearly, the changed circumstances in which we live today require a sharpening of focus for us all in terms of addressing the nature of the problems which now present themselves. In response to this changing context, working more closely with communities and providing focused and effective supports at local level will be key objectives for my Department in the coming period.

With regard to the issue of future legislative proposals, the main proposals envisaged at present are:

- A Bill to amend the Dormant Accounts legislation for the purpose of improving the administrative efficiency of the existing operations of the Dormant Accounts Fund. It is anticipated that this Bill will be published shortly.
- Arising from the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language, legislation will be brought forward in 2011 to establish an Irish Language and Gaeltacht Authority with responsi-

bility for Irish language matters throughout the State. The new Authority will assume responsibility, inter alia, for relevant functions currently performed by Údarás na Gaeltachta, including an enterprise function.

Equality Issues

55. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the measures taken in Budget 2011 to tackle discrimination and safeguard equality; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47123/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Mary Alexandra White): Funding of the order of €16.249m will be made available to support measures relating to equality and diversity during 2011. Among the key priorities for my Department will be the continuation of the vital work done by equality and human rights agencies, and the support of important integration and diversity management initiatives throughout the country. While some reductions are necessary, I expect that much of the required savings can be achieved through efficiencies in administration and overhead costs.

My Department's equality and rights agencies have been given adequate funding to continue their core work next year. The Equality Tribunal has been given a 9% increase. The allocations for the Equality Authority and Irish Human Rights Commission will allow them to continue promoting and researching issues of equality and human rights.

Supports for women have been protected, with full funding for the Equality for Women measure being maintained. This funding stream helps women throughout the country to access new opportunities for employment, training and enterprise, which is vital at this difficult economic time. The national women's organisations will receive combined funding of over €500,000 next year.

Funding of initiatives to support the Traveller Community has been reduced by 4% on the 2010 allocation. However, it is expected that this reduction can be met from administrative savings. My Department will continue to support interagency working through the City and County Development Boards and the work of the National Traveller Monitoring and Advisory Committee. I also envisage continued funds for mediation and related initiatives, especially in the light of serious situations which have arisen around the country in recent years. Funding will also be provided for positive communications measures such as Traveller Pride Week, in line with a commitment in Towards 2016 from all of the social partners to give 'concentrated attention' to achieving progress on Traveller issues, including '...measures to improve communication between Travellers and the general population'.

A combined allocation of €5.8m for the Office of the Minister for Integration and the European Refugee Fund will facilitate the continuation of measures to promote the integration of legally resident immigrants (including the Ministerial Council on Migrant Integration and grants to local authorities, sporting bodies, etc), as well as the funding of projects under the European Refugee Fund and the European Fund for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals. In fact, the provision in these subheads is very close to the likely outturn in 2010.

A further priority will be the advancement of the implementation of the National Disability Strategy, with a provision of €7.499m made for this sector in 2011.

Question No. 56 answered with Question No. 46.

Community Development

57. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht

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Affairs his plans to develop the Ministerial Council on Integration; if he has had meetings with other Government Departments regarding the development of integration; the result of such discussions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46041/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Mary Alexandra White): As I indicated in my reply to Question No 91 on 3 Samhain 2010, the establishment of the Ministerial Council on Integration is one of the initiatives outlined in the policy statement — *Migration Nation: Statement on Integration Strategy and Diversity Management* — and is part of progressing work on immigrant integration policy in Ireland. The Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion, Children and Integration and the Senior Officials Group which supports the Cabinet Committee are also involved in this work.

The Council provides a forum where immigrants can speak directly to me regarding their experience of integration in Ireland and assist me in better-informed policymaking by identifying issues and bringing them to attention. Inaugural meetings of the Ministerial Council on Integration have been held in all the regional fora of the Council. Following the completion of the inaugural meetings of the Ministerial Council, it is my intention to convene a formal meeting of the standing Cross-Departmental Group on Integration in the near future.

In accordance with the policy of mainstreaming of services for migrants, primary responsibility for the delivery of services rests with the relevant service providers and Government agencies at both central and local level. My Office engages with these bodies (and with relevant non-governmental organisations) on an ongoing basis with regard to issues relating to the integration of migrants. Issues which have been raised at the Ministerial Council are brought to the attention of the appropriate bodies.

Irish Language

58. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans to develop the Irish language in an organic fashion; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46052/10]

59. **Deputy Eamon Gilmore** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the discussions he has had with the Department of Education and Skills regarding simplifying the grammar of the Irish language; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46053/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 58 and 59 together.

As the Deputy is aware, further to a Government decision in late 2008, my Department commenced a review of the *Caighdeán Oifigiúil* (Official Standard) for Irish earlier this year. It could be said that organic development is at the heart of this process. The *Caighdeán* has not been reviewed or updated since it was first published in 1958. In linguistic terms, it is inevitable that there will always be a gap between any spoken language and the official written standard for any language. However, it is widely accepted that this gap is now excessive with regard to the Irish language, since the spoken language has continued to develop over the last 50 years.

I appointed a Steering Committee to oversee the Review of the *Caighdeán Oifigiúil*, which is due to be completed in June of next year. The Department of Education and Skills has a representative on the Committee and its involvement in the process is crucial. Education is one of the areas where the new *Caighdeán Oifigiúil* will have most impact. What is clear from

submissions received during the public consultations is that, above all else, people want clarity on rules in the *Caighdeán*. This may involve simplification in some instances, but simplicity was one of the criteria adopted by those who published the *Caighdeán* in 1958. As I stated at the outset of this Review, some rules will go, some rules will be amended, and completely new rules may be put in place. However in all cases, the criteria underpinning these decisions will epitomise the concept of organic development — clarity, internal consistency, simplicity and due regard to the spoken language in the Gaeltacht. Taken together, these show that organic development is a progressive yet complex process. It is my hope as Minister that the final result in this review process will highlight the best traits of such organic development, while also providing the clarity that people are looking for.

My proposals in relation to the development of the language at community level within the Gaeltacht and throughout the State will be set out in the 20-year Strategy for the Irish Language, which will be published shortly, and in respect of which there are separate Questions to me on today's Order Paper.

Forbairt na Gaeilge

60. D'fhiafraigh **Deputy Brian O'Shea** den Aire Gnóthaí Pobail, Comhionannais agus Gaeltachta cén dul chun cinn atá déanta leis an bhfoclóir leictreonach Gaeilge/Béarla ag Foras na Gaeilge; agus an ndéanfaidh sé ráiteas ina thaobh. [46057/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Tuigim ó Fhoras na Gaeilge go bhfuil dul chun cinn sásúil á dhéanamh maidir leis an bhfoclóir leictreonach Béarla-Gaeilge.

Is é an staid reatha ná go bhfuil Céim a hAon — céim na Pleanála agus an Deartha — curtha i gcrích cheana féin mar aon le cuid de Chéim a Dó. Baineann Céim a Dó le tiomsú an fhoclóra féin agus tá trí fhochéim i gceist, eadhon:

Céim 2(a), a bhaineann le cur le chéile bhunachar Béarla an fhoclóra i bhfoirm creataí iontrála — cuireadh an fhochéim sin i gcrích le gairid;

Céim 2(b), a bhaineann le taobh na Gaeilge den fhoclóir a sholáthar — cuireadh tús leis an bhfochéim seo i bhfómhar 2009 agus leanfaidh an obair ar aghaidh go ceann dhá bhliain; agus

Céim 2(c), céim na heagarthóireachta — cuirfear tús leis an bhfochéim sin ag tús 2011 agus meastar go leanfaidh an obair ar aghaidh go dtí an tríú ráithe den bhliain 2012.

Ach Céim a Dó a bheith curtha i gcrích, leanfar ar aghaidh ansin go dtí Céim a Trí, a bhaineann le táirgeadh an fhoclóra féin. Cheana féin, tá ráitis spéise iarrtha maidir leis an sonrú teicniúil ar an leagan leictreonach den fhoclóir. Mar sin, comhairlítear dom go bhfuiltear ag súil leis an leagan críochnúil den fhoclóir a fhoilsiú i bhfoirm chlóite agus leictreonach ag deireadh na bliana 2012. Tá cur síos cuimsitheach ar an tionscadal iomlán le fáil ar an suíomh gréasáin, www.focloir.ie. Déantar nuashonrú rialta ar an suíomh sin agus, dá réir sin, bíonn teacht ag an bpobal ar an eolas is déanaí faoin tionscadal agus is féidir féachaint ar fhíorábhar an fhoclóra agus é á chur le chéile.

Is fiú dom a threisiú chomh maith go mbeidh mórchuid den obair a bhaineann leis an dtionscadal seo ina dúshraith luachmhar amach anseo le haghaidh tionscadail eile foclóireachta a bhfuil gá leo — foclóir nua Gaeilge-Béarla ach go háirithe.

Severe Weather Events

61. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is involved with other Government Departments in relation to the current weather conditions and the effects such conditions may have on those living alone and those living in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46036/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): My Department is represented on the Inter-Agency Group on Severe Weather and is presently working with other Government Departments and agencies to assist and support communities across the country, including the elderly and vulnerable, and those living alone and in rural areas, during the current difficult weather conditions. As Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, I have written to the range of community groups and bodies with which my Department has an ongoing relationship to highlight the need for their members to continue to keep in regular contact with people who may find themselves housebound and living alone during the current inclement weather conditions, in order to ensure that such people have sufficient supplies of food and heat over the coming days and weeks. Indeed, I believe that the community sector is uniquely placed to do this work, given their local knowledge, networks and, most particularly, their “on the ground” presence.

The Deputy may also be aware that Muintir na Tíre, which is supported by my Department and the Department of Justice and Law Reform, has established a special helpline for older and vulnerable people that may be trapped in their homes due to the cold weather conditions and I know this helpline has been accessed by many over the last number of days.

I would like to acknowledge the very important and invaluable assistance being offered to communities across the country by the community and voluntary sector during the current inclement weather conditions. My Department will continue to work with the sector and with other Government agencies in order to assist those most affected and vulnerable at this time.

Question No. 62 answered with Question No. 54.

Question No. 63 answered with Question No. 37.

Rural Development

64. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the steps he is taking to support local enterprise start ups; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [45964/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): The Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (RDP) represents a substantial investment in rural areas and has a significant role to play in sustaining and creating rural employment. The main objectives of the RDP are to improve the quality of life in rural areas and facilitate the diversification of the rural economy. Axes 3 & 4 (LEADER) of the RDP, for which my Department has responsibility, continue to facilitate access to significant financial resources for rural communities. Enterprise support has always been a significant element of successive programmes facilitating rural development in Ireland, including the current and previous LEADER elements of such programmes.

I believe that the enterprise funding available under the RDP adds value to other supports available by specifically targeting rural areas and by seeking to reinforce the economic impact of similar and related interventions under other Axes of the RDP and, indeed, other national programmes.

I can assure the Deputy that I work closely with my Cabinet colleagues, particularly the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, Mr Batt O’Keeffe, T.D., to promote increased co-operation between groups implementing LEADER and other agencies either directly or indirectly involved in supporting enterprise — specifically the County Enterprise Boards. Our aim is to ensure that we maximise the impact of all of the funding available and support enterprise and job creation in rural areas to the greatest extent possible, while at the same time ensuring that no unnecessary or inefficient overlaps or duplication occur.

The individual measures under the RDP that specifically support enterprise creation and development, including their indicative allocations, are as follows:

- Diversification into non-agricultural activities for farm families — €16.66m;
- Support for business creation and development — €48.26m; and
- Encouragement of tourism activities — €45.4m.

To date the RDP has leveraged private/community funding of approximately €43 million which also aids in the development of strong rural communities as well as economically viable business activity, all of which contributes to the creation of the right conditions for the generation of sustainable, long term job opportunities.

In Gaeltacht areas, Údarás na Gaeltachta plays a major role in supporting local enterprise through the range of supports it provides to existing and start-up enterprises. Over the two year period 2009-2010, An tÚdarás has been provided with some €70m in Exchequer funding to allow it to pursue these objectives. In addition to Exchequer-voted funding, An tÚdarás also has access to other sources of income that enable it to promote and stimulate employment creating initiatives — for example, income generated from schemes such as the Community Employment Scheme and the Rural Social Scheme, income from dividends, fees and the sale/lease of assets, and employment support schemes operated by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation.

Departmental Bodies

65. **Deputy Fergus O’Dowd** asked the Taoiseach if he has received an annual report for each of the past three years from the chairman of all State bodies under the aegis of his Department; if the pay of chief executives and employees of such bodies is fully in accordance with Government policy; if he will list any such bodies where this requirement under the code of practice for the governance of State bodies has not been met or no report has been received; if he will provide full details of such issues in such reports and if these reports will be laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46887/10]

The Taoiseach: I have received the Annual Report of the National Economic and Social Development Office (NESDO), which is the only agency under the aegis of my Department, for each of the past three years. The pay of the Chief Officer and all employees of the body are in full accordance with Government policy.

Departmental Expenditure

66. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Taoiseach the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46919/10]

The Taoiseach: The tables below detail expenditure by my Department including Programme Subheads on refreshments and catering for official functions from 2008 to end November 2010.

Department

Year	*Catering for official functions (including lunches, receptions, dinners etc)	Refreshments (including tea, coffee, bottled water etc)
	€	€
2008	**318,412.67	51,240.53
2009	91,139.47	37,299.98
Jan to end Nov 2010	76,670.83	23,631.37

*This includes costs associated with functions hosted on behalf of Government for visiting dignitaries, including Heads of Government and State.

**This also includes costs associated with additional functions held in 2008 including the official opening of the Battle of the Boyne site and a state funeral.

Programme Subheads

2008	Catering for official functions (including lunches, receptions, dinners etc)	Refreshments (including tea, coffee, bottled water, milk, soft drinks)
	€	€
Tribunal of Inquiry	185.25	2,709.53
National Forum on Europe	102,578.87	1,548.68
Ireland Newfoundland Partnership	6,068.41	18.50

2009	Catering for official functions (including lunches, receptions, dinners etc)	Refreshments(including tea, coffee, bottled water, milk, soft drinks)
	€	€
Tribunal of Inquiry	0.00	1,916.70
National Forum on Europe	16,361.77	926.12
Ireland Newfoundland Partnership	1,358.23	n/a

January to end November 2010	Catering for official functions (including lunches, receptions, dinners etc)	Refreshments(including tea, coffee, bottled water, milk, soft drinks)
Tribunal of Enquiry	€0.00	€1,731.01

Supplier names are detailed below:

Alternative Cater Hire
 Artizan Food Company
 Ballymascanlon Hotel
 Banqueting Food Systems Ltd
 Bewley's Food Systems Ltd

Bluebell Diary
Brambles Deli Cafe Ltd
Brennans Green Isle Hotel
Bridge House Hotel
Bryan S Ryan Ltd
Bunzl Irish Merchants
Cafe Crepe
Caife Duin Aill
Caterhire Ltd
City Hotel Derry
Claire Hanley Catering
Clarke's Bakery Ltd
Conaty's Catering
Conrad Hotel (Dublin)
Corporate Cuisine Ireland
Cypress Catering T/A Dobbins
De Braam Mineral Water Company Limited
Dobbins Outdoor
Dobbins Wine Bistro Ltd
Dublin Castle Gift shop
Egan Event Hospitality
EW Technologies
Fitzers Catering Ltd
Flair Hospitality
Gerard Kelly & Sons Ltd
Hotel Minella
Instant Coffee Services Ltd
Its a Bagel Ltd
John Coughlan Catering Ltd
Joint Services Committee
Knights Catering Ltd
Lawlor Office Supplies
Le Phare Coffee House
Leydens Ltd
Linenhall Arts Centre
Listons

[The Taoiseach.]

Lyreco Ireland Ltd

Masterchefs Ltd

Molloy Catering

Munchies

Musgrave Foodservices

Nash Mineral Water

Old Ground Hotel Ennis

Pearl Brasserie

Peter Fowler Catering

Radisson SAS Royal Hotel

RASC Catering Mgt Ltd

Science Gallery

SFC Catering

Spar Merrion Row

Spencer Dock Convention

Taste Catering

The Clarence

The McWilliam Park Hotel

The Merrion Hotel

The Plaza Hotel

The Silk Road Cafe

The Westlin Hotel

Three Q Catering Limited

Tipperary Natural Mineral Water

University College Cork

Waterford Fringe Festival

Watkins Catering

Departmental Appointments

67. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Taoiseach if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47007/10]

68. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Taoiseach if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47022/10]

The Taoiseach: I propose to take Questions Nos. 67 and 68 together.

I have not made any public appointments since 22 November, 2010.

Preparations for the appointment of a new Public Service Board, to be chaired by Minister of State Dara Calleary, are continuing. With a majority of members from outside the Public Service, it will advise the Government on further opportunities and priorities for transformation and efficiency, and on the capacity of the Public Service to lead change and to deliver a high standard of performance. This will inform the approach of the Government and Public Service management to the transformation process over the period ahead.

Following the dissolution of two of the constituent bodies under the National Economic and Social Development Office (the NCPP and the NESF), it was decided that the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) should be reconstituted in a manner which takes into account the changes to the overall structure of Social Partnership, in particular the inclusion of the Environmental Pillar. It was also decided to increase the number of independent members to provide greater external input to the work of the Council. These changes coincided with the conclusion of the term of the Council in Summer 2010.

Last week, a motion of approval of the National Economic and Social Council (Alteration of Composition) Order 2010 was passed by both Houses of the Oireachtas, facilitating these changes. Consequently, I expect to appoint new members of the Council shortly. The majority of the membership is appointed on the basis of nominations received from social partner organisations.

Other than in these areas, I am not due to make any public appointments between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011 at present.

Migration Statistics

69. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Taoiseach the estimated number of Irish citizens who emigrated from the State during 2009; the number of Irish citizens who returned to reside here in 2009 and the net emigration and immigration figure for that year; and to ask that the same information be furnished for the period 1 January 2010 to 30 November 2010. [47108/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Taoiseach (Deputy John Curran): The most recent figures available on migration of Irish nationals can be found in the annual Population and Migration estimates which are published in respect of April each year.

The data in the table below was taken from this release and distinguishes the estimated number of Irish nationals who immigrated and emigrated in the twelve months to April 2009 and 2010 respectively.

The information requested by the Deputy for the period 1 January 2010 to the 30 November 2010 is not currently available.

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Estimated Migration by Irish nationals, 2009-2010¹

Persons Year ending April	Immigration	Emigration	Net migration (derived)
2009	18.4	18.4	0.0
2010	13.3	27.7	-14.4

¹2009-2010 are preliminary.

Departmental Appointments

70. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Taoiseach the timetable involved in the filling of the

[Deputy Fergus O'Dowd.]

recent vacancy for State solicitor for County Louth; the identity of the successful person or company and the salary given; if the position was advertised; the number of interviews that took place and the person who conducted such interviews; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46681/10]

The Taoiseach: The vacancy for State Solicitor for County Louth has been filled following a competition run by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). Mr. Fergus Mullen, Solicitor, was appointed by the DPP on 1 December 2010.

The position was advertised in mid June. 19 applications were received by the closing date of 9 July and all 19 applicants were called to interview. They were interviewed by a three-person board set up by the DPP comprising two senior lawyers from the DPP's Office and one lawyer from outside the Office. Mr. Mullen was ranked first by the interview board.

The total package of remuneration for the Louth State Solicitor position is €229,282 per annum. The State Solicitor must provide for all accommodation costs, the salary of support staff and office expenses from this sum.

Schools Building Projects

71. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of primary schools in Waterford with applications for capital project assistance in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46860/10]

72. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of secondary schools in Waterford with applications for capital project assistance in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46862/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 71 and 72 together.

Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including projects for Waterford, is available on my Department's website at www.education.ie.

However, for the Deputy's convenience, I am setting out below the relevant extracts from my Department's website for Waterford City and County for both primary and post primary schools.

All applications for major capital projects are assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects and assigned a Band rating. The priority attaching to individual projects is determined by published prioritisation criteria, which were formulated following consultation with the Education Partners. There are four band ratings under these criteria, each of which describes the extent of accommodation required and the urgency attaching to it. Band 1 is the highest priority rating and Band 4 is the lowest. Documents explaining the band rating system are also available on my Department's website.

The progression of all large scale building projects from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department's multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of each individual project at this time.

Waterford — Applications on hand for Major Capital Works including those in Architectural Planning — Extracted from .Department's Website

County	Roll Number	School	Current Status	Application for	Provisional Band Rating
Waterford	01711O	S N Cill Rosanta Cill Mhic Thomais (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	07737Q	Villierstown N S Cappelquin (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	12007G & 18235D	Ferrybank Convent NS & Scoil Mhuire An Port Mor NS, Ferrybank	Design Team to be appointed	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	14568K	Killea Boys N S Dunmore East (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 3
Waterford	15046I	St Stephens N S Waterford (Waterford City)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	15540Q	Ballyduff B 2 N S Ballyduff (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 3
Waterford	16748W	S N Na Cille Cill Mhic Thomais Fhinn (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	16976M	S N Deaglan Portlairge (Waterford City)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	17159I	S N An Garrain Bhain Dungarbhain (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	17525H	Dunmore East Convent Ns Dunmore East (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 3
Waterford	17535B	Fionnabhair NS, Fenor, Co. Waterford	Design Team to be appointed	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	17570M	S N Na Bhfiodh Cill Mhic Thomais (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	18167M	S N Aine Nfa Seafield Bonmahon (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	18380M	S N Faiche Liag Portlairge (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	18793O	Sc Naomh Eoin Le Dia Passage Road (Waterford City)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	19282R	St Johns Special Sch Dungarvan (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	19814B	Scoil Gearbhain Straid Emmett (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 3
Waterford	19885B	Gealscoil Philib Barun Teach Realt Na Mara (Waterford County)	Application	New School	Band 2

Waterford — Applications on hand for Major Capital Works including those in Architectural Planning — Extracted from Department's Website

County	Roll Number	School	Current Status	Application for	Provisional Band Rating
Waterford	19953P	St Marys Ns Dungarvan (Waterford County)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	19955T	S N Na Toirbhirte Clocar Na Toirbhirte (Waterford City)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 3
Waterford	19970P	Portlaw N.S., Co. Waterford	Design Team to be appointed	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	20116H	Glor Na Mara NS, Tramore	Design Team to be appointed	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	64930I	C.B.S. Mount Sion (Waterford City)	Application	New School	Band 2
Waterford	64950O	De La Salle College Newtown (Waterford City)	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 4
Waterford	64990D	St. Angela's Ursline Convent	Design Team to be appointed	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	72230W	St Declan'S Community College Kilmacthomas (Waterford County) — Post Primary	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 4
Waterford	72240C	Central Technical Institute Parnell Street (Waterford City) — Post Primary	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	76066J	Meánscoil San Nioclás Rinn O Gcuanach (Waterford County) — Post Primary	Application	Extension/Refurb	Band 2
Waterford	19108B	St. Martin's Special School, Ballytruckle	Awaiting appointment of Design Team	New School	Band 1
Waterford	19244J	St. Josphph's Special School, Waterford City	Awaiting appointment of Design Team	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	18681D	Christ Church NS, Lower Newtown	Awaiting appointment of Design Team	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Waterford	20170N	Kilmacthomas NS	Early Architectural Planning	Extension/Refurb	Band 1
Total	32				

Projects Progressing to construction, on site or completed 2010.

County	Roll Number	School	Current Status
Waterford	19629G	Holy Cross School, Ballycarnane, Tramore	Under Construction
Waterford	20076V	Bunscoil Bhothairena Naomh, Lismore	Under Construction
Waterford City	20050D	Gaelscoil na Deise, Grace Dieu Rd., Waterford	At Tender Stage
Waterford City	20160K	Waterford Educate Together	At Tender Stage
Waterford City	64970U	Colaiste na Maighdine, presentation Secondary School	At Tender Stage
Total	5		

Large Scale Extensions/Refurbishments completed in past 5 years

County	Roll Number	School	Current Status
Waterford	13635R	Ballyduff NS, Kilmeaden	2008
Waterford	18462O	Scoil Lorcaín NS	2008
Waterford	19539F	St. Pauls Junior School, Lisduggan	2008
Waterford	19853L	Gaelscoil Portláirge NS	2008
Waterford	17351A	SN Mhuire Baile Mhic Gonair	2007
Total	5		

School Transport

73. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the reason a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath has had their grant to take their children to school withdrawn; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46905/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): The family referred to by the Deputy, in the details supplied, were in receipt of a remote area grant as there was no school transport service available to meet their transport needs.

However, Bus Éireann which operates the School Transport Scheme, on behalf of my Department, has advised that the family can now avail of a school transport service to and from school.

As a rule primary school transport routes are planned so that, as far as possible, no eligible child will have more than 2.4 kilometres to travel to a pick-up point. Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure that their children are brought safely to and collected safely from designated pick up and set down points. Bus Éireann has advised that the family referred to by the Deputy in the details supplied live within 2.2 kilometres from a pick up point and that this pick up point is considered to be as safe as other designated pick-up points being used throughout the country.

As the family has a level of service within guidelines, it is not proposed to alter the current arrangements.

Departmental Expenditure

74. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the amount of money, under each heading, spent by her on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular

[Deputy Brian Hayes.]

form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46911/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The table below provides the relevant information regarding the cost of refreshments for meetings and functions which took place in my Department and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

	2008	2009	2010
Minister Mary Hanafin	NIL (to 6/5/2008)	n/a	n/a
Minister Batt O'Keeffe	€60 From 7/5/2008 to 31/12/2008	€432 From 1/1/2009 to 31/12/2009	€138 From 1/1/2010 to 22/3/10
Tánaiste Mary Coughlan	n/a	n/a	*€672 From 23/3/2010 to End of November

*The Tánaiste's costs for 2010 include two lunches she hosted in October, one for the Finnish Minister for Education and officials at a total cost of €180.55 and another for a Ministerial delegation from Saudi Arabia at a total cost of €356.75

The Companies who supplied the goods and services are the following:

Houses of the Oireachtas, Catering Services, Leinster House, Dublin 2

Regent Catering Associates, Marlboro Street, Dublin 1

D.S Catering, Athlone, Co Westmeath

Departmental Agencies

75. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to the recent report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Special Report No. 74, the reason four FETAC staff were given retirement packages which amounted to €800,000; if she will specify the grade and position these individuals each held; the length of service in FETAC and the wider public service; the person who authorised these payments; the measures being taken to recoup these unauthorised payments; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46924/10]

76. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the sums paid as part of early retirement packages or redundancy payments to staff within HETAC, FETAC and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland since the decision to merge these three bodies was taken; the number of staff let go during this period; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46925/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 75 and 76 together.

FETAC have informed my Department that the decision to offer early retirement to staff in late 2008 was influenced by a number of factors. The reduction of numbers at certain grades was in line with the recommendations of an organisational review of FETAC undertaken by Farrell Grant Sparks. This review was in turn arranged in response to a recommendation in the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland external review of FETAC that identified structural imbalance in the organisation. FETAC also cited the expectation that efficiencies would arise from the forthcoming amalgamation of HETAC, FETAC and NQAI and that salary savings would be achieved over time arising from the early retirements.

I understand that three of the four former members of staff held the position of Development Officer, a senior technical grade in FETAC. The fourth member of staff held a Grade VI post, an administrative middle management position. A table showing the length of service and lump sum paid to each of the members of staff is set out below.

The Senior Management Team of FETAC, led by the Chief Executive Officer, authorised the early retirements. The approval of the Minister for Education and Skills and the consent of the Minister for Finance, required by FETAC's governing legislation, was not sought. Legal advice in respect of the recovery or reassessment of unauthorised benefits has been obtained and is being considered.

Apart from the FETAC early retirement scheme, no other staff have left FETAC, HETAC or the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland since the amalgamation announcement, other than through resignation, non-renewal of temporary contracts due to the moratorium on public sector recruitment, the expiry of a period of secondment from another organisation or normal retirement pursuant to the terms of the relevant pension scheme.

	Grade	Total Service; Public Sector	Amount in FETAC	Lump Sum
Applicant A	Development Officer	37.128 years	5.586 years	151,868
Applicant B	Development Officer	32.9687 years	5.167 years	133,834
Applicant C	Development Officer	24.863 years	4.671 years	121,834
Applicant D	Grade VI	31.718 years	5.559 years	78,124

Work Placement Programme

77. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will support a matter regarding a placement programme (details supplied). [46935/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): The Work Placement Programme is intended to assist people who are unemployed to develop their skills levels to secure work experience that will assist them in finding employment. My Department recently issued circular 66/2010 which permits schools to participate in the Work Placement Programme if they so wish.

The programme provides a mechanism for schools to offer placements to graduates and non-graduates from a wide variety of disciplines and provides an opportunity for schools to access skills and experience which may otherwise be unavailable. The individuals on placement will, in turn, have the opportunity to utilise and develop their own skills.

This involves a placement for a defined period, rather than employment, and participants in this voluntary programme may be entitled to maintain their social welfare entitlements subject to the rules of the Department of Social Protection.

Schools may offer placements to teachers registered with the Teaching Council. Where a registered teacher is engaged he or she may undertake normal teaching duties if the school authority considers this appropriate and can make suitable arrangements. Schools may also use the programme to engage people in non-teaching roles, where non-teaching graduates and non-graduates may have valuable skills from which a school could benefit. It is a condition of the programme that any placements must not displace an existing member of staff or be used to fill a vacant post. This includes substitute vacancies. These conditions safeguard future employment opportunities in the education sector.

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

In addition, the Government has also decided to expand the number of placements offered under the Work Placement Programme. The number of places on the programme will be increased from the current 2,000 to 7,500 in 2011, with 5,000 of the additional placements being offered in the public sector.

Schools Building Projects

78. **Deputy Darragh O'Brien** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding the provision of a new school (details supplied) in County Dublin; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46939/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The school referred to by the Deputy was announced earlier this year for the appointment of a design team. Representatives from the Board of Management of this school attended a briefing given by my Department to explain the tendering process and the steps involved.

The first stage of this process, which was carried out by my Department on behalf of the school, has been completed and pre-qualified lists of consultants have issued to the Board of Management. The next step will be for the Board of Management to issue invitations to the pre-qualified consultants to tender for the selection and appointment of the design team.

Site Acquisitions

79. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the discussions that have taken place between her and the Sisters of Mercy regarding the purchase of a site for a school (details supplied) in south Tipperary; the position regarding the terms of a contract for this site; the progress made in these contract discussions; the expected date for an agreed contract; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46940/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): In 2004, agreement was reached to amalgamate the two primary schools referred to by the Deputy. The application for capital funding to facilitate this amalgamation was assessed and assigned a band rating of 1.4.

A technical inspection was carried out on the existing school buildings to determine which would be suitable to facilitate the amalgamated school. The report produced following this inspection concluded that the most suitable building to facilitate the amalgamation would be the girls' school. It also found that an additional portion of land would be required from the Sisters of Mercy to facilitate the development. The Department has received an offer of lands from the Sisters of Mercy under the Residential Institutions Redress compensation scheme. The Department is considering this offer in the context of the religious orders' response to the Government request for an increase in their contribution under the Redress scheme.

On conclusion of the acquisition of the site, the progression of the amalgamated school building project will be considered in the context of the Department's multi-annual school building and modernisation programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

Schools Building Projects

80. **Deputy Simon Coveney** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding an application by a school (details supplied) in County Cork for funding for

an additional classroom; the funding available for this project and the timescale envisaged for the construction and completion of same. [46944/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The school to which the Deputy refers has made an application for capital funding to construct two classrooms and a Resource Room.

The application is currently under consideration and a decision will issue shortly to the Board of Management of the school.

Higher Education Grants

81. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will list, on a county basis, the number of grant applications received and the number which have been processed for each local authority and vocational education committee here in tabular form. [46948/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The process of assessing and paying third level or further education grants is a matter for the relevant local authority or VEC.

I am aware that the timing of payment varies between the 66 awarding authorities depending on a number of variables including the volume of applications received, staffing resources and whether or not properly completed application forms have been submitted. Work prioritisation across different functions, and how available staff are deployed to execute those functions are matters for the management of each VEC and local authority concerned.

This year's student grant schemes include a number of significant administrative and service improvements aimed at addressing the issue of delay, which include an initial roll-out of a new online grant application system. The new system, introduced in both Irish and English, is already operating in 11 grant awarding authorities. Building on this initial phase for the current academic year, the ultimate aim will be to make it available to all applicants nationally.

Key among the other improvements introduced are a complete overhaul of the grant application form, streamlined administrative processes, advance payments to awarding authorities and publication of the grant schemes some two months earlier than last year. The Student Support Bill, which will provide for a fundamental and radical restructuring of the whole student grants administration function and provide for a single unified scheme is now listed to be taken at Report stage on 16 December 2010.

The table below details the number of new student grant applications received, awarded, refused, on-going, cancelled, yet to be processed, transferred and the number paid by the local authorities and Vocational Educational Committees for the 2010/11 academic year up to the week ended 3 December 2010 unless otherwise stated. The information has been supplied to my Department by the local authorities and the Vocational Education Committees.

My Department is in constant contact with grant awarding authorities to monitor the situation in relation to the processing and payment of student grants, particularly as a number of grant awarding authorities have not supplied up to date information in this matter. It recently wrote, on my behalf, to the heads of the grant awarding authorities to inform them that I am anxious to ensure that remaining applicants receive decisions on their grant applications as soon as possible and requesting their co-operation in prioritising this work in their Councils/Committees.

Local Authorities — Processing Position as at week ending 3.12.10

Local Authorities	Number of New Applications	Awarded	Refused	Ongoing/ Further Information or Documentation Requested	Cancelled/ Withdrawn	Yet to be processed	Transferred	Paid
Carlow Co. Council	233	158	25	40	4	0	6	151
Cavan Co. Council	293	174	26	53	7	17	16	174
Clare Co. Council	682	375	27	179	0	79	22	253
Cork City Council	775	267	69	198	6	137	98	208
Cork Co. Council	1,608	215	166	452	22	640	113	179
Donegal Co. Council	877	454	112	180	31	0	100	300
Dublin City Council	2,457	976	331	283	58	418	391	748
Dun/Rath Co. Council	827	254	101	250	14	111	97	197
South Dublin Council	863	292	93	206	14	123	135	213
Fingal Co. Council	996	241	167	173	0	311	104	101
Galway Co.Council	2,504	793	106	834	44	543	184	793
Kerry Co. Council	703	438	67	126	13	0	59	370
Kildare Co. Council	1,052	295	53	195	23	271	215	295
Kilkenny Co. Council	432	301	40	41	18	0	32	235
Laois Co. Council	396	257	41	23	17	5	53	257
Leitrim Co. Council	225	139	15	37	1	0	33	123
Limerick Co. Council	724	169	59	150	17	264	65	91
Limerick City Council	283	151	15	85	2	11	19	0
Longford Co. Council	207	128	18	32	8	0	21	112
Louth Co. Council	602	169	32	141	9	197	54	49
Mayo Co. Council	642	388	45	45	27	20	117	247
Meath Co. Council	735	195	118	218	4	200	0	147
Monaghan Co. Council	323	188	38	34	5	0	58	166
Offaly Co. Council	229	144	29	15	9	12	20	140
Roscommon Co.Council	481	321	38	45	21	0	56	321
Sligo Co. Council	301	164	22	66	18	0	31	137
Tipperary (NR) Council	312	197	21	51	13	10	20	159

Local Authorities — Processing Position as at week ending 3.12.10 — *continued*

Local Authorities	Number of New Applications	Awarded	Refused	Ongoing/ Further Information or Documentation Requested	Cancelled/ Withdrawn	Yet to be processed	Transferred	Paid
Tipperary (SR) Council	451	238	44	50	1	79	39	216
Waterford City. Council	174	81	27	42	7	0	17	72
Waterford Co. Council	537	346	23	0			11	317
Westmeath Co. Council	390	260	36	58	8	0	28	260
Wexford Co. Council	514	270	83	94	21	6	40	215
Wicklow Co. Council	776	326	53	131	10	138	118	159

VECs — Processing Position as at week ending 3.12.10

VECs	Number of New Applications	Awarded	Refused	Ongoing / Further Information or Documentation Requested	Cancelled / Withdrawn	Yet to be processed	Transferred	Paid
Co. Carlow VEC	337	312	15	6	0	2	2	132
Co. Cavan VEC	1,129	636	165	238	22	44	24	500
Co. Clare VEC	1,230	631	141	331	47	0	80	238
Co. Cork VEC	2,669	336	159	1,325	46	715	88	200
City of Cork VEC	1,130	338	195	347	24	35	191	137
Co. Donegal VEC	1,990	1,016	197	471	198	10	98	840
City of Dublin VEC	2,684	766	459	1033	54	62	310	313
Co. Dublin VEC	2,893	429	272	1,133	41	737	281	154
Dun Laoghaire VEC	375	147	60	88	4	2	74	118
City of Galway VEC	627	421	57	71	8	0	70	314
Co. Galway VEC	1,921	805	118	245	40	558	155	194
Co. Kerry VEC	1,816	1,084	178	361	113	7	73	448
Co. Kildare VEC	1,310	418	145	549	20	55	123	0

VECs — Processing Position as at week ending 3.12.10 — *continued*

VECs	Number of New Applications	Awarded	Refused	Ongoing / Further Information or Documentation Requested	Cancelled / Withdrawn	Yet to be processed	Transferred	Paid
Co. Kilkenny VEC	848	418	102	67	0	201	60	131
Co. Laois VEC	709	298	75	178	15	79	64	88
Co. Leitrim VEC	403	235	24	61	9	36	38	72
City of Limerick VEC	572	329	79	60	84	20	0	0
Co. Limerick VEC	996	469	127	286	29	26	59	150
Co. Longford VEC	718	417	88	93	67	0	53	248
Co. Louth VEC	1,133	658	148	120	6	107	94	232
Co. Mayo VEC	1,538	581	18	0	31	908	0	175
Co. Meath VEC	1,307	518	154	358	58	157	62	142
Co. Monaghan VEC	847	453	103	0	40	171	80	183
Co. Offaly VEC	749	457	100	143	24	5	20	112
Co. Roscommon VEC	810	561	102	82	18	0	47	266
Co. Sligo VEC	944	383	49	391	37	40	44	203
Co. Tipperary NR VEC	929	425	119	232	46	70	37	202
Co. Tipperary SR VEC	756	597	45	49	30	0	35	215
Co. Waterford VEC	510	311	66	133	0	0	0	113
City of Waterford VEC	573	133	45	112	13	243	27	126
Co. Westmeath VEC	931	508	133	186	23	0	81	188
Co. Wexford VEC	1,768	307	215	803	19	249	175	372
Co. Wicklow VEC	1,038	417	103	218	22	161	117	116

Information from the following Local Authorities refers to week ending 29. 10.10 Wicklow.
 Information from the following Local Authorities refers to week ending 5. 11.10 Waterford County incomplete.
 Information from the following Local Authorities refers to week ending 19 11.10 Louth.
 Information from the following Local Authorities refers to week ending 26. 11.10 Westmeath.
 Information from the following VEC's refers to week ending 5. 11.10 Wexford.
 Information from the following VEC's refers to week ending 26. 11.10 Tipperary SR, Tipperary NR, City of Limerick, Mayo.
 Information from the following VEC's refers to week ending 19.11.10 Laois.
 Information from the following VEC's refers to week ending 12.11.10 Meath.
 This information has been supplied to the Department by the local authorities and the Vocational Education Committees.

School Staffing

82. **Deputy Brendan Howlin** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 226 of 29 September 2010, if the staff side have indicated their views on the matter; the progress made towards completion of the consultation process in respect of contracts of indefinite duration for unqualified or incompletely qualified teachers; when the final contract for use by schools and vocational educational committees will be issued; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46950/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): A draft contract of indefinite duration and draft fixed term contracts for unqualified individuals employed in teaching posts have been sent to the Staff side, and their views are awaited.

The final contracts will be issued for use by schools and VECs when the consultation process is completed.

Work Placements

83. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide details of the way an unemployed teacher or special needs assistant can apply to work in a school and receive social benefits. [46993/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department has recently issued a circular which permits schools to participate in the FÁS Work Placement Programme (WPP) if they so wish. This FÁS programme is intended to assist people who are unemployed to retain their skills levels and secure work experience that will assist them in finding employment. This involves a placement for a defined period, rather than employment, and participants in this voluntary programme may be entitled to maintain their social welfare entitlements subject to the rules of the Department of Social Protection.

The WPP provides a mechanism for schools to offer placements to graduates and non-graduates from a wide variety of disciplines which has not existed up until now and offers an opportunity for schools to access skills and experience which may otherwise be unavailable. The individuals on placement will, in turn, have the opportunity to utilise and develop their own skills.

Placements are not confined to teaching or SNA posts. It is a condition of the programme that any placements must not displace an existing member of staff or be used to fill a vacant post. This provision includes substitute vacancies. People interested in applying for placements under the scheme should contact their nearest FÁS office as all placements will be advertised through FÁS.

Departmental Appointments

84. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if she will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46999/10]

85. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will list all public appointments that she is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011 [47014/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 84 and 85 together.

I assume the Deputy is concerned with appointments to State Boards that come under the aegis of my Department. Since the 22nd, November 2010 to date I have made 6 appointments to Boards which are contained in the tabular statement below. They are new appointments with the exception of Mr. Scott at Tipperary Rural & Business Development Institute (T.R.B.D.I.) who is a re-appointment. The appointees listed do not receive any remuneration for carrying out their functions. They are entitled to claim travel and subsistence expenses that arise in carrying out their duties.

I am aware that eight vacancies will arise on the National Qualification Authority on the 25th, February 2011. There are also eight vacancies on the Higher Education Authority and fifteen on the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering & Technology.

I have requested officials at my Department to compile a full list of vacancies on bodies under the aegis of my Department and I will forward it to the Deputy when it is available.

Board	Name	Tenure
N.U.I. Maynooth	Pro Martin G Curley	22/11/2010 to 29/10/2015
	Ms. Teresa Murray	22/11/2010 to 29/10/2015
The Dental Council	Mr. Gerry Horkan	22/11/2010 to 29/10/2015
Leterkenny Ins of Tech	Cllr Michael Fleming	30/11/2010 to 04/12/2011
Tipperary Rural & Bus Dev	Ms. Paula Murray	22/11/2010 to 08/12/2011
	Mr. Darragh Scott (Student Rep)	2/12/2010 to 30/11/2011

Schools Building Projects

86. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills when a school (details supplied) in County Cork will be given permission to commence construction of a new building; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47031/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department has reached agreement, in principle, subject to contract with Cork County Council and is in on-going liaison with the Local Authority in relation to the proposed acquisition of a site. Due to the commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. Once this acquisition is concluded, the proposed building project will be considered in the context of the capital budget available to my Department for school buildings generally.

School Staffing

87. **Deputy Michael Noonan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if her attention has been drawn to the fact that the position of a special needs assistant at a school (details supplied) in County Limerick is to be terminated from December 2010; if she will have the matter examined with a view to reversing the decision; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47033/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): As the Deputy may be aware, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) is responsible, through its network of local Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) for allocating resource

teachers and Special Needs Assistants to schools to support children with special educational needs. The NCSE operates within my Department's criteria in allocating such support.

I have arranged for the details supplied to be forwarded to the NCSE for their attention and direct reply.

All schools have the names and contact details of their local SENO. Parents may also contact their local SENO directly to discuss their child's special educational needs, using the contact details available on www.ncse.ie.

Schools Building Projects

88. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills when the classroom extension will be provided to a school (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47078/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department recently approved funding for alteration works — extension of a classroom at the school in question.

Pension Provisions

89. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if part-time teachers who have not been given permanent contracts have access to a pension scheme; if she has made arrangements for such persons to contribute to a personal retirement savings account; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47087/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Pension arrangements for primary, secondary, community and comprehensive teachers are governed by statutory superannuation provisions. Under these provisions admission to the pension schemes is mandatory for teachers, including permanent, temporary, part-time and substitute teachers, appointed to approved teaching positions in schools who are paid salary, out of monies voted by the Oireachtas, through the Payroll operated by my Department. A number of part-time teachers who are employed by management authorities and paid by grant to the school, will from January 2011 be paid through my Department's payroll and will contribute to the pension scheme from then. Provision is being made to enable these teachers to reckon past part-time service for pension purposes subject to the usual terms and conditions including the payment of appropriate contributions.

Apart from the circumstances outlined above, where part-time teachers are paid by grant to the school, it is a matter for the management authority of the employing school to make provision for access to a Personal Retirement Savings Account (PRSA) for such personnel. The management authority is not required to contribute to a PRSA.

Schools Building Projects

90. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills when a school's (details supplied) application for a classroom extension will be decided upon; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47093/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): I am pleased to inform the Deputy that my Department recently approved funding for alteration works — extension of a classroom at the school in question.

Postgraduate Scholarships

91. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Studies is in a position to issue a call for a scheme 1, postgraduate scholarship for 20 November 2012; if so, when she expects IRCHSS to be able to do so; the number of scholarships to be offered; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47094/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) will issue a call for proposals under the Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme on 7th January 2011. The closing date for applications will be the 21st February 2011. While the number of awards is dependent on the outcome of the competitive assessment process, it is envisaged that awards will be maintained at a similar level to 2010, with funding commencing in Autumn 2011. A pre-announcement of the impending call has been placed on the IRCHSS website (www.irchss.ie).

Schools Building Projects

92. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills further to Parliamentary Question No. 98 of 11 November 2010, the reason the school authorities have not been contacted in relation to the process in appointing a design team for the project. [47114/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Officials from my Department have spoken with the school's Principal on a number of occasions since 11th November and have advised that the school authorities will shortly be invited to a briefing in the Department's offices in Tullamore at which the process for tendering for a design team will be explained to them.

My officials will again be in contact with the school authorities when a date for the briefing is finalised.

FÁS Training Programmes

93. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will detail all FÁS courses which are currently taking place or which have taken place in a school (details supplied) in Dublin 16 since September 2008; in respect of each course, under whose aegis such course is or was held; and in respect of each course, if it is or was part time or full time, the number of hours duration per day and if daytime or evening. [47115/10]

94. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will detail all moneys paid out in respect of FÁS courses held in a school (details supplied) in Dublin 16 from September 2008 to date in 2010; to whom such moneys were paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47116/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 93 and 94 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is set out in the following table.

Contracts are paid on a per capita basis; this means that there is a set fee for each participant based on a minimum number of trainees. The fees are reduced when the number falls below the set minimum level. Furthermore, each contract is subject to stipulated placement targets — both at the conclusion of the course and 4-6 months after its completion. FÁS retains a percentage of the contractor fee which becomes payable when these targets have been met.

Balinteer Community School — FAS Contracted Course between Sept 2008-Dec 2010

Start Date	Finish Date	Course Title	Contract Number	Contract Value	Contractor	PT	FT	Day	Hours per day	Evening	Hours per Evening
25/09/2009	21/11/2009	Manual & Computerised Accounts	2438	15,655.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.15 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4 Hrs Fri		
12/10/2009	13/11/2009	Basic Computers	2877	8,350.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.15 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4 Hrs Fri		
27/10/2009	22/01/2010	Comptia Networks+	3048	20,740.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.15 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4 Hrs Fri		
29/03/2010	17/07/2010	Childcare Trainneship P3	3700	27,120.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.15 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4 Hrs Fri		
11/10/2010	18/12/2010	ECDL	4028	25,336.00	Business Management Institute		✓	✓	7.5Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25 Hrs Fri		
05/04/2010	09/07/2010	Healtcare Trainneship P3	3703	23,730.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.5 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5 Hrs Fri		
05/04/2010	09/07/2010	Healtcare Trainneship P4	3704	23,730.00	Creative Training		✓	✓	7.5 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5 Hrs Fri		
31/05/2010	02/07/2010	Warehouse Operator and Forklift Driver	3979	22,000.00	Irish School of Motoring		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
31/05/2010	02/07/2010	Warehouse Operator and Forklift Driver	3980	22,000.00	Irish School of Motoring		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
08/06/2010	08/10/2010	ECDL	4024	25,336.80	Business Management Institute		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
14/06/2010	15/10/2010	ECDL	4025	25,336.80	Business Management Institute		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
09/08/2010	10/12/2010	ECDL	4026	25,336.80	Business Management Institute		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
13/09/2010	14/11/2010	ECDL	4027	25,336.80	Business Management Institute		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
16/08/2010	17/09/2010	Computer Basics	4150	7,450.00	Clane College		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
20/09/2010	22/10/2010	Computer Basics	4151	7,450.00	Clane College		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		

Balinteer Community School — FAS Contracted Course between Sept 2008-Dec 2010

Start Date	Finish Date	Course Title	Contract Number	Contract Value	Contractor	PT	FT	Day	Hours per day	Evening	Hours per Evening
25/10/2010	26/11/2010	Computer Basics	4152	7,450.00	Clane College		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
29/11/2010	07/01/2011	Computer Basics	4153	7,450.00	Clane College		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
11/10/2010	12/11/2011	Warehouse Operator	4421	19,500.00	ISM		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
08/11/2010	10/12/2010	Warehouse Operator	4422	19,500.00	ISM		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25Hrs Fri		
06/09/2010	28/01/2011	Childcare Pract Trainneship P1+2	4342	26,400.00	Midland School of Childcare		✓	✓	7.5Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25 Hrs Fri		
18/10/2010	11/03/2011	Childcare Pract Trainneship P1+3	4344	26,400.00	Midland School of Childcare		✓	✓	7.5Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3.25 Hrs Fri		
22/09/2008	13/03/2009	ECDL	1885	38,240.00	Ceative Training	✓		✓	7 Hrs × 2 Days per week		
19/10/2009	12/03/2010	Childcare Pract Trainneship	2819	33,900.00	Ceative Training		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5.Hrs Fri		
27/10/2009	02/04/2010	Healthcare Assistant Trainneship	2803	37,290.00	Ceative Training		✓	✓	7.5 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5.Hrs Fri		
27/10/2009	02/04/2010	Healthcare Assistant Trainneship	2802	37,290.00	Ceative Training		✓	✓	7. 5Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5.Hrs Fri		
06/04/2009	05/06/2009	Manula & Computerised A/cs	3437	15,655.00	Ceative Training		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5.Hrs Fri		
17/05/2010	06/08/2010	Comptia Networks +	3939	20,740.00	Ceative Training		✓	✓	7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4.Hrs Fri		
08/07/2009	18/09/2009	Basic Computers — Short Course	2481	6,700.00	Ceative Training	✓		✓	6.5 hrs × 2 days per week		
15/05/2009	31/07/2009	Basic Computers — Short Course	2480	6,700.00	Ceative Training	✓		✓	6.5 hrs × 2 days per week		
15/05/2009	31/07/2009	Basic Computers — Short Course	2479	6,700.00	Ceative Training	✓		✓	6.5 hrs × 2 days per week		
08/03/2012	16/04/2010	Basic Computers -	2876	10,020.00	Ceative Training			✓	7.5 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 5 Hrs Fri		

Balinteer Community School — FAS Contracted Course between Sept 2008-Dec 2010

Start Date	Finish Date	Course Title	Contract Number	Contract Value	Contractor	PT	FT	Day	Hours per day	Evening	Hours per Evening
28/09/2009	04/12/2009	Basic Computers — Short Course	2476	7,950.00	Ceative Training	✓			7.5 Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 4 Hrs Fri		
10/03/2008	14/11/2008	Healt Care Assitant Trainneship	1742	57,960.00	Ceative Training				7. Hrs (Mon -Thurs) & 3Hrs Fri		
15/09/2008	06/12/2009	Return to Work	1744	28,600.00	Ceative Training				4 hours × Mon — Fri		
22/09/2009	13/03/2009	ECDL Part time	1886	38,240.00	Creative Training	✓			5 hours × Mon — Fri		

Evening Courses Balinteer Community School — between Sept 2008 — Dec 2010

21/09/2009	27/11/2009	ECDL	PO 4500268749	6,000.00	Ceative Training					✓	3 Hrs × 12Evening per week
21/09/2009	27/11/2009	Preperation for ECDL	PO 4500268749	2,350.00	Ceative Training					✓	3 Hrs × 1 Evening per week
21/09/2009	27/11/2009	Start Your Own Business	PO 4500268749	2,350.00	Ceative Training					✓	4 Hrs × 1 Evening per week
16/06/2010	19/08/2010	ECDL	PO 4500287367	9,080.00	Ceative Training					✓	3 Hrs × 2Evening per week

95. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills whether she has any concerns about adults who have not been vetted attending FÁS courses in a school (details supplied) in Dublin 16 when pupils are attending the school and her policy applicable to such arrangements. [47117/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): My Department issued a circular to all school authorities in late 2005 urging trustees and Boards of Management to make their facilities available, where possible, for community education and recreation purposes.

It appears that the school in question is making some of its school facilities available for the running of FÁS courses.

Decisions in relation to the use of school facilities are at the discretion of the school authorities, subject to the condition that the needs of the students attending the school are prioritised in the first instance. School authorities must always be cognisant of their responsibility to provide a duty of care towards the pupils in the school. It is therefore essential that the Board has appropriate measures in place to safeguard the welfare and safety of its pupils.

In relation to vetting, the current arrangements for vetting of teaching and non-teaching staff are set out in Department Circular 0094/2006 which is available on my Department's website. My Department has also recently issued a new circular (0063/2010) which updates and expands the garda vetting requirements for all primary and post-primary schools. The requirements of this circular are effective from 1 January 2011.

School Transport

96. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in primary schools in Waterford city and county availing of school transport in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47146/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): Bus Éireann, which operates the School Transport Schemes, on behalf of my Department, has advised that the following numbers of primary pupils availed of school transport services in the years 2005 to 2009:

Year	Number of Cases
2005	1,485
2006	1,513
2007	1,502
2008	1,479
2009	1,495

The final figures for 2010 are not yet available.

97. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of children in secondary schools in Waterford city and county availing of school transport in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47147/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): Bus Éireann, which operates the School Transport Schemes, on behalf of my Department, has

advised that the following numbers of post-primary pupils availed of school transport services in the years 2005 to 2009:

Year	Number of Cases
2005	1,657
2006	1,624
2007	1,604
2008	1,640
2009	1,642

The final figures for 2010 are not yet available.

Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

98. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the number of persons in Waterford city and county receiving the long-term unemployment bonus paid to vocational training opportunities scheme students in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47148/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): I should clarify for the Deputy that my Department does not hold information on where participants live. However, the number of participants in Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme courses delivered by County and City of Waterford Vocational Education Committees (VECs) who were in receipt of the long-term unemployment bonus for each of the last five years and to date in 2010 is set out as follows:

	County Waterford VEC	City of Waterford VEC
2010	54	85
2009	32	108
2008	59	100
2007	69	118
2006	69	111
2005	68	110

Schools Building Projects

99. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the progress made in providing a permanent school building for a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47164/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for a new school. The application has been assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects and assigned a band rating of 2.2. Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including the project referred to by the Deputy, is available on the Department's website at www.education.ie.

The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department's

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multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

Site Acquisitions

100. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a permanent site for a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47166/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): A suitable site has been identified, for the school referred to by the Deputy, which is in the ownership of Limerick County Council. My officials are in on-going liaison with the Local Authority in relation to an agreed means of ownership / interest in the site. Due to the commercial sensitivities relating to site acquisitions, I am not in a position to comment further at this time. Once this acquisition is concluded, the proposed building project will be considered in the context of the capital budget available to my Department for school buildings generally.

Schools Building Projects

101. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the position regarding a permanent building for a school (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47169/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The school to which the Deputy refers has applied to my Department for large scale capital funding for a new school. The application has been assessed in accordance with the published prioritisation criteria for large scale building projects and assigned a band rating of 2.2. Information in respect of the current school building programme along with all assessed applications for major capital works, including the project referred to by the Deputy, is available on the Department’s website at www.education.ie.

The progression of all large scale building projects, including this project, from initial design stage through to construction phase will be considered in the context of my Department’s multi-annual School Building and Modernisation Programme. However, in light of current competing demands on the capital budget of the Department, it is not possible to give an indicative timeframe for the progression of the project at this time.

Third Level Fees

102. **Deputy Ruairí Quinn** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the amount that will be raised by replacing the student services charge at third level with a flat higher education contribution of €2,000; the funds that will be raised by applying a €200 charge for post-leaving certificate students; if she will also provide each figure net of the amount that will be offset by student grant assistance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47200/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): The total additional revenue that will be generated by Higher Education institutions by replacing the existing €1,500 per year Student Services Charge with a flat Higher Education Student Contribution of €2,000 with effect from the 2011/2012 academic year is estimated to amount to some €55 million. Of the additional €55m, the contribution that will be paid by the Exchequer in respect of students who qualify under the third level grant schemes will amount to some €28m. The new Student

Contribution will apply to all students who currently benefit under the 'free fees' scheme. In addition, higher education institutions will be asked to put in place arrangements under which a student may opt to pay the contribution in two equal instalments of 50% in September and 50% in January in a given academic year.

The overall net additional revenue will be reduced by virtue of the commitment to increase the current higher education grants schemes threshold to provide for an additional eligibility category of support qualifying for '50% Student Contribution' and the arrangements to provide that second and subsequent siblings from a single family will not have to bear the full increased cost of the new €2,000 contribution. Whilst it is not possible to provide a precise calculation, it is estimated that the reduction in additional revenue may amount to some €8 million.

In relation to the introduction of a new €200 annual contribution for Post Leaving Certificate students, it is estimated that the total additional revenue that will be generated will amount to some €7.5 million and by up to €4 million net when payments by the Exchequer on behalf of those students who are eligible under the student grant schemes are taken into account. Eligible PLC students may include those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance provided that they meet all of the terms and conditions of the relevant student grant scheme.

Vocational Education Committees

103. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if a request for an investigation has been made by a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47310/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): My Department responded to a representation received on behalf of the person referred to by the Deputy and referred the matter to the relevant Vocational Education Committee (VEC), as the VEC is the person's employer in this case.

Teachers' Remuneration

104. **Deputy Emmet Stagg** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills the reason a qualified teacher is being paid at the unqualified rate as a substitute teacher despite her Department being aware of the qualification since October 2010; and the reason the person (details supplied) in County Kildare is on emergency tax when her Department received their tax credit from the Revenue Commissioners on 30 October 2010. [47311/10]

Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills (Deputy Mary Coughlan): Officials from my Department were in contact with the person referred to by the Deputy recently and the matters raised by him are now resolved.

Work Placement Programme

105. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills if she will provide this Deputy with a reply to a matter (details supplied). [47317/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Education and Skills (Deputy Seán Haughey): My Department recently issued circular 66/2010 which permits schools to participate in the Work Placement Programme if they so wish. The Work Placement Programme is intended to assist people who are unemployed to develop their skills levels and secure work experience that will assist them in finding employment. The programme provides a mechanism for schools to offer placements to graduates and non-graduates from a wide variety of disciplines and provides an opportunity for schools to access skills and experience which may otherwise be unavailable.

[Deputy Seán Haughey.]

The individuals on placement will, in turn, have the opportunity to utilise and develop their own skills. This involves a placement for a defined period, rather than employment, and participants in this voluntary programme may be entitled to maintain their social welfare entitlements subject to the rules of the Department of Social Protection.

Schools may offer placements to teachers registered with the Teaching Council. Where a registered teacher is engaged he or she may undertake normal teaching duties if the school authority considers this appropriate and can make suitable arrangements. Schools may also use the programme to engage people in non-teaching roles, where non-teaching graduates and non-graduates may have valuable skills from which a school could benefit. It is a condition of the programme that any placements must not displace an existing member of staff or be used to fill a vacant post. This includes substitute vacancies. These conditions safeguard future employment opportunities in the education sector. In addition, the Government has also decided to expand the number of placements offered under the Work Placement Programme. The number of places on the programme will be increased from the current 2,000 to 7,500 in 2011, with 5,000 of the additional placements being offered in the public sector

Parking Levy

106. **Deputy Paul Gogarty** asked the Minister for Finance the details of the new parking levy announced earlier this year; if this will be coming into place in January 2011 as earmarked, or if this has been delayed; the location at which companies with large numbers of employees will be able to access more information on the proposed roll-out; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47237/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The introduction of the car parking levy has been the subject of a considerable degree of work undertaken by officials in my Department, the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. The necessary preparatory work has now been completed and I am currently considering a date for the commencement of the levy. An employee will be liable to the levy where he or she has an entitlement to use a parking space for the parking of a vehicle covered by the levy, the parking space is provided directly or indirectly by the employer, and the parking space is located in an area designated by the Minister for Finance, initially within Dublin city. This will be extended to other urban areas at a later date. The levy is €200 per annum, in general.

A reduced levy applies where car parking spaces are shared between employees provided that the ratio of employees to each car parking space is 2:1 or more. In these circumstances, the levy for employees with an entitlement to park will be reduced to €100. Where an employee's normal pattern of work is on the basis of part-time or job-sharing arrangements, then the levy amount payable is reduced pro-rata, but not below a minimum of 50 per cent of the amount otherwise due. A reduction in the levy can also apply in the case of shift workers. There are exemptions for disabled persons, employees of the emergency services, and for occasional use of a parking space, including by retired employees.

The scheme will require the employer to deduct the levy from the employee through the payroll system and return the levy to Revenue. Deductions of the levy will be spread throughout the year in line with the frequency of salary payments. The Revenue Commissioners have published a guidance document covering implementation of the levy, this is available *on* www.revenue.ie.

Tax Collection

107. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of persons in Waterford city and county who were prosecuted for non-payment of value added tax in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46874/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I draw to the Deputy's attention that this is a matter for the Revenue Commissioners. However, I am advised by Revenue that the number of cases in Waterford city and county prosecuted for non-filing of value added tax returns in each of the past five years and to date in 2010 is as follows.

Year	Number of Cases
2005	0
2006	1
2007	1
2008	2
2009	1
2010 (to date)	5

In this context it should however be noted that the main focus of Revenue's response to non-payment of VAT — and indeed other taxes and duties — is through debt collection and recovery measures involving, inter alia, referral of debt cases to the sheriff, referral of debt cases to one of its contracted external firms of solicitors for the institution of legal proceedings in the Courts or attachment of debts owed by third parties to a defaulting taxpayer.

Flood Relief

108. **Deputy Rory O'Hanlon** asked the Minister for Finance the number of applications from each local authority in the country for funding to alleviate individual episodes of flooding in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46879/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Deputy Martin Mansergh): The number of applications submitted by each Local Authority to date in 2010 under the Office of Public Works Minor Flood Works and Coastal Protection scheme is as follows:

Local Authority	Number
Cavan County Council	26
Kildare County Council	5
Sligo County Council	1
Cork County Council	42
Laois County Council	1
South Dublin County Council	2
Cork City Council	1
Leitrim County Council	8
Tipperary North County Council	8
Clare County Council	22
Limerick County Council	33
Tipperary South County Council	11
Carlow County Council	3
Longford County Council	10

[Deputy Martin Mansergh.]

Local Authority	Number
Waterford County Council	4
Donegal County Council	21
Louth County Council	8
Westmeath County Council	7
Dublin City Council	3
Mayo County Council	16
Wexford County Council	16
Fingal County Council	6
Meath County Council	4
Wicklow County Council	13
Galway City Council	2
Monaghan County Council	11
Dunloaghaire Rathdown Co. Council	1
Galway County Council	111
Offaly County Council	12
Kilkenny County Council	6
Kerry County Council	16
Roscommon County Council	31

Following assessment of the applications submitted, total funding of €16m has been allocated by the OPW under the scheme. Further applications are being received and assessed on an ongoing basis.

Departmental Expenditure

109. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Finance the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46914/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): Refreshments for meetings or functions which I hold in my office are normally purchased from the Department's canteen or local shops. The total spent in 2008, 2009 and 2010 for this is listed in the table below. The details of the breakdown requested by the Deputy are not readily available as these are not generally recorded electronically.

Year	Amount Spent
	€
2008	254.89
2009	217.74
2010	957.78

Tax Code

110. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Finance if he will examine and support a proposal regarding patent royalty tax exemption (details supplied). [46934/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The tax exemption for patent income has been in place for over 30 years and has applied to income received by an individual or company from a qualifying patent subject, since 2008, to an annual limit of €5 million. A tax exemption has also applied, subject to certain conditions, to distributions paid by companies from exempt patent income. These exemptions have been abolished with effect from 24 November 2010. The decision to abolish the relief was taken in the light of a recommendation to this effect by the Commission on Taxation. As part of its review of all tax expenditures, the Commission on Taxation examined the relief for patent income to determine if its continued operation was justified on cost benefit grounds. The Commission found that the relief has not had the desired impact on innovation and R&D activity and that, despite various refinements to the scheme over the years, it was not a particularly well-targeted measure providing good value for money.

The Government agrees with the conclusions of the Commission and believes that in the current challenging times scarce resources should be focussed instead on the R&D tax credit scheme. The R&D credit scheme provides a more direct and effective incentive for enterprises to innovate and invest in R&D activities and the scheme has been enhanced considerably in recent years to make it one of the most competitive of its kind anywhere.

Abolition of the patent income exemption will yield €50 million to the Exchequer in a full year and this is provided for in the National Recovery Plan. Alternative options for curtailing the relief were considered in the context of the Plan, such as limiting the tax free payment to a fixed amount per annum. While a limit of €40,000, as suggested in the proposal referred to in the question, would provide some savings, it would still mean a significant cost to the Exchequer and would be difficult to justify on the basis that it would provide tax-efficient means for remunerating employees.

111. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal with a matter regarding a levy (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46945/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I can inform the Deputy that Section 45 of Finance Act 2008 introduced new tax provisions in relation to profits derived from petroleum exploration and production activities. A new tax called a “profit resource rent tax” will apply at rates of 5%, 10% or 15% in addition to the corporation tax rate of 25% that currently applies to profits from petroleum activities. It will apply when profits exceed certain defined levels. This will be worked out by a formula that relates the profits from a petroleum field to the capital investment in the field. The new tax provisions give effect to the Government Decision of 30 July 2007 that a new regime would apply in relation to petroleum profits from discoveries made from 2007 onwards. I have no plans to introduce a levy along the lines proposed by the Deputy.

Fiscal Policy

112. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal with a matter regarding a stimulus package; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46978/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As I indicated in my Budget address last week, economic activity in Ireland has stabilised and recovery in the real economy is beginning to take shape. Building on progress already made, the purpose of the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014 is to plot a course to sound, sustainable growth for the economy. Budget 2011 represents the first instalment of that Plan. The approach being taken by the Government in the Plan and in Budget 2011 will help to dispel uncertainty and will give consumers and businesses confidence to spend in the economy.

The Government is satisfied that this is the most sustainable approach to support an acceleration of growth in the economy.

Departmental Appointments

113. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47002/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): There have been no appointments to the boards or bodies under the aegis of my Department since 22 November 2010.

114. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47017/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Independent Mediation Officer for the Civil Service Grievance Procedure is due to be appointed for a further year from the 1 January 2011. This appointment is sent to the Staff Panel for their agreement and then it is forwarded to the Minister for Finance for approval. The term of office of the current Board of the Public Appointments Service is due to finish on 20th February 2011. A new Board consisting of one Chairperson and seven members will be due to be appointed from that date. The CEO will continue to be an ex officio member of the Board.

One vacancy will arise on the National Treasury Management Agency Advisory Committee on 31 December 2010.

In accordance with the terms of the Central Bank Reform Act 2010, the Minister for Finance may make between 1 and 3 further appointments to the Central Bank Commission in addition to the appointments already made to the Commission in October 2010.

Personal Debt

115. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether false assumptions obtaining between 2000 and 2007 about consumer income, long-term economic productivity and consumer behaviour resulted in the collapse of the Irish banking system; his further views on whether the various bank guarantee schemes and bank bailouts, including budget 2011 introduced by the Government, in effect transfer credit institutions' liabilities onto the State; if a logical continuation of this principle requires credit institutions to enter into debt clemency agreements with creditors whose 2000 to 2007 investments were based on the same false assumptions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47029/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I would not accept that reliance on false assumptions about income, long term economic productivity and consumer behaviour were the sole reasons for the difficulties faced by the banking sector although they could all be classed as playing their part. Other factors included loan impairments, particularly in the property sector, falling asset prices, bank lending policies and bank remuneration policies. The Irish Government took a number of decisive steps to stabilise and maintain the banking sector including the introduction of the Credit Institutions (Financial Support) Scheme 2008, the initial recapitalisation of AIB and Bank of Ireland, the nationalisation of Anglo Irish Bank, the Eligible Liabilities Guarantee scheme, NAMA the investments in Anglo, Irish Nationwide and EBS and most recently the joint EU-IMF Programme for Ireland which includes a facility of up to €35 billion to support the banking sector.

I would not accept that these actions should be categorised as transferring the credit institutions' liabilities onto the State and I want to make it clear that debt clemency arrangements would further increase the exposure of the State. In relation to debt clemency for NAMA

debtors, the NAMA Board has stated clearly in its Business Plan that it will enforce personal guarantees to the greatest extent feasible.

Tax Code

116. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal with a matter (details supplied) regarding a levy; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47071/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I understand that the levy referred to by the Deputy is the pension related deduction legislated for in the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2009 (as amended). This deduction is to be made from the remuneration of each public servant in accordance with the Tables in Section 2 of that Act (as amended by Section 13 of the Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2009).

The current rate at which the deduction is to be made is as follows;

- First €15,000 of earnings — exempt
- Between €15,000 and €20,000 — 5%
- Between €20,000 and €60,000 — 10%
- Above €60,000 — 10.5%

The deduction rates for all public servants (including Gardaí and Fire Brigade workers) are as set out above. The amount of levy payable by each individual public servant is based on their individual rate of remuneration.

National Debt

117. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Finance the level he estimates the national debt will be as of 31 December 2010 and 31 December 2011. [47076/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) have advised that at end-2009 the national debt stood at €75.2 billion. Based on the projections for the Exchequer Borrowing Requirement for the years 2010 and 2011, as set out in Budget 2011, the estimate for the level of national debt at end-2010 is approximately €94 billion and is approximately €112 billion at end-2011.

Tax Code

118. **Deputy Richard Bruton** asked the Minister for Finance if the tax advantages that previously applied just to married couples now applies to couples who have entered into a civil union; if similar provisions apply to persons who have been cohabiting, but who have not yet formalised their relationship in a civil union; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47086/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): It is intended that the necessary legislative changes to give effect to the tax consequences of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010 will be included in the forthcoming Finance Bill. The provisions will have effect for the year of assessment 2011 and will provide the same tax treatment for registered civil partners as for married couples. Individuals who are cohabiting and who are neither married nor in a registered civil partnership will continue to be treated for tax purposes as single persons.

Public Sector Pay

119. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Finance if he will deal a matter regarding the public sector; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47098/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The 10% reduction announced in the Budget will apply to new entrant public servants with effect from 1 January 2011. Detailed guidelines on the implementation of this measure that will issue shortly, will provide that public servants who leave and subsequently re-enter the public service after a short break in service will not be considered new entrants.

Fiscal Policy

120. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if the phasing out of property based tax incentives by 2014, as set out in the National Recovery Plan and the Budget 2011, will ensure that those taxpayers subject to the minimum effective tax rate will not be able to derive financial benefit, through deferred tax relief, from these property incentives after 2014; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47203/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): As set out in my Budget 2011 speech and summary measures, a “guillotine” provision will ensure that all unused property-based capital allowances and section 23 reliefs are lost after 2014 and an impact assessment will be undertaken into the phased abolition and the “guillotine” provision. This impact assessment will include consideration of how restricted relief carried forward under the high earners restriction should be dealt with in the context of a “guillotine” provision for all unused property-based capital allowances and section 23 reliefs.

121. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Finance the amount Ireland has contributed to the International Monetary Fund in quotas and subscriptions in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the position regarding subscriptions and quotas in view of the recent agreement with the European Central Bank, EU and International Monetary Fund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47132/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The majority of the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) financial resources are generated by the subscriptions of member states. Each member is assigned a quota, broadly based on its size relative to the world economy. A member’s quota determines its maximum financial commitment to the IMF, its voting power, and has a bearing on its access to IMF financing. Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs*), the IMF’s unit of account. A member must pay its subscription in full upon joining the Fund: up to 25 percent must be paid in SDRs or widely accepted currencies (such as the U.S. dollar, the euro, the yen, or the pound sterling), while the rest is paid in the member’s own currency (in Ireland’s case this is the euro).

Ireland’s current IMF quota is SDR 838.4 million or 0.38%. Our quota level has been at this level for the years 2005-2010. A quarter of this is paid in SDRs, while the remainder remains a contingent liability on the Central Bank’s balance sheet until drawn down by the IMF. It should be noted that quotas make funds available for use and the IMF can call on members at any time to contribute. Details of transactions on the Central Bank’s IMF accounts are set out in the Annual Report on Ireland’s Participation in the IMF and the World Bank (available at www.finance.gov.ie).

In 2008, a general review of quotas at the IMF took place. Once ratified, Ireland’s holding will increase to 0.528% or SDRs 1,257 million. Furthermore, under the fourteenth review of quotas, the recent G20 Summit in Korea agreed to a set of proposals which will ultimately

result in Ireland's quota being increased again to 0.724% or SDR 3,449.9 million. Ireland's quota level is not affected by the Joint EU/IMF Programme.

*At 24 November 2010 €1 = SDR 0.86547

Tax Reliefs

122. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of farmers in Waterford availing of the existing 25% general stock relief for farmers in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47143/10]

123. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of farmers in Waterford availing of the special incentive stock relief of 100% for certain trained young farmers in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47144/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 122 and 123 together.

I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that details of claims for stock relief claimed by farmers are not captured in such a way as to provide a basis for compiling the information requested by the Deputy.

124. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the number of artists in Waterford City and County availing of the tax exempt earnings provisions in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47145/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I am informed by the Revenue Commissioners that the available information relates to the exemption of certain earnings of writers, composers and artists in Waterford city and county who made income tax returns for the four income tax years 2005 to 2008, the latest year for which the necessary detailed information is available, and is as follows:

Tax Year	Number of claimants
2005	30
2006	42
2007	35
2008	31

A married couple who has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit. An estimated breakdown of the figures on a geographical basis is available on the basis of "bailiwick", meaning, in this case, the jurisdiction or boundaries within which Revenue Sheriffs, County Registrars or their officers operate for the purposes of enforcement of tax debt and which equates geographically with "county".

Benchmarking Awards

125. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Finance the year in which benchmarking was introduced and the cost in that year and each subsequent year in respect of public sector workers and public sector pensioners. [47152/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The first Public Service Benchmarking Body was established under the terms of the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness on 19 July 2000.

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

The average award recommended in the report was 8.9%. The total pay and pension costs amounted to approximately €1.2bn. The year-on-year cost was as follows:

Year	Amount Spent
	€m
2003	592
2004	306
2005	166
2006	128

The second Public Service Benchmarking Body was established in January 2006. The Body recommended increases for only 15 of the 109 grades examined. The increases were not implemented and no costs arose for the Exchequer.

Tax Collection

126. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Finance the reason a person (details supplied) in County Sligo has received a bill from the Revenue Commissioners for €3,200; if he will confirm that the bill is correct; if he will ensure that if correct, payment can be made on a phased payment basis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47153/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have no role in assessing or confirming an individual's tax liability or in making payment arrangements. These are a matter for the Revenue Commissioners. I am advised by the Revenue Commissioners that the person in question is issued with a tax return (Form 12) annually as he is in receipt of owner-occupier relief under the Rural Renewal Scheme.

This person incorrectly received a refund €4,215.70 on 2 April 2008 for the tax year 2007 because, when his tax return for that year was processed, his spouse's income details (which he had not shown on the return) were inadvertently omitted. The incorrect 2007 refund came to light this year and, on 18 August 2010, the person in question was informed of the approximate amount of this underpayment in a telephone conversation with the Sligo Revenue Office. He was also informed of the option of collecting the underpayment over a number of years and it was arranged that he would further contact the Sligo office to arrange a meeting to discuss his tax affairs.

As the person in question had not contacted the Sligo office to arrange a meeting, a PAYE Balancing Statement (P21) for the year 2007 issued on 23 November 2010, showing a net underpayment of €3,466.91. The Revenue Commissioners advise me that the option of making the payment over a number of years, previously offered, is still available and the person in question should contact the Sligo office (071 9148614) to make the necessary arrangements.

Personal Earnings

127. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he will set out, according to the most recent data from the Revenue Commissioners, the number of persons earning less than €5,000, between €5,001 and €10,000, less than €14,000, less than or equal to the minimum wage, less than or equal to the proposed minimum wage of €7.65, between €10,001 and €15,000, between €15,001 and €20,000, between €20,001 and €30,000, between €20,001 and €30,000, between €30,001 and €40,000, between €40,001 and €50,000, between €50,001 and €60,000, between €60,001 and €70,000, between €70,001 and €80,000, between €80,001 and €90,000, between €90,001 and €100,000, between €100,001 and €125,000, between €125,001 and €150,000, between €150,001 and €175,000, between €175,001 and €200,000, between €200,001

and €250,000, between €250,001 and €300,000, between €300,001 and €350,000, between €350,001 and €400,000, between €400,001 and €450,000, between €450,001 and €500,000, between €500,001 and €750,000, between €750,001 and €1,000,000, between €1,000,001 and €2,000,000, between €2,000,001 and €3,000,000, between €3,000,001 and €4,000,000, between €4,000,001 and €5,000,000, €5,000,000 or greater and less than the average industrial wage.
[47157/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The information requested, estimated by reference to the income tax year 2010, is set out in the following table. However, because of the Revenue Commissioners' obligation to observe confidentiality in relation to the taxation affairs of individual taxpayers and small groups of taxpayers, the breakdown by income bands requested by the Deputy is not provided in relation to incomes exceeding €2 million due to the small numbers of income earners with incomes in excess of that level.

All income earners for Income Tax Year 2010 (provisional)

Gross Income	Numbers
€	
0-5,000	228,716
5,001-10,000	184,571
10,001-14,000	159,676
14,001-15,000	38,898
15,001-15,514	21,000
15,515-17,542	83,243
17,543 -20,000	111,098
20,001-30,000	408,875
30,001-33,343	109,483
33,344 -40,000	187,686
40,001-50,000	202,568
50,001-60,000	134,600
60,001-70,000	93,895
70,001-80,000	66,643
80,001-90,000	46,572
90,001-100,000	32,373
100,001-125,000	47,355
125,001-150,000	22,265
150,001-175,000	12,005
175,001-200,000	7,135
200,001-250,000	7,854
250,001-300,000	4,271
300,001-350,000	2,625
350,001-400,000	1,672
400,001-450,000	1,091
450,001-500,000	808
500,001-750,000	1,889
750,001-1,000,000	633
1,000,000-2,000,000	608
Over 2,000,000	188
Total	2,220,296

[Deputy Brian Lenihan.]

The minimum wage annualised at €17,542 and the new minimum wage annualised at €15,514 are included among the income ranges in the table. The latest available average industrial wage of €33,343, which relates to 2009, is also included among the income ranges in the table. It should be noted that the income ranges shown in the above tables relate to Gross Income as defined in Revenue Statistical Report, 2006. The figures are estimates from the Revenue tax-forecasting model using actual data for the year 2008 adjusted as necessary for income and employment trends in the interim. These are, therefore, provisional and likely to be revised. It should be noted that a married couple who has elected or has been deemed to have elected for joint assessment is counted as one tax unit.

Pension Provisions

128. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if he has sought or received advice as to the constitutionality of the introduction of an average 4% cut in public sector pensions, for those already in receipt of a pension or who retire before the end of the grace period, on the basis that it may involve the retrospective and unilateral amendment of an employment contract whereby public servants make a contribution to their pension through superannuation over the course of their working lives in the expectation of a given income in retirement; if he is satisfied that this reduction in pensions does not violate the Croke Park Agreement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47180/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I can inform the Deputy that the Office of the Attorney General advised on all aspects of the Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill. The public service pension reduction measure is in accordance with the Croke Park Agreement. Section 3 provides that the calculation of public service pensions is not affected. "Nothing in *section 2* shall affect the calculation of any public service pension entitlement (including an entitlement to a lump sum and an entitlement to periodic payments of pension or other benefits) of a person who is a pensioner or becomes a pensioner on or at any time before the relevant date or, in the case of a pensioner falling under paragraph (c) of the definition of "pensioner" in *section 1*, at any time after that date." Implementation of the measure, therefore, does not impact on the calculation of pensions, nor is there any change in the future method of determining pension increases. Also, in the case of those retiring up to end-February 2012, the measure will be applied to pensions as calculated by reference to the pre 1 January 2010 pay rates.

Tax Code

129. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Finance if his attention has been drawn to the fact that persons who completed the purchase of a house in the days and weeks running up to the announcement of Budget 2011 may have been exposed to significant stamp duty bills; if he plans to back-date the change to stamp duty by a reasonable period of time to provide these home owners with some relief; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47196/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Stamp Duty reforms as announced in the Budget have two aims: stimulation of the property market and commencing the necessary infrastructure for the commitment in the National Recovery Plan to introduce a Site Value Tax. As a result of the changes, Stamp Duty at a rate of 1% where the property value is under €1m and 2% on the excess above €1m, will now be payable on all residential property transactions. I have, however, put in place a transitional arrangement: where a binding contract has

been entered into before 8 December 2010, and the effect of this measure would increase the Stamp Duty otherwise chargeable, there will be a transition period whereby Stamp Duty can be calculated and charged under the old regime, so long as the instrument effecting the transfer of the property is executed before 1 July 2011.

I am aware that there will always be winners and losers in a situation such as this, but unfortunately this will happen no matter what date is chosen to commence any new measure and this is regrettable. While there may be additional Stamp Duty costs for some purchasers, the overall transaction costs for property transfers are now much lower than in recent years because of the decline in property values.

130. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Finance if he performed an evaluation of the specific implications for the upper Shannon tax designated area of the restriction of section 23 relief to the income from the property itself; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47219/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The Department of Finance, the Office of the Revenue Commissioners and independent consultants carried out major detailed reviews of certain tax incentive schemes in 2005. A key recommendation of these reviews was that a cost benefit analysis should be carried out on any proposed future scheme prior to their introduction. A tax incentive scheme for the mid-Shannon region was subsequently proposed and my Department in line with the new policy engaged Goodbody Economic Consultants to carry out an assessment of the costs and benefits of the proposed scheme. The report was completed in March 2006. The aim of this scheme is to encourage the provision of tourist infrastructure in the mid-Shannon region. If tourists need accommodation there are already plenty of hotels and B&Bs in the area — however at present tourists do not stay in the area in the large numbers we would want. What is needed are tourist related facilities that will encourage people to stay in the area and experience what the mid-Shannon region has to offer. This scheme aims to promote the provision of such facilities. It is not anticipated that the restriction of Section 23 relief will impact significantly on the Mid-Shannon Scheme.

131. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Finance if he will consider the issues regarding section 23 properties raised in correspondence (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47223/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): My Department together with the Revenue Commissioners has been engaged in detailed discussions with the Office of the Attorney General in relation to the many complex issues associated with the legacy property relief schemes which continue to cost the Exchequer several hundreds of millions of Euro a year in tax forgone. The measures announced in the Budget are intended to be proportionate but also effective in terms of reducing the burden on the Exchequer. An impact assessment will be carried out in advance of the 2014 deadline to identify any significant effects of the proposed changes with the aim of providing for such effects in a future Budget in advance of the 2014 guillotine. I realise that these measures may be severe on some people but the economic situation requires that I explore as many avenues as possible to achieve Exchequer savings.

Dental Practice Incomes

132. **Deputy Joe McHugh** asked the Minister for Finance his views on whether investments in dental businesses that were made in the period 2003 to 2007 were based on assumed annual

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turnover figures dating from that period; his further views on the outcome of the November 2010 survey of dental practices conducted by the Irish Dental Association, which shows that practice incomes have fallen by 35% to 40% nationally this year, and if he acknowledges that 70,000 fewer dental procedures were conducted in this State to date this year than last year because of changes to the PRSI scheme; if he further acknowledges the very high costs associated with dental practice commencement during the period 2003 to 2007; if the State plans to assist pertinent struggling young practitioners with borrowings from banks in which the State is a shareholder via debt forgiveness or renewed credit arrangements that are affordable; his further views on whether, notwithstanding distressed credit issues, the existing practitioners offer the best hope of partial finance recoupment; his views on creditor-financier liability in this context; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47229/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): The operation of the Treatment Benefits Scheme, which includes Dental Benefit, is funded from the Social Insurance Fund and is the responsibility of my colleague Mr Eamon O Cuiv TD, Minister for Social Protection.

I am informed by the Department of Social Protection that payments made under the Treatment Benefit Scheme show a drop of 59.8% in 2010 over 2009. However as dental practice incomes also include private payments and HSE payments it is not possible for that Department to know what the overall reduction in income to dental practices was in 2010. Approximately 933,000 fewer treatments were paid as part of the Dental Benefit Scheme in 2010, as compared to 2009. The Department of Social Protection is not in a position to quantify the overall reduction in treatments as they may also be carried out and paid for privately or as I have indicated part of the HSE's parallel dental scheme. The Government has no specific plans to assist young dentists in debt.

The decisions financial institutions operating in Ireland make on an application for credit or restructuring of existing credit arrangements is a commercial decision for the institution concerned. The Department of Finance has no direct function in relation to individual's decisions on these matters. A general debt forgiveness scheme would have costs not only for the bank, but also for the Government. Banks would require further capital support which in turn would be passed on to the tax payer. A debt forgiveness policy raises its own issues such as "fairness" and "moral hazard" for those who are managing to make their repayments.

Tax Statements

133. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Finance if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare will be furnished with a P21 for 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47238/10]

Minister for Finance (Deputy Brian Lenihan): I have been advised by the Revenue Commissioners that a PAYE Balancing Statement (P21) for the tax year 2009 will issue to the person concerned shortly.

National Lottery Funding

134. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount of National Lottery funding allocated to projects in the area of health in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46888/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The funding made available by my Department in each of the past 5 years and to date in 2010 to community organisations in Co. Waterford from the National Lottery Fund is set out below.

2010

Waterford Branch, Irish Foster Care Association, Barristown, Passage East, Co. Waterford — €25,000.

2009

Barnados Teen Parent Support Programme, Storehall Business Park, Kilcronan, Waterford — €41,729.

The funding made available by my Department to voluntary organisations from the National Lottery Fund, including the breakdown by programme and a list of each body in receipt of funding is set out on my Department's website — www.dohc.ie

Health Services

135. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) will be called for orthodontic treatment; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46901/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Departmental Expenditure

136. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Health and Children the amount of money, under each heading, spent by her on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46916/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The information requested by the Deputy is detailed in the tabular statements below.

Year	Name of Company	Costs
2008	Leinster House Catering	€17.40
2009		Nil*
2010 to date		Nil*

*The Minister does not normally request refreshments for meetings.

Suicide Prevention

137. **Deputy James Reilly** asked the Minister for Health and Children the annual budget made available to the National Office for Suicide Prevention on a per annum basis since its establishment in tabular form; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46981/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The budget for the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) is set by the Health Service Executive. The total annual funding available to support suicide prevention initiatives is in the region of €8 million which includes

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the annual budget for the NOSP. The following table provides details of the annual budget for the NOSP since 2005:

Year	Funding
	€m
2005	1.5
2006	2.7
2007	4.5
2008	4.5
2009	4.3
2010	3.7

An additional €1m has been provided in this year's budget for suicide prevention. This funding will enable the NOSP to build on initiatives to date and bring added momentum and new impetus to their activities to address the increasing incidence of suicide. The following areas will be targeted:

- develop the number and range of training and awareness programmes;
- improve and standardise the response to deliberate self harm;
- develop the capacity of primary care to respond to suicidal behaviour and consider new models of response;
- ensure that helpline supports for those in emotional distress are coordinated and widely publicised.

Departmental Appointments

138. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if she will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47004/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): Where fees are approved, there are four categories of fees payable to chairpersons and directors of state-sponsored bodies. The applicable category is determined by the salary of the CEO of the body relative to certain Civil Service salary scales. The applicable rates with effect from 1st January 2010 are:

Category	Chair	Director
	€	€
1	29,888	14,963
2	20,520	11,970
3	11,970	7,695
4	8,978	5,985

The appointments made since the 22nd November are as follows:

Board	Fees	Member	Term of Office	Appointment Details
Hepatitis C and HIV Compensation Tribunal	Daily Rate of €992.68 plus VAT	Ms Karen Fergus SC	5 Years	Re-Appointment as decided by Minister
Irish Blood Transfusion Service Board	Category 3	Ms Helen O'Leary MB	3 Years	New Appointment on recommendation of CEO
Voluntary Health Insurance Board	Category 2	Ms Cathriona Hallahan	5 Years	New Appointment as decided by Minister

139. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will list all public appointments that she is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47019/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The following vacancies will arise between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011 are as follows:

Board	Number of Vacancies Arising
Advisory Committee for Human Medicines (IMB)	12
Advisory Committee for Veterinary Medicines (IMB)	12
Beaumont Hospital Board	2
Dublin Dental Hospital Board	14
Food Safety Consultative Council	23
Food Safety Authority of Ireland	1
Irish Medicines Board	8
Scientific Committee of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI)	15
Dental Council	4
Health Insurance Authority	5

Health Services

140. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive an appointment with the orthodontic clinic in Galway. [47041/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

141. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children if a person (details supplied) will be facilitated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47066/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Nursing Homes Support Scheme

142. **Deputy Catherine Byrne** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the nursing home support scheme makes provision for married couples to be accommodated in the same nursing home when both persons are assessed as being in need of long-term care; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47067/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): A fundamental principle enshrined in the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 is that of patient choice. Once a person receives approval for financial support, they can choose to enter any nursing home that is participating in the scheme in any part of the country, subject to the nursing home having an available bed and being able to cater for the person's particular needs. This applies to public, private and voluntary nursing homes alike.

Therefore, a married couple can be accommodated in the same nursing home provided that it can cater for their individual needs and has available beds.

Children in Care

143. **Deputy Seán Power** asked the Minister for Health and Children further to Parliamentary Question No. 96 of 14 October 2010, the reason it has not been answered despite assurances on 23 November 2010 that a reply would issue on or before the 26 November 2010; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47068/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department has been advised by the HSE that a response was issued to the Deputy on 13th December 2010, and that an email was sent to advise of this on that date.

Health Service Staff

144. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for Health and Children the position regarding a person (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47072/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Incentivised Scheme of Early Retirement (ISER) was announced by the Minister for Finance in his Supplementary Budget Statement of 7 April 2009. This replaced all existing early retirement schemes, and no others were available after the closing date of the ISER, until the introduction of the Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy schemes which I announced on 1 November 2010.

The Government decided in November 2010 that in view of the need to achieve a permanent reduction in the number employed in the public health sector from 2011 onwards, and to facilitate public health reform, that a targeted scheme should be introduced for certain grades in the health sector. As this scheme post dated the retirement date of the person in question, its terms were not, unfortunately, available to him.

Long-Term Illness Scheme

145. **Deputy Pat Rabbitte** asked the Minister for Health and Children her plans to review the list of long-term illnesses covered under the long-term illness scheme; if she will consider including the very rare condition Addison's disease to the scheme; if a long-term illness scheme card could be issued to a person (details supplied) in Dublin 24; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47077/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): There are no plans to extend the list of eligible conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme.

Under the Drugs Payment Scheme no individual or family pays more than €120 per calendar month towards the cost of approved prescribed medicines. The scheme is easy to use and 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.

Health Service Allowances

146. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Health and Children if an application for rent allowance now under appeal will be expedited in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [47082/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the HSE for attention and direct reply to the Deputy.

Health Services

147. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Health and Children further to Parliamentary Question No. 91 of 18 November 2010, when a full and detailed response will issue from the Health Service Executive. [47092/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): My Department has been advised by the Health Service Executive (HSE) that a reply will issue to the Deputy on 14 December 2010.

Child Deaths

148. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the report being prepared by the Independent Review Group into the death of children in care will be completed by 31 December 2010 as originally promised; if any time extension has been requested and or granted for the furnishing of the report; when it has been finalised and received; when it will be published; if, to date, she has received any reports indicating that the numbers of children who died in care since the commencement of the year 2000 exceed 188; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47101/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): I established the Independent Review Group on Child Deaths (IRGCD) on March 8th 2010. The Group is composed of Ms Norah Gibbons and Mr. Geoffrey Shannon.

The HSE have transferred the relevant files to the IRGCD, via my Office. The HSE originally identified 188 files for transfer to the Independent Review Group on Child Deaths in respect of children who died while in care, children who were known to the child protection services and young people who had been in care as children and died after their 18th birthday. Following that transfer, and as had been previously indicated, the HSE re-examined all of its records to check whether there were any other outstanding cases which should be passed to the Review Group. In the course of that examination, the HSE identified a further 11 cases, 9 relating to children known to the services and 2 young adults. All of the relevant files were passed to the IRGCD in October, and they form part of the work now being carried out by the group.

The Group has sought certain clarification in relation to information presented to it and the HSE is responding to queries raised. As well as the extra files provided in October, a number of the files presented were the subject of ongoing reviews in the HSE and this delayed the transfer of these files to the Independent Review Group. Taking these factors into account,

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coupled with the need for a thorough and complete process and the large amount of case work presented, it is likely that the Group will report to me in February 2011.

It should be noted that part of the work of the IRGCD is to analyse the categorisation of the deaths being examined and to ensure that the cases placed in each category are correct.

149. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive has provided her with a schedule of clear timelines for completing all reviews of child deaths which are currently in progress but not yet complete; if such schedule includes, in respect of each review, milestone dates for completion of the review, finalisation of the report and publication of an executive summary; when she proposes to lay a copy of the schedule before the Houses of the Oireachtas and publish it; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47103/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The Schedule referred to has not yet been received from the HSE, but I am informed that it is to be provided very shortly. I will lay a copy of the schedule before the Houses as soon as it has been received.

150. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the Health Service Executive, as promised in their statement of 24 May 2010, collated the numbers of deaths of children who were known to social services over the past decade who were not in the care of the State; if this information has yet been furnished to her and if she will detail the information received and if it has been referred to the Independent Review Group on Child Deaths. [47106/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The Independent Review Group on Child Deaths (IRGCD) was established on March 8th 2010. The Group is composed of Ms Norah Gibbons and Mr. Geoffrey Shannon.

The HSE has collated the information and relevant files required for the work of the Review Group, including the cases referred to by the Deputy. This material was provided to my Office which transferred it to the Review Group. Following the first transfer of files, the HSE re-examined all of its records to check whether there were any other cases which should be passed to the review group. A further 11 cases were identified, 9 of which related to children known to the child protection services. These additional files have also been transferred to the Group. It is likely that the Group will report to me in February 2011. It should be noted that part of the work of the IRGCD is to analyse the categorisation of the deaths being examined and to ensure that the cases placed in each category are correct. I do not deem it appropriate at this juncture, given that the work of the Review Group is ongoing, to detail any specific information provided to the Group.

Child Care Services

151. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has received recent reports from the Health Service Executive with regard to the progress made by it in implementing the PA Consulting Reform Plan with regard to child care services; in the context of any such report received, the nature of the progress made; if she has been informed of any continuing industrial relations issues which are continuing to impede the implementation of the recommendations made in the PA Consulting report; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47107/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy Barry Andrews): The findings of the Strategic Review of the Delivery and Management of Children and Family Services, (known as the PA Consulting Report) are helping to inform the HSE in the restructuring of services at national and regional level. The report is the subject of regular discussion with the HSE, most recently as part of the preparation of its Service Plan for 2011.

I expect that the 2011 Service Plan will include a strong and measurable commitment on the part of the HSE to further progress the implementation of the findings of the PA Report. I will be meeting with HSE senior management later this week at which the matter will be the subject of further discussion. I look forward to completion by the HSE of initial testing of the recommendations in selected regions in 2011 and to an expanded roll-out beyond these areas.

I am unaware of particular industrial relations issues which may serve to impede progress. I recently convened a meeting with IMPACT to discuss a range of issues of mutual concern, including implementation of this report.

In addition to progressing the implementation of the specific recommendations contained in the PA Report, the HSE is also in the process of strengthening its capacity to deliver on the necessary changes and reforms required. In this context, I raised in recent months the need for the appointment of an individual at National Director level who has a proven track record to lead the reform of Children and Family Services. The HSE was very receptive to the proposal and to the need for the appointment of a person who would have the authority to deliver on the wide and ambitious reform programme in this area. The post-holder will lead structural, information, and managerial improvements within a clear service model that focuses on best outcomes for families and children. The appointee will have oversight responsibility for ensuring that services are delivered appropriately, safely and of a high quality in line with statutory obligations. This will be the second senior management appointment in this area and it builds on the recruitment in 2009 of a new Assistant National Director with dedicated responsibility for Children and Family services..

The recruitment process for the new National Director of Children and Family Services is at the final stage and an announcement will be made very shortly by the HSE in this regard.

Hospital Charges

152. **Deputy Jan O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has given any consideration to providing support to persons who have to cover the costs of surgery, post-operative recovery and loss of earnings because they have been fitted with defective hip replacements; if she will consider setting up a loan guarantee scheme for those who cannot afford, but have no option, but to seek legal redress from the manufacturer of the devices; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47111/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The HSE has established an Incident Management Team to coordinate the national recall of patients who received specific hip replacement products manufactured by DePuy Orthopaedics. Approximately 3,300 patients have received these implants in Ireland, in public or private hospitals, and they have been invited for a recall assessment and possible treatment. It is expected that for most patients this process will be precautionary only and that further treatment will not be needed. The Incident Management Team includes a patient representative and member of the Irish Institute of Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgery and of the independent hospital sector, to ensure coordinated management of this issue. The Team is also in contact with the company in relation to the fulfilment of the commitment by DePuy to cover the costs of the recall process and any

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remedial treatment that may be required. In the circumstances I have no plans to establish financial support arrangements such as the Deputy has suggested.

I have arranged to have the Deputy's question forwarded to the Health Service Executive for a more detailed response.

Health Services

153. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Health and Children if the BTEC social care practice HND course is recognised by the Health Service Executive. [47133/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): This matter has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Departmental Agencies

154. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Health and Children the pay increases awarded to staff at the VHI in the years 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the amounts of any increases and the reasons for same; if any pay increases have been awarded to management at the company; the amounts of any such increases and the reasons for same; if any bonuses have been awarded to staff or management at the company in those years; the total amount of any such bonuses and the amounts received by individuals; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47138/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): The Chief Executive Officer of the VHI was appointed on 1 May 2008 on a salary scale of €243,602-€304,450. This salary scale was revised to €249,693-€312,061 in September 2008 on foot of the conclusions of Hay Management Consultants on the remuneration of Chief Executives of Commercial State Bodies. No further increases have been applied since.

The Chief Executive Officer of the VHI is entitled to participate in a Performance Related Award Scheme in line with the provisions and principles of the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector. No awards were made to the CEO in respect of 2008 and 2009.

The terms and conditions of employment of other employees of the VHI are a matter for the Board.

Health Service Staff

155. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she is satisfied that elements contained in the Croke Park Agreement militate unfairly against long serving members of the nursing profession who may retire but now find that they will be unfairly financially penalised because of the cost neutral factor contained in that agreement; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47159/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I am not aware of the cost neutral factor contained in the Croke Park Agreement to which the Deputy refers, nor am I aware of elements of the Croke Park Agreement that impact specifically on retiring members of the nursing profession.

Hospital Staff

156. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Health and Children the number of consultant ophthalmic surgeons attached to Beaumont Hospital, Dublin 9; the average waiting time to see an ophthalmic surgeon in Beaumont; the number of persons on the waiting list at Beaumont; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47185/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Eating Disorders

157. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Health and Children if funding is being made available, in certain cases, to persons suffering from eating disorders to enable them to complete treatment programmes at a centre (details supplied); and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47206/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): As this is a service matter the question has been referred to the HSE for direct reply.

Departmental Expenditure

158. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Health and Children if her attention has been drawn to the shortfall in funding provided by the Health Service Executive titled demography funding to provide residential places for clients with an intellectual disability; if she will quantify the level of demand for such funding in each of the HSE regions and the costs involved to provide a demand led service; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47254/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children (Deputy John Moloney): 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.

Medicinal Products

159. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she has asked the Irish Medicines Board to review their decision in the past to approve the drug Mefloquine or Lariam in view of the fact that the drug has been linked with severe psychological and physical side effects, including a number of deaths among soldiers in Ireland who served on missions abroad, and its withdrawal as a drug for soldiers in other armies around the globe specifically for those reasons. [47289/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): I have been advised by the Irish Medicines Board (IMB) that concerns about the potential for Lariam to cause neuropsychiatric disorders have been identified and reviewed at both national and EU level. As new information on the product has become available, the product information leaflet has been updated and now includes the following:

“Patients with a history of psychiatric disturbances (including depression) or convulsions should not be prescribed Lariam prophylactically, as it may precipitate these conditions.”

“Lariam can cause neuropsychiatric disturbances. If psychiatric disturbances occur during prophylactic use, Lariam should be discontinued and an alternative prophylactic agent should

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be recommended. Disturbances have ranged from confusion and anxiety to severe neuropsychiatric effects (including hallucinations, psychotic or paranoid reactions, depression), and symptoms may persist up to several weeks after discontinuation of the drug. Rare cases of suicidal ideation and suicide have been reported though no relationship to drug administration has been confirmed. Patients with a history of psychiatric disturbances should not be prescribed Lariam prophylactically.

Patients should be advised to obtain medical advice before the next weekly dose of Lariam, if any concerning or neuropsychiatric symptoms develop. Discontinuation of Lariam should be considered, particularly if neuropsychiatric reactions occur. The need for alternative anti-malarial therapy or prophylaxis can then be evaluated.”

The IMB has advised healthcare professionals of these risks by letter to and in their Drug Safety Newsletter.

Hospital Waiting Lists

160. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Health and Children when a person (details supplied) in County Clare will be facilitated; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47296/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply to the Deputy.

161. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail** asked the Minister for Health and Children if she will request the Health Service Executive to expedite necessary surgery in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47300/10]

Minister for Health and Children (Deputy Mary Harney): As this is a service matter, it has been referred to the Health Service Executive for direct reply.

Departmental Expenditure

162. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Transport the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46921/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The amount of money spent by my office on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 is set out in tabular form overleaf.

Year	Amount
	€
2008	5,925.15
2009	3,138.98
2010 (to date)	616.30
Total	9,680.43

Supplier names and address are set out in tabular form below.

Supplier name	Supplier Address
Catering Section, Joint Services Committee, House of the Oireachtas	Leinster House, Dublin 2
Davenport Hotel	Merrion Square, Dublin 2
Angela Kelly T/A Jemange Catering Company	9 Royal Canal Terrace, Phibsboro, Dublin 7
Elmglen T/A Jone Deli	South Leinster Street, Dublin 2
Regent Catering Services	Leeson Lane, Dublin 2

Proposed Legislation

163. **Deputy Noel Ahern** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the wearing of helmets by cyclists; in relation to school children, if it is currently policy to encourage the wearing of such helmets or if it has the back up of legislation; and if he will consider introducing legislation in view of the urgent need for same due to the fact that children feel they are victimised if seen to be wearing helmets which are unfashionable and thus will not wear same. [46957/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Under the Road Safety Authority (Conferral of Functions) Order 2006 (S.I. No. 477 of 2006), this is a matter for the Road Safety Authority.

Departmental Appointments

164. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47009/10]

165. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Transport if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011 [47024/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 164 and 165 together.

As the Deputy should be aware public appointments are made by the Public Appointments Service.

Public Transport

166. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Transport if he will provide this Deputy with a copy of the licence applications (details supplied) and any other relevant documentation; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47090/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Under Statutory Instrument No. 566 of 2010, responsibility for the licensing of Public Bus Passenger Services was transferred from my Department to the National Transport Authority (NTA) with effect from 1 December 2010. The NTA should be contacted directly in relation to the information sought.

Departmental Expenditure

167. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for Transport the level of funding allocated to a scheme (details supplied) under the rural transport programme; if he will restate his commitment to continue funding this particular scheme into the future; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47099/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Pobal administers the Rural Transport Programme (RTP) on behalf of my Department. Neither I nor my Department have any role in relation to the day-to-day management issues pertaining to the Programme or in allocating funds to particular groups. However I understand from bal that an amount in excess of €171,000 has been allocated to the North Fingal Rural Transport Company this year. €10.6 million is being provided for the RTP in 2011 in recognition of the important role it plays in combating rural isolation, particularly for the elderly.

State Companies

168. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Transport the pay increases awarded to staff at Coras Iompair Éireann in the years 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the amounts of any increases and the reasons for same; if any pay increases have been awarded to management at the company; the amounts of any such increases and the reasons for same; if any bonuses have been awarded to staff or management at the company in those years; the total amount of any such bonuses and the amounts received by individuals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47135/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): Pay increases, bonuses and any other emoluments paid to the staff of Córas Iompair Éireann are a matter for the Board of the company. In the case of the Executive Chairman such remuneration levels must be approved by the Minister for Finance in consultation with myself as Minister for Transport. Under the Minister for Finance's Guidelines on Chief Executive pay and conditions payments made to Chief Executives or equivalent are required to be published in the annual accounts of the State body.

Air Services

169. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Transport the changes in support for regional air services from mid-2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47149/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): The estimates published on 7 December 2010 show that there is a reduction of €5.5 million in the estimate for regional airports current expenditure in 2011 as against the 2010 estimate. This reduction relates to the curtailment of public service contracts for air services. The current Public Service Obligation (PSO) contracts for services linking Dublin Airport with the regional airports at Derry, Donegal, Sligo, Ireland West Airport Knock, Galway and Kerry Airports commenced on 22 July 2008 and are due to expire on 21 July 2011.

The Deputy will be aware of the Value for Money (VFM) Review of Exchequer Expenditure on the regional airports programme was recently completed. The review was carried out to assist me in evaluating the appropriate scale of a regional airports programme in future years bearing in mind aviation policy objectives, the updated EU legislation, the improved surface links under the NDP and Transport 21 and the need to address the difficulties with our public finances. The Review is being considered by Government and it is intended that it will be published shortly. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on any likely PSO scheme beyond 2011 in advance of the Government decision in the matter.

Cycle Facilities

170. **Deputy Chris Andrews** asked the Minister for Transport the position regarding the canal cycle route and when the route is expected to be completed. [47177/10]

Minister for Transport (Deputy Noel Dempsey): This is a Dublin City Council project, towards which my Department is providing funding. Progress has been made on the route on the south side of the city. As a recent decision of the Council in relation to construction of a proposed bridge over the River Tolka will affect development on the north side of the city, my Department has requested the City Council to assess the implications and review proposals for the northern section of the route. Pending receipt of this, I am not in a position to comment on the timescale for the completion of the overall project.

Departmental Expenditure

171. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46917/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): As a matter of general practice my office does not purchase refreshments specifically for meetings and functions I am involved in. Other costs may arise in my Department for the provision of these items for meetings held by Department officials. However, I am advised that any such expenditure is not likely to be significant.

Crime Prevention

172. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will support a matter. (details supplied). [46958/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the location referred to is within Raheny Garda Sub-District. Local Garda management is aware of one incident of burglary in the location referred to by the Deputy, the investigation of which is ongoing. No further incidents have been recorded in the area during 2010. A member of the local Community Policing Unit is specifically assigned to the area referred to and attends residents' meetings to help address their concerns. The area is subject to regular patrols by uniform and plain-clothes personnel, including the Community Policing and Mountain Bike Units and the District Detective and Drug Units, supplemented as required by the Divisional Crime Task Force and Traffic Corps personnel.

Local Garda management closely monitors and keeps under review patrols and other operational strategies in place, in conjunction with crime trends and policing needs of the communities in the area, to ensure optimum use is made of Garda resources and the best possible Garda service is provided to the public. The situation is kept under review. Current policing plans in the area are designed to address issues of crime and public order offences. Community policing is a central feature and core value of Garda policing policy, and current policing strategies are predicated on the prevention of crime, public order offences and anti-social behaviour.

Court Procedures

173. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if his attention has been drawn to the fact that a number of single parents have experienced great difficulties

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arising from the changes in legislation relating to orders of maintenance; his plans to address the anomalies that have arisen in relation to enforcement proceedings; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46982/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): There are a number of provisions in the law for ensuring that payments continue to be made by spouses in support of their dependent spouses and children. They include enabling powers for the courts to order attachment of the earnings of a debtor spouse, to order the securing of payments to the maintenance creditor, to order the payment of lump sums and to order arrears of maintenance to be paid by instalments.

A High Court judgment last year had implications for sections 6 (imprisonment in the case of non-payment of debt) and 8 (imprisonment relating to non-payment of maintenance) of the Enforcement of Court Orders Act 1940. The Enforcement of Court Orders (Amendment) Act 2009 made changes to both sections consequent on that judgment in accordance with legal advice. While the law generally operates successfully in this area my attention has been drawn to the fact that difficulties have arisen in some cases. As a result, I have published proposals for the better enforcement of maintenance orders. These proposals are contained in the Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 which is currently before the House.

Deportation Orders

174. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform when a decision will issue regarding a person (details supplied) who is appealing a deportation; if he will confirm that all relevant appeal documents have been received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46994/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Arising from the expiration of her permission to remain in the State on student conditions, and in accordance with the provisions of Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended), the person concerned was notified, by letter dated 8 June 2010, that the Minister proposed to make a Deportation Order in respect of her. She was given the options, to be exercised within 15 working days, of leaving the State voluntarily, of consenting to the making of a Deportation Order or of making representations to the Minister setting out the reasons why a Deportation Order should not be made against her. Representations were received on behalf of the person concerned.

The position in the State of the person concerned will now be decided by reference to the provisions of Section 3(6) of the Immigration Act 1999 (as amended) and Section 5 of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) on the prohibition of refoulement. All representations submitted will be considered before the file is passed to me for decision. Once a decision has been made, this decision and the consequences of the decision will be conveyed in writing to the person concerned.

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual immigration cases may be made directly to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

Departmental Appointments

175. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary,

expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47005/10]

176. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47020/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 175 and 176 together.

The full information sought by the Deputy is not readily available or easily accessible and requires a significant trawl of departmental and in some cases the records of bodies for which the department is responsible. I have asked that subject to other ongoing departmental and agency priorities this work be completed without undue delay. When it is to hand I will communicate with the Deputy.

Garda Recruitment

177. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the number of applicants that have successfully completed stages one and two of the selection process for An Garda Síochána and are being processed through background screening, medical examination and physical competence test and so on; the number of candidates who have completed these stages and will begin training in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47028/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that there are currently 410 Garda applicants who have successfully completed stages 1 and 2 of the application process. Of these there are a total of 164 applicants who have completed all stages of the application process and are ready for entry to the Garda College when recruitment re-commences. The remaining candidates are being processed through background screening, medical examination and physical competency tests. The National Recovery Plan 2011- 2014 provides for a reduction in the number of members of An Garda Síochána to 13,000 by the end of 2014. This reduction, and the rate at which it is achieved through retirements, will be taken into account in determining when recruitment will re-commence.

178. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if it is still the intention to proceed with the establishment of a panel of approved candidates for Garda recruitment, which was announced in June 2010; if so, when it is likely that such a panel of approved candidates will be established; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47054/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The moratorium on recruitment and appointments continues to apply to An Garda Síochána with provisions for exceptions following agreement with the Minister for Finance. The purpose of organising a recruitment campaign earlier this year was to begin the process of establishing a panel of potential applicants who could go on to be recruited as members of An Garda Síochána. Since that announcement was made, the National Recovery Plan 2011- 2014 was developed and published. The plan provides for a reduction in the number of members of An Garda Síochána to 13,000 by the end of 2014. This reduction, and the rate at which it is achieved through retirements, will be taken into account in determining when recruitment will commence.

Asylum Applications

179. **Deputy Fergus O'Dowd** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the position regarding changes for applicants for subsidiary protection who are residing here for over five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47062/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): There has been no change in the processing of applications for Subsidiary Protection as referred to by the Deputy. On a regular and ongoing basis my Department assesses the cases on hand to ensure that, as far as possible, persons who are waiting for a decision for the longest periods have their cases finalised first. The factual position is that any case where an application for Subsidiary Protection has been made will be considered in accordance with the legislation i.e. the European Communities (Eligibility for Protection) Regulations, 2006 (S.I. No. 518 of 2006). When consideration of the application has been completed, the applicant is notified in writing of the outcome. In the event that the Subsidiary Protection application is refused, the applicant's case file, including all representations submitted, will then be considered under the various headings set out in Section 3(6) of the 1999 Act.

Residency Permits

180. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if a decision has been made on an application for a change of status from Stamp 2 to Stamp 3 for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [47097/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that the person referred to by the Deputy made an application to change his current immigration status on the 14 October 2010. Applications are dealt with in chronological order and I am informed that officials in INIS will be in touch with this person shortly.

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual Immigration cases may be made direct to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

Asylum Applications

181. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform with regard to the total number of unaccompanied children who arrived in the State between 1 January 2002 and 30 September 2010 being 1,871 children, the number that have been allowed to remain here upon attaining 18 years of age and the numbers whose applications to remain presently await determination. [47102/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) that unaccompanied minors are dealt with in accordance with section 8(5)(a) of the Refugee Act 1996 (as amended) which provides that, where it appears to an Immigration Officer or an authorised officer that a child under the age of 18 years who has arrived in the state and is not in the custody of any person, that child must, as soon as is practicable be referred to the Health Service Executive (HSE) and thereupon the provisions of the Child Care Act, 1991 apply to the child.

As the Deputy will be aware, it is open to the unaccompanied minors to apply for refugee status if they so wish. All asylum applications, whether they relate to adults or children, require

an investigation to be carried out to determine whether refugee status should be granted or refused. Clearly in the context of determining asylum applications involving unaccompanied children, regard will be had for the age and maturity of the child. In circumstances where an unaccompanied minor is placed in the care of the HSE pursuant to the provisions of the Refugee Act, 1996, the making of a decision with regard to an asylum application is taken by the HSE on behalf of the child.

The Deputy might also wish to note that in the instances where refugee status is refused, the unaccompanied children involved will be made aware of the entitlement to apply for Subsidiary Protection in the State and to submit written representations to the Minister as to why a Deportation Order should not be made and any such communications are again copied to the HSE and to the child's legal representative.

It is not possible to dis-aggregate the cases of previously unaccompanied children who were subsequently granted permission to remain in the State from the overall figures for persons granted permission to remain in the State.

The Deputy might also wish to note that it is not uncommon for persons arriving in the State as unaccompanied children to be re-united with family members already in the State and once such re-unification is achieved, the HSE will no longer be required to act as guardian to such children.

Garda Strength

182. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will detail for each of the years 1999 up to and including the year 2010 with regard to the Garda Síochána, the number of chief superintendents, superintendents and inspectors on the Garda Force and the projected number as at the 1 January 2011. [47104/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that the personnel strength of each of the ranks referred to by the Deputy, as at 31 December 1999-2009, and 30 September 2010, the latest date for which figures are readily available, is set out in the table below. I am further informed that as of 10 December 2010, 2 Chief Superintendents, 9 Superintendents and 9 Inspectors have either retired or declared their intention to retire between 1 October 2010 and 31 December 2010.

Year	Chief Superintendents	Superintendents	Inspectors
1999	46	168	263
2000	46	169	293
2001	46	171	288
2002	47	171	294
2003	47	173	294
2004	47	168	291
2005	47	173	288
2006	46	166	287
2007	52	185	330
2008	52	187	344
2009	39	167	317
30/09/2010	47	177	342

Work Permits

183. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the rules currently applicable to granting permission to non-EU citizens who wish to move to and work in Ireland to do so; the number of such applications received during the period 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009 and 1 January 2010 to 30 November 2010; the nationality of the individual applicants in the case of each of the aforesaid periods; and the number of applicants who were successful and granted permission to reside in and work here; the numbers unsuccessful and their nationalities in each case. [47105/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The current position with regard to non-EEA nationals who wish to move to and work in Ireland is that certain such nationals are required to apply for a work permit to take up employment in the State. The issuing of work permits is a matter for the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Innovation. When a work permit is secured, the individual, if from a visa required country must apply for the appropriate visa to enter the State. If the person is belonging to the class of non-nationals who are not visa required, they are expected to produce documentation at the port of entry to satisfy the Immigration Officer of their intent. When in the State, all non-EEA nationals who intend to remain here longer than 90 days must register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau where their passport will be endorsed with the appropriate immigration stamp and a Garda National Registration card will be issued to them.

The categories of persons also given access to the labour market in the State and not requiring a work permit to take up employment include spouses of Irish Nationals, partners in a de facto relationship with an Irish national, who meet the qualifying criteria, spouses and dependants of EU nationals, persons who were granted permission to enter the State as researchers, persons who are granted refugee status in the State, family members of refugees who are granted family reunification. Persons who hold permission to remain under these categories are also entitled to seek employment in the State by virtue of holding such permission. All persons in these categories are required to register their presence in the State with the Garda National Immigration Bureau.

Due to the range of categories of persons who are allowed to come and work in the State and, in certain circumstances, overlapping conditions related to their permission to remain, it is not possible in the time available to dis-aggregate the numbers and nationalities of such persons as requested by the Deputy. However, the following statistical information has been provided by the Work Permits Division in the Department of Enterprise, Trade, and Innovation which will give the Deputy the numbers of Employment permits issued in the year 2009 and up to 31 October 2010. The numbers of permits issued include nationals already in the State but who have changed jobs.

Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
2010		3,394	3,877	7,271	990	199
	Albania	2	2	4	0	3
	Algeria	2	5	7	0	0
	Andorra	1	0	1	0	0
	Anguilla	1	0	1	0	0
	Antarctica (Aust. Ext. Territories)	1	0	1	0	0
	Argentina	7	6	13	1	1
	Armenia	1	0	1	0	0

Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
	Australia	59	37	96	26	6
	Azerbaijan	0	1	1	0	0
	Bahrain	4	1	5	2	0
	Bangladesh	25	61	86	30	7
	Barbados	1	0	1	0	0
	Belarus	18	18	36	4	1
	Bosnia Herzegovina	1	5	6	1	0
	Botswana	10	3	13	2	0
	Brazil	74	269	343	59	7
	Brazilian	0	1	1	0	0
	Bulgaria	69	1	70	8	2
	Cameroon	1	0	1	1	0
	Canada	69	31	100	8	4
	Chile	2	1	3	0	0
	China	135	183	318	95	5
	Colombia	3	3	6	0	1
	Congo (Democratic Republic of)	0	1	1	0	0
	Croatia	6	21	27	2	0
	Cuba	0	3	3	0	0
	Egypt	11	16	27	5	2
	El Salvador	1	0	1	0	0
	Ethiopia	2	5	7	0	0
	Ghana	1	1	2	1	0
	Guatemala	1	0	1	0	0
	Hong Kong	1	9	10	4	0
	India	864	1,133	1,997	112	33
	Indian	0	1	1	0	0
	Indonesia	7	2	9	2	0
	Iran	3	5	8	0	0
	Iraq	1	2	3	0	0
	Israel	8	9	17	0	0
	Jamaica	1	0	1	0	0
	Japan	24	15	39	3	0
	Jordan	7	0	7	1	1
	Kazakhstan	0	1	1	0	0
	Kenya	2	5	7	1	0
	Korea (Republic of (North)	1	0	1	1	0
	Korea (Republic of (South)	15	10	25	1	0
	Kosovo	1	1	2	1	0
	Kuwait	6	0	6	0	0
	Kyrgyz Republic	1	1	2	0	1
	Latvia	3	2	5	0	0
	Latvia (Alien)	0	0	0	1	0
	Lebanon	5	1	6	4	0
	Liberia	2	0	2	0	0
	Libya	0	0	0	1	0
	Macedonia (FYR)	0	4	4	0	0
	Malawi	0	4	4	1	0
	Malaysia	187	85	272	41	10
	Maldives	1	0	1	0	0
	Mali	0	1	1	0	0
	Mauritania	1	1	2	1	0

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Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
	Mauritius	14	13	27	20	1
	Mexico	7	4	11	2	2
	Moldova	23	67	90	16	3
	Mongolia	1	2	3	0	0
	Morocco	11	10	21	2	0
	Myanmar (Formerly Burma)	1	3	4	4	1
	Nepal	3	30	33	4	1
	New Zealand	30	32	62	13	2
	Niger	0	1	1	1	0
	Nigeria	20	39	59	18	1
	Oman	1	1	2	0	0
	Pakistan	65	101	166	59	5
	Palestine	2	0	2	1	0
	Peru	0	0	0	1	1
	Philippines	234	989	1,223	109	25
	Qatar	1	0	1	0	0
	Romania	766	5	771	130	18
	Russian Federation	21	50	71	8	2
	Samoa	1	0	1	0	0
	Samoa(USA)	0	0	0	1	0
	Saudi Arabia	2	1	3	0	0
	Serbia	7	4	11	1	0
	Seychelles	0	0	0	1	0
	Singapore	8	3	11	0	0
	South Africa	68	133	201	44	13
	Sri Lanka	7	36	43	3	0
	St Vincent and the Grenadines	0	0	0	1	0
	Sudan	3	0	3	3	0
	Syria	3	3	6	5	1
	Taiwan	2	1	3	0	0
	Tanzania	0	2	2	0	0
	Thailand	30	61	91	22	12
	Tonga	1	1	2	0	0
	Trinidad & Tobago	3	1	4	3	0
	Tunisia	2	4	6	2	0
	Turkey	38	18	56	15	4
	Uganda	1	1	2	2	0
	Ukraine	65	144	209	29	5
	United Arab Emirates	3	0	3	0	0
	United States of America	281	101	382	34	16
	Uruguay	2	1	3	2	0
	Uzbekistan	1	2	3	2	0
	Venezuela	3	4	7	0	0
	Vietnam	6	6	12	4	0
	Western Samoa	0	1	1	0	0
	Yugoslavia (Federal Republic of)	0	2	2	1	0
	Zambia	2	2	4	1	1
	Zimbabwe	6	31	37	6	1

Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
2009		3,815	3,835	7,650	1,781	441
	Albania	2	4	6	2	0
	Algeria	7	9	16	8	1
	Argentina	17	7	24	8	2
	Armenia	0	2	2	0	0
	Australia	116	66	182	33	4
	Azerbaijan	1	0	1	0	0
	Bahrain	4	7	11	1	0
	Bangladesh	62	114	176	75	14
	Barbados	1	0	1	0	0
	Belarus	15	38	53	22	2
	Bosnia Herzegovina	2	3	5	7	1
	Botswana	16	11	27	9	1
	Brazil	88	196	284	132	23
	British National (Overseas)	0	0	0	1	0
	Bulgaria	23	1	24	2	0
	Burundi	0	1	1	0	0
	Cameroon	1	2	3	3	0
	Canada	88	46	134	16	6
	Chile	1	7	8	4	0
	China	188	207	395	198	12
	Colombia	1	4	5	3	0
	Costa Rica	4	0	4	0	0
	Croatia	10	14	24	7	1
	Cuba	0	1	1	0	0
	Ecuador	0	1	1	0	0
	Egypt	18	19	37	11	1
	Estonia (alien)	0	0	0	1	0
	Ethiopia	5	3	8	2	0
	Fiji	1	0	1	0	0
	Gambia	1	0	1	1	0
	Georgia	1	2	3	2	0
	Ghana	0	1	1	2	0
	Guyana	3	0	3	0	0
	Honduras	1	2	3	0	0
	Hong Kong	13	10	23	8	0
	India	916	788	1,704	195	54
	Indian	1	0	1	0	0
	Indonesia	0	3	3	5	0
	Iran	5	7	12	4	2
	Iraq	3	0	3	2	0
	Israel	17	7	24	1	0
	Jamaica	1	0	1	2	0
	Japan	28	16	44	4	0
	Jordan	11	8	19	1	1
	Kazakhstan	2	0	2	0	0
	Kenya	6	6	12	11	0
	Korea (Republic of (South))	20	6	26	3	0
	Kosovo	2	1	3	3	0
	Kuwait	3	0	3	0	0
	Kyrgyz Republic	2	1	3	1	0

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Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
	Latvia	1	3	4	4	1
	Latvia (Alien)	0	4	4	2	0
	Lebanon	4	5	9	2	0
	Libya	0	2	2	3	0
	Macedonia (FYR)	0	1	1	0	0
	Malawi	1	1	2	0	0
	Malaysia	338	119	457	72	18
	Maldives	1	0	1	0	0
	Mauritania	0	1	1	2	0
	Mauritius	26	21	47	11	0
	Mexico	9	5	14	3	0
	Moldova	36	86	122	37	3
	Mongolia	2	3	5	3	0
	Morocco	20	14	34	5	3
	Myanmar (Formerly Burma)	0	5	5	7	2
	Nepal	22	13	35	9	7
	New Zealand	58	64	122	34	4
	Niger	0	0	0	0	1
	Nigeria	26	31	57	16	2
	Oman	4	0	4	0	0
	Pakistan	89	97	186	88	14
	Palestine	0	0	0	1	0
	Paraguay	1	0	1	0	0
	Peru	0	2	2	2	1
	Philippines	396	995	1,391	284	58
	Romania	192	1	193	15	8
	Russian Federation	34	35	69	26	1
	Samoa	2	0	2	0	0
	Samoa (USA)	0	1	1	1	0
	Saudi Arabia	1	0	1	0	0
	Senegal	0	1	1	0	0
	Serbia	8	4	12	0	0
	Seychelles	3	0	3	0	0
	Sierra Leone	1	0	1	0	0
	Singapore	14	2	16	1	0
	Solomon Islands	1	0	1	0	0
	South Africa	171	223	394	83	20
	Sri Lanka	23	31	54	14	4
	Sudan	7	3	10	2	2
	Syria	2	3	5	3	0
	Taiwan	4	0	4	0	0
	Tanzania	5	0	5	0	1
	Thailand	61	79	140	58	13
	Timor East	0	1	1	0	0
	Tonga	0	2	2	1	0
	Trinidad & Tobago	12	3	15	2	0
	Tunisia	1	6	7	6	0
	Turkey	27	14	41	16	125
	Turkmenistan	0	1	1	0	0
	Uganda	1	0	1	0	0
	Ukraine	72	168	240	114	12

Year	Nationality	New	Renewals	Issued	Refused	Withdrawn
	United Arab Emirates	11	0	11	0	0
	United States of America	391	111	502	50	12
	Uruguay	2	0	2	0	0
	Uzbekistan	0	1	1	1	0
	Venezuela	0	2	2	1	2
	Vietnam	11	7	18	2	0
	Yemen	1	0	1	0	0
	Yugoslavia (Federal Republic of)	2	6	8	1	1
	Zambia	0	5	5	0	0
	Zimbabwe	14	31	45	9	1

Asylum Applications

184. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the options that remain and are open to a non-Irish national who has been served a notice pursuant to section 14 (1) of the Immigration Act 2004 which will allow the person to remain here; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47112/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): Section 14(1) of the Immigration Act 2004 provides that the Minister may, by notice in writing, require a non-national who does not have permission to be in the State to comply with either or both of the following conditions: that her or she reside or remain in a particular district or place in the State; that he or she report at specified intervals to an immigration officer or member of the Garda Síochána specified in the notice or to the registration officer of the registration district in which he or she is resident, and the non-national shall comply with the requirement.

Section 14 (2) stipulates that a non-national who contravenes this section shall be guilty of an offence. It is open to an individual who has received such notice to write to the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Services outlining his/her particular circumstances so that his/her particular case may be considered under the relevant immigration legislation.

Garda Strength

185. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the number of the Garda Síochána stationed in each Garda district in Waterford city and county in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47150/10]

186. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the number of members of the Garda Síochána Reserve stationed in each Garda district in Waterford city and county in each of the past three years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47151/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I propose to take Questions Nos. 185 and 186 together.

I am informed by the Garda authorities that the personnel strength of An Garda Síochána and the number of Garda Reserves assigned to each Garda District in the Waterford Garda Division in the years referred to by the Deputy and as at the latest date for which figures are readily available is set out in the table below.

[Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

District	31/12/06	31/12/07		31/12/08		31/12/09		30/09/10	
	Gardaí	Gardaí	Reserve	Gardaí	Reserve	Gardaí	Reserve	Gardaí	Reserve
Dungarvan*	56	62	—	61	—	66	—	67	1
Tramore	44	47	2	50	2	53	2	50	2
Waterford*	157	169	7	179	8	190	16	190	17

*2006, 2007 and 2008 figures take account of the boundary changes.

Citizenship Applications

187. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the position regarding an application for naturalisation in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service office has received any correspondence recently from the registrar general's office in Nairobi; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47160/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): A valid application for a certificate of naturalisation from the person referred to in the Deputy's Question was received in the Citizenship Division of my Department in June 2010.

The application is currently being processed in the normal way with a view to establishing whether the applicant meets the statutory conditions for the granting of naturalisation and will be submitted to me for decision in due course. To date no correspondence has been received from the registrar general's office in Nairobi.

I should remind the Deputy that queries in relation to the status of individual Immigration cases may be made direct to INIS by Email using the Oireachtas Mail facility which has been specifically established for this purpose. The service enables up-to-date information on such cases to be obtained without the need to seek this information through the more administratively expensive Parliamentary Questions process.

Garda Recruitment

188. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will deal with a matter (details supplied) regarding the Garda Síochána; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47184/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am reviewing the current entry requirements into An Garda Síochána in consultation with the Commissioner. This review will of course take into account the recommendations of the Report referred to by the Deputy.

Garda Operations

189. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will report on Garda Operation Shannon; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the number of stolen vehicles recovered to date; the number of gardaí involved to date; the cost of the operation to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47187/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am informed by the Garda authorities that Operation Shannon, which commenced in 2006, is an ongoing investigation by the Stolen Motor Vehicle Section of the National Bureau of Criminal Investigation into the

theft and sale by organised crime groups of stolen vehicles, supported by counterfeit vehicle registration documentation.

Since the commencement of the investigation, 221 stolen vehicles have been recovered. Twenty three persons have been arrested, some of whom have been convicted for offences relating to deception, handling or possession of stolen vehicles or possession of counterfeit documents. Four of those convicted had prison sentences imposed, while others were ordered to pay compensation to unsuspecting parties who had purchased such stolen vehicles. Two persons are awaiting trial.

I am also informed that a breakdown as sought by the Deputy of the cost of this investigation, which remains ongoing, could not be made available without a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources.

190. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform if he will report on Garda Operation Foolsap; the number of gardaí involved; the number of persons arrested and charged to date; the amount of drugs seized; the amount of firearms seized; the amount of stolen property recovered to date and the cost of the operation to date; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47188/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I am advised by the Garda authorities that Operation Foolsap was established in the Galway Garda Division in October 2009. It is an ongoing operation targeting the activities of a particular organised crime group.

The number of members of An Garda Síochána involved in the Operation can vary with up to 150 Gardaí involved at certain times, including members of the Criminal Assets Bureau, the Garda Bureau of Fraud Investigation and Crime & Security personnel.

To date, thirteen charges have been preferred against ten persons arrested on foot of the Operation. The charges relate to a range of alleged offences including offences under the following provisions: Section 71A of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 as inserted by section 5 of the Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act 2009 (directing a criminal organisation); 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); Section 12 of the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 (Burglary); Sections 3 and 15 of the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 and 1984 (possession of controlled drugs and possession of controlled drugs for unlawful sale or supply). Drugs, including cannabis herb and a quantity of cocaine, with a total estimate street-value of approximately €57,000 have been seized. No firearms or stolen property have been recovered to date. The cost of this Operation, which remains ongoing, is not readily available and would require a disproportionate expenditure of Garda time and resources to calculate same.

Criminal Justice System

191. **Deputy Alan Shatter** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the reason for the oversight in the criminal justice system which led to the death of a person (details supplied) on 31 December 2009; and the ongoing risks to the general public if the system remains unchanged. [47286/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The investigation by Judge Michael Reilly, Inspector of Prisons, into the handling of the sentencing, release and post release procedures in the criminal matter that is the subject of the Deputy's Question highlighted a number of very serious failings which took place across four criminal justice agencies following the sentencing in absentia of an individual to a four year term of imprisonment.

[Deputy Dermot Ahern.]

Several of the failures resulted from human error and others occurred because of the lack of systematic procedures to pick up on these errors when they occurred.

As I outlined to the House on 7 December 2010, I appointed Mr. Pat Folan, a former Director General of the immigration services, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations put forward by Judge Reilly. Significant changes have since been introduced to the system on foot of Judge Reilly's report with the aim of ensuring that the mistakes such as those identified will not reoccur. The progress achieved is detailed in the report of the Implementation Group which has been laid before the Houses and is also available on my Department's website www.justice.ie <http://www.justice.ie/>.

The new procedures that are now in place will serve to increase efficiency and effectiveness and enhance the overall accountability requirements on agencies and individual officials, as well as promote the timely sharing of relevant information between the Justice agencies.

Garda Vetting of Personnel

192. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform the current backlog of cases with the Garda Central Vetting Unit; the number of staff who are working in the unit; the target in terms of the timescale for clearances to be issued in future; when this target is expected to be reached; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47312/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): The Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) provides employment vetting for a large number of organisations in Ireland registered with the Gardaí for this purpose and which employ persons in a full-time, part-time, voluntary or training capacity to positions where they would have substantial, unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults.

The GCVU has managed a substantial increase over recent years in the numbers of vetting applications it receives — 187,864 in 2007; 218,404 in 2008 and 246,194 in 2009. At present, there are approximately 60,000 vetting applications in the course of being processed.

The processing time for vetting applications fluctuates in line with periods of increased demand. Furthermore, additional time may be required to process an individual vetting application in cases where clarification is required as to the details provided or where other enquiries need to be made, for example, when the person in question has lived and worked abroad. There will always be a reasonably significant time period required to process a vetting application. Registered organisations have been advised to take account of this in their recruitment and selection process. However, the Garda makes every effort to reduce the time to the minimum possible consistent with carrying out the necessary checks. I am informed by the Garda Authorities that the current average processing time for vetting applications received at the GCVU is approximately ten weeks.

The allocation of Garda resources, including personnel, is a matter for the Garda Commissioner. There are currently a total of 89 gardaí and Garda civilian personnel assigned to the Vetting Unit, including an additional ten persons recruited to the Unit on a temporary basis due to the current high volume of applications. Overall, this represents a very significant increase in the level of personnel assigned to the unit, which stood at only 13 before the current process of development in Garda vetting began in 2005. In addition, overall staffing arrangements at the Unit are kept under review.

House Prices Database

193. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for Justice and Law Reform how the proposals regarding the new database on house prices are expected to work; how the information will be

compiled and the source of the information; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47313/10]

Minister for Justice and Law Reform (Deputy Dermot Ahern): I can inform the Deputy that it is my intention to bring forward amendments to the Property Services (Regulation) Bill to give the new Property Services Regulatory Authority the statutory function in relation to publishing details of residential sales prices.

The amendments will provide that details which, under existing stamp duty legislation, must be supplied to the Revenue Commissioners for stamp duty purposes within 30 days following the sale or lease of property will be made available to the Property Services Regulatory Authority for publication at regular intervals. Publication of this house price data will ensure the required level of market transparency and meet the needs of statutory and other bodies involved in tracking market trends and compiling statistical data on the property market.

Departmental Expenditure

194. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, tea and coffee, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010, in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and its address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46915/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): Light refreshments, such as tea and coffee, are provided at certain meetings and functions held in Iveagh House, and come from the stocks centrally purchased by my Department's Protocol Division.

Details of expenditure by Protocol Division on tea, coffee and bottled water, including the relevant service provider, are included in the table below. It has not been possible in the time available to provide all the information requested.

The majority of the refreshments included in the table are used for official hospitality at my Department which is instrumental to the ongoing efforts to promote a positive perception of Ireland internationally and to further strengthen and develop links with other countries with a view to advancing our values and economic interests.

My Department is very conscious of the need to achieve value for money on expenditure in this area and, as with all expenditure, appropriate financial controls and regulations are in place.

Supplier		2008	2009	2010 (to date)
		€	€	€
Bewley's Ltd. Northern Cross, Malahide Road, Dublin 17. Pallas Foods Ltd. Newcastle West, Co. Limerick.	Tea	1,058.57	409.16	812.82
G. Elliott & Sons Ltd. 4/10 Camden Row, Dublin 8. Java Republic Roasting Co. The Roastery, 510 Mitchelstown Road, Northwest Business Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15. Viking Direct, Unit 35, Rosemount Business Park, Dublin 11.	Coffee	4,882.99	3,852.93	5,401.10
De Braam Trading Ltd. Fordstown, Rathmolyon, Co. Meath. G. Elliott & Sons Ltd. 4/10 Camden Row, Dublin 8.	Bottled water	4,149.26	5,157.41	3,445.92

Departmental Appointments

195. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; the remuneration in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; whether each was a re-appointment or a new appointment; the details of the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47003/10]

196. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47018/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): I propose to take Questions Nos. 195 and 196 together.

As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I make appointments to four bodies — the Ireland-United States Commission for Educational Exchange (the Fulbright Commission), the Development Education Advisory Committee and the Irish Aid Expert Advisory Group.

I re-appointed Ms. Una Halligan to the Ireland-United States Commission for Educational Exchange for a fourth two-year term with effect from 11 December 2010, and I re-appointed Professor Geraldine McCarthy to the Ireland-United States Commission for Educational Exchange for a second two-year term with effect from 11 December 2010. The Ireland-United States Commission for Educational Exchange enjoys autonomy of management and administration in accordance with section 2(5) of the Educational Exchange (Ireland and the United States of America) Act, 1991. Members of the Commission serve without remuneration but they are reimbursed by the Commission for reasonable expenses necessarily incurred by them in the discharge of their functions.

None of the other bodies have had appointments made to them in the period in question.

I make appointments to the Emigrant Services Advisory Committee (ESAC) following consultations with our Embassy in London and the Irish Abroad Unit in my Department. The question of the appointment of a new committee is currently under consideration by the Embassy in London and appointments will likely be made early in 2011 for a two-year term. The committee consists of twelve members, including two officers from our Embassy in London, who act as Chair and Secretary to the committee. The ten voluntary committee members were appointed in May 2009 and their term runs until 31 December 2010. The primary role of the committee is to advise me on the allocation of grants to Irish community organisations in Britain under the Emigrant Support Programme.

No appointments to the other bodies which fall under the aegis of my Department are envisaged for the period in question.

Territorial Claims

197. **Deputy Jim O’Keeffe** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs his views on the claim by Denmark and the Faroe Islands to the United Nations for a portion of the North Sea continental shelf which is part of the Rockall area in the Atlantic claimed by Ireland; the impact this will have on Ireland’s claim; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47224/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): Under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea each State Party to the Convention is entitled to continental shelf for 200 nautical lines from its coast. States with an extended continental shelf that stretches beyond 200 nautical miles are obliged to lodge a claim with the UN Commission on the Limits

of the Continental Shelf within 10 years of becoming party to the Convention. Ireland claims continental shelf extending beyond 200 nautical miles both to the west and to the south of the country. For the purposes of our claims we have divided the extended shelf into three sectors. One of these three sectors lies in part of the Hatton-Rockall Area of the North-East Atlantic, which extends up to 500 nautical miles from the State's west coast. There is an agreed Ireland-UK boundary here but it is not accepted by Iceland or the Faroe Islands, which make their own claims in this area. The four countries have met regularly since 2001 in an effort to resolve the overlapping claims issue, but to date have been unable to reach agreement. The 10-year deadline for the making of submissions to the UN Commission expired for Ireland in May 2009. The Government therefore lodged the national claim for this area at the end of March 2009. The deadline for the Faroe Islands is 2014 (because Denmark, which is responsible for the foreign relations of the Faroe Islands, only became a party to the Convention on the Law of the Sea in 2004) and the authorities in the Faroes had kept us informed of their intention to make their submission this year. That submission was lodged with the Commission in New York on 2 December last.

The Commission's rules of procedure prevent consideration of a submission concerning a disputed area without the consent of all the states concerned. Accordingly the purpose of making submissions in accordance with the deadline, as Ireland, the UK and the Faroes have all now done, is to stop the clock on the deadline and preserve each country's legal position. In the meantime, the four states intend to keep the matter under regular review and will meet again in the New Year. We continue to work for the creation of conditions that will permit consideration of Ireland's submission by the Commission as soon as possible.

The State's continental shelf has already been successfully extended beyond 200 nautical miles in the area to the west of the Porcupine Bank where 39,000 square kilometres of additional seabed has recently been designated under the 1968 Continental Shelf Act. Together with France, Spain and the UK, we have also made a successful submission to the UN Commission in relation to a large area of seabed in the Celtic Sea and Bay of Biscay and the four countries have recently begun discussions on its division between them.

Foreign Investigations

198. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the steps he intends to take to require the Botswana Government to act upon a report (details supplied) and bring to justice those who murdered an Irish citizen. [47234/10]

199. **Deputy Mattie McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs the steps he will now take with the Botswana authorities to ensure a meeting (details supplied) takes place as a matter of urgency. [47235/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): I propose to take Question Nos. 198 and 199 together.

I refer the Deputy to my reply to Question No. 73 of last Thursday, 9 December, in connection with this case mentioned by him. As he will be aware from that reply, the Department of Foreign Affairs is still awaiting a formal response from the Office of the President of Botswana with the findings of their review of this case and until this has been received and considered it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

Human Rights Issues

200. **Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if his attention has been drawn to reports that US military personnel have been using the drug mefloquine

[Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh.]

(Lariam) to psychologically torture or experiment with detainees in Guantánamo Bay detention centre, including a practice called pharmacologic waterboarding and the administration on arrival of a dose five times that recommended to tackle malaria; if he has raised this matter with the US Administration as being contrary to conventions on the treatment of prisoners or detainees or prisoners of war; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47290/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): I am aware that a number of blogs on the Internet have alleged recently that the US Department of Defence forced detainees at the Guantánamo Bay detention facility to take a high dosage of the anti-malarial drug, mefloquine, whether they presented with malarial symptoms or not. These remain unsubstantiated allegations and have not been raised with the US authorities.

Together with our EU partners, Ireland continues to encourage the US to bring about the closure of the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay in the shortest possible time and to treat those detained there in accordance with the requirements of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

Diplomatic Communications

201. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for Foreign Affairs if he will support a matter (details supplied) in order to retain a free, open and transparent media at an international level and within the United States of America. [47309/10]

Minister for Foreign Affairs (Deputy Micheál Martin): The exchange of information between governments, reporting by diplomatic missions and the assessment of diplomatic personnel are an important aspect of the formulation of foreign policy and the conduct of international relations. For a variety of reasons, including political and commercial, it is important that such exchanges take place in confidence. This is not inconsistent with a commitment to freedom of the media and of expression. I do not propose to comment on the publication by the Wikileaks website of alleged United States diplomatic cables.

As the individual referred to is the subject of legal proceedings it would not be appropriate for me to comment on this particular case.

Pension Provisions

202. **Deputy Terence Flanagan** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will deal with a matter (details supplied) regarding pensions; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47043/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I understand that the Deputy has clarified that he is referring to State pensions.

There are three types of State pension:- State pension (transition), State pension (contributory) and State pension (non-contributory). Both State pension (transition) and State pension (contributory) are among a number of social welfare schemes based upon social insurance. Payments based on social insurance contributions are funded through pay-related contributions to the social insurance fund by employers, employees and the self-employed with subvention, where necessary, by the State. In the case of contributory pensions, payment is made on reaching pension age provided the qualifying conditions, which include having paid a minimum number of contributions at an appropriate rate and reaching a minimum average annual contribution rate, have been met. There are no residency conditions attached to con-

tributory payments as the pensioner has built up an entitlement based on contributions paid over his/her working life.

The State pension (non-contributory) is a means-tested payment for persons over 66 years of age and is funded entirely by taxation. All income is assessable as means and this includes cash income, private pensions, foreign pensions, the value of any property (excluding the claimant's own home) and the value of any investments, monies held in financial institutions and capital which the claimant or their spouse may have. A person seeking the payment must also be habitually resident in the State.

The current Government policy in relation to pensions is laid out in the National Pensions Framework which was launched in March of this year. The framework includes a number of changes to the State pension in order to make it more transparent, simple and equitable for those reaching pension age. Among the changes outlined are changes to the social insurance conditions and increases to the State pension age however there are no plans to alter the residency requirements or reduce the pensions of those who are non-residents.

Private Rented Accommodation

203. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the decision in respect of a person (details supplied) who has been required to move house because the rent for which rent supplement is sought is €4.30 in excess of the limit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47178/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): In the timeframe available, I regret that my Department is not in a position to reply to this question. My Department will be in contact with the Deputy over the coming days and will reply in full to the question raised.

Social Welfare Fraud

204. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons found to have committed welfare fraud in Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; the types of fraud involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46865/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Criminal prosecutions are taken against persons who defraud the social welfare payments system and employers who fail to carry out their statutory obligations. Prosecutions are not reported by region therefore the information requested is not available.

Social Welfare Benefits

205. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of jobseeker's benefit in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46866/10]

206. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of jobseeker's allowance in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46867/10]

208. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of the lone parent allowance in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46871/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I propose to take Questions Nos. 205, 206 and 208 together.

The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following tabular statement. The numbers in receipt of the three payments was broadly stable at about 7,500 in aggregate in 2005 and 2006. The numbers of recipients of each of the payments rose in 2007. The number of Jobseekers Allowance and Jobseekers Benefit, taken together, rose again in 2008 and 2009 and remains stable over the first eleven months of 2010. The numbers on One Parent Family payment remained stable at just below 3,000 from 2007 to 2009 but has seen a slight increase to 3,100 in 2010.

Table: Jobseekers Benefit, Jobseekers Allowance and One Parent Family Payment for County Waterford for period December 2005 to date.

	Jobseekers Benefit*	Jobseekers Allowance*	One Parent Family Payment
December 2005	2,034	2,980	2,582
December 2006	1,934	3,162	2,658
December 2007	2,033	3,353	2,911
December 2008	4,106	4,503	2,970
December 2009	4,270	6,852	2,992
November 2010	2,890	8,320	3,105

*Refers to Dungarvan and Waterford local offices only.

207. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in receipt of rent allowance in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46868/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The purpose of rent supplement is to provide short-term support to eligible people living in private rented accommodation, whose means are insufficient to meet their accommodation costs and who do not have accommodation available to them from any other source. Since 2005, the number of individuals in receipt of rent supplement in Waterford has increased by 27%. The information the Deputy has requested is provided for in the following tabular statement.

Rent Supplement Recipients in Waterford 2005 to present

Year	No. Recipients
*2010	2,291
2009	2,267
2008	2,126
2007	1,776
2006	1,737
2005	1,804

*On 3rd December 2010.

Question No. 208 answered with Question No. 205.

209. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of farm assist payments in County Carlow; the number of applications for farm assist payments in County Carlow currently being processed; the number of persons in

County Carlow in receipt of farm assist payments in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46890/10]

210. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of farm assist payments in County Kilkenny; the number of applications for farm assist payments in County Kilkenny currently being processed; the number of persons in County Kilkenny in receipt of farm assist payments in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46891/10]

211. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of farm assist payments in County Wicklow; the number of applications for farm assist payments in County Wicklow currently being processed; the number of persons in County Wicklow in receipt of farm assist payments in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46892/10]

212. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of farm assist payments in County Meath; the number of applications for farm assist payments in County Meath currently being processed; the number of persons in County Meath in receipt of farm assist payments in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46893/10]

213. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons currently in receipt of farm assist payments in County Clare; the number of applications for farm assist payments in County Clare currently being processed; the number of persons in County Clare in receipt of farm assist payments in each of the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46894/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): I propose to take Questions Nos. 209 to 213, inclusive, together.

The information requested by the Deputy is contained in the following tabular statement.

Table: Farm Assist by Selected Counties, 2005 to 2010

County	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (October)	Pending Decision (October 2010)
Carlow	57	58	52	56	70	99	7
Clare	354	404	393	417	511	626	22
Kilkenny	117	113	118	112	135	174	8
Meath	52	50	48	57	74	92	16
Wicklow	52	55	54	51	55	75	5

214. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding an application for jobseeker's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Longford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46900/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The person concerned submitted an application for Jobseekers Allowance on 8 November 2010. The payment of Jobseekers Allowance is subject to a means test and in this regard the file was forwarded to a social welfare inspector who conducted a means assessment on 24 November 2010. The inspector's report is

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complete and has been returned to Longford Local Office where a decision will issue to the person concerned this week.

Pension Provisions

215. **Deputy James Bannon** asked the Minister for Social Protection the reason a person (details supplied) in County Longford has been refused a State pension transition; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46904/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The qualifying conditions for State pension (transition) require the applicant to:

- have entered insurable employment before attaining the age of 55 years.
- have at least 260 paid contribution weeks, from employment since entry into insurance.
- satisfy the yearly average condition.

The person concerned applied for State pension (transition) in May 2010. His claim was disallowed on the grounds that he does not satisfy the yearly average condition, as he only has a yearly average of 14 PRSI contributions from the date of his commencement of insurable employment to the end of the last full tax year prior to his 65th birthday. A yearly average of at least 24 would be required to qualify for State pension (transition). Any PRSI contributions in respect of periods of self-employment are specifically excluded from calculations to determine entitlement to State pension (transition), although they can be used to determine entitlement to State pension (contributory). A yearly average of at least 10 would be required to qualify for State pension (contributory) from age 66.

Departmental Expenditure

216. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Social Protection the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008 to date in 2010, inclusive, in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46918/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The following table sets out the Department's expenditure on refreshments for meetings and functions from 2008 to 10 December 2010. This expenditure is included in the Incidental Expenses subhead of the Department's Vote.

Year	Amount
	€
2008	149,786
2009	100,682
up to 10/12/2010	61,812

The type of expenses included beverages, refreshments and lunches for meetings, functions and training courses. Expenditure on each subcategory is not recorded separately on the Department's financial management system.

A listing of suppliers of such goods and services from 2008 to 10 December 2010 are set out in Appendix 1. This schedule does not include instances where employees of the Department have been reimbursed for costs paid by them directly for business related expenditure.

Supplier Name	Address
A Slice of Life	7 Connaught Street, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
Academy Plaza Hotel	10-13 Findlater Place, Off O'Connell St., Dublin 1
Altmore Tea Rooms	2nd Floor, Castle Buildings, Tara Street, Tullamore
Annebrook House Hotel	Austin Friars St, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Anner Hotel	Dublin Road, Thurles, Co Tipperary
Arches Coffee House	Unit 5, Carroll Village, Dundalk, Co Louth
Ballykisteen Hotel	Limerick Junction, Co Tipperary
Berman & Wallace Ltd	Belfield Office Park, Clonskeagh, Dublin 14
Betelnut Café	Mermaid Arts Centre, Main Street, Bray, Co. Wicklow
Bewleys Coffee Ltd	Northern Cross, Malahide Road, Dublin 17
Bloomfield House Hotel	Mullingar, Co Westmeath
Blue Mountains Café	185 Townsend St, Dublin 2
Bon Appetit	Malahide, Co Dublin
Brambles Deli Café	Unit C4, South City Business Pk, Tallaght, Dublin 24
Brannigan's Bar	9 Cathedral St, Dublin 1
BWG Foods Limited	Finiskin Road, Sligo
Cafe Gusto	3 Washington Street, Cork
Cafe Riva	Unit 7, 17 Northwest Business Park, Ballycoolin, Dublin 15.
Cahill's	6 Ballintemple, Cork City, Co Cork
Campbell Catering Ltd.	Northern Cross, Malahide Road, Dublin 17
Cassidys Hotel	Cavendish Row, Upper O'Connell St, Dublin 1
Cater Hire Ireland	Unit 9, Stillorgan Industrial Park, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.
Clarence Hotel	6- 8 Wellington Quay, Dublin 2
Coach Lane Restaurant	1-2 Lord Edward St., Sligo
College Delicatessen	185 Townsend Street, Dublin 2
Common Purpose Irl Ltd Cork	Albert Quay Hse, Albert Quay, Cork
Competition Press	54 Sandymount Ave, Dublin 4
Conaty's Catering	116A Lwr. Kilmacud Rd., Stillorgan, Co. Dublin
Conlon's Food Hall	14 Church Street, Dundalk, Co. Louth
Conrad Hotel, Dublin	Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2
Context	Oranmore, Co. Galway
CORI-Justice Office	Bloomfield Ave, Off Morehampton Rd, Donnybrook, Dublin 4
Corporate Express (Irl) Ltd	Liosban Retail Centre, Tuam Rd, Galway
Cosgroves Centra Supermarket	Maugheraboy Road, Sligo
Crowne Plaza Hotel	Dublin Airport
Crumbs Sandwich Bar	5 Bridge St, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim
Supplier Name	Address
Cruzzo Restaurant	Marina Village, Malahide, Co. Dublin
Donegal Catering Equipment	Coneyburrow Road, Lifford, Co Donegal
Elaine Maguire	c/o Canteen Con Colbert House, Kilmainham, Dublin 8
ELY CHQ	22 Ely Place, Custom House Quay, Dublin 1
Fairways Hotel & Conference Centre	Dublin Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth
Federation of Irish Societies	London
Floridita Restaurant	Dublin

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Supplier Name	Address
Food Solutions Ltd.	Coes Rd, Dundalk, Co. Louth
G. Elliott & Sons Ltd.	4/10 Camden Row, Dublin 8
Gallaghers Hotel	100 Main St, Letterkenny, Co Donegal
Gemma's Farmhouse Kitchen	c/o Dept. Of Agriculture, Old Abbeyleix Road, Portlaoise, Laois
Grand Hotel	Malahide, Co. Dublin
Harbourmaster Bar	Custom House Quay, Dublin 1
Harvey's Point — Restaurant & Country Hotel	Lough Eske, Donegal Town, Donegal
Headfort Arms Hotel,	Kells, Co. Meath
Hibernian Fine Foods Ltd	Hibernian Court, Longford
Hilton Dublin Airport	Northern Cross, Malahide Rd, Dublin 17
Hochtief Facility Management	Landscape House, Landscape Road, Churchtown, Dublin 14
Hugh Jordan & Co Ltd	Unit 4, Airways Ind. Est., Santry, Dublin 17
Ice House	Ballina, Co Mayo
Il Vignardo Restaurant	Store Street, Dublin 1
International Centre for Local & Regional Dev.	Eimear Donnelly, 39 Abbey St, Armagh BT61 7EB
Irish Taxation Institute	1st Flr, South Block, Longboat Quay, Grand Canal Harbour, Dublin 2
Jacobs Ladder	4 Nassau Street, Dublin 2
Knights Catering	5 Upper O'Connell St., Dublin 1
L.S. Catering Ltd	5 Upper O'Connell St., Dublin 1
Life Café Bar	Dublin
Linda Bowan	c/o Canteen, DSFA, St Oliver Plunkett Rd, Letterkenny, Co Donegal
Londis	Convenience Store, 8 Drumfinn Pk, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Longford Arms Hotel	Main Street, Longford
Lord Bagenal Inn	Main Street, Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow
Lough Rynn Castle Ltd	Lough Rynn, Mohill, Co Leitrim
Lydon House Catering Ltd	3 Buttermilk Walk, Middle Street, Galway
Mac Torcaills	15 Townsend St., Dublin 2
Maldron Hotel	Oranmore, Galway
McCabes Delicatessen	37 Tara Street, Dublin 2
McCambridges	38 Shop St., Galway
Supplier Name	Address
Mona Lisa	Dublin 2
Ms. Amanda Gill	8 Taobh An Sruthain, Buncrana, Co. Donegal
Munchies	Millennium Walk, Dublin 1
Newgrange Hotel	Bridge St., Navan, Co Meath
Norton Group	Unit 3B, Airport Business Park, Cloghran, Co. Dublin
O'Briens (Fine Wines)	Unit 33, Spruce Avenue, Stillorgan Industrial Estate, Co. Dublin
O'Briens Irish Sandwich Bar	Tara St., Dublin 2
O'Callaghan Davenport Hotel	Hospitality House, 16-20 South Cumberland St, Dublin 2
Phresh Coffee Shop	Poolbeg, St. Dublin 2
Plaza Hotel	Tallaght, Co. Dublin
Quinsworth & Tesco	Sligo
Radisson Hotel	Paddy Harte Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal
Radisson SAS Farnham Est. Hotel	Farnham Estate, Cavan
Regent Catering Facility	River Cottage, Umberstown Little, Trim, Co Meath
Roasted Bean Coffee Co	53 Talbot St, Dublin 1

Supplier Name	Address
Robert Reades	19 Store Street, Dublin 1
Sally Ann Luykx	Private Caterer, 43 North Strand Road, Dublin 3
Sligo Park Hotel.	Pearse Road, Sligo
Temple Bar Hotel	Fleet St., Dublin 2
The Bush Hotel	Carrick on Shannon, Co Leitrim
The D Hotel	Scotch Hall, Marsh Rd, Drogheda, Co. Louth
The French Paradox	Dublin 4
The Glasshouse	Swan Point, Sligo
The Gresham Metropole	Mac Curtain Street, Cork
The Harbourmaster Bar	Dublin 2
The Landmark Hotel	Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim
The Pig & Heifer	6 Guild Court, Amiens Street, Dublin 1
The Pitstop Café	Northside Civic Centre, Bunratty Road, Coolock, Dublin 17
The Spiced Bean Café	Mary St, Mullingar, Co Westmeath
The Westin Hotel	College Green, Westmoreland Street, Dublin 2
Tipperary Water	16 Cherry Orchard Estate, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Toni's Bistro	Main St, Donegal Town, Co. Donegal
Trinity Capital Hotel	Pearse Street, Dublin 2
Value Centre Cash & Carry	Finiskin Road, Sligo
Wynn's Hotel	35-39 Lr Abbey Street, Dublin 1

Question No. 217 withdrawn.

Medical Aids and Appliances

218. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Kildare is entitled to medical appliance benefit in their own right or that of their spouse; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46942/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The medical appliance benefit scheme is a scheme under which qualified customers may reclaim part of the cost of the purchase or repair of a hearing aid. Eligibility is based on PRSI contributions.

Only PRSI classes A, E, H, and P are reckonable for eligibility for this benefit. Neither the person concerned nor her spouse have sufficient qualifying PRSI contributions paid. They have most recently paid Class S (self-employed) contributions, which do not count towards qualifying for this benefit. Therefore neither person is qualified.

Unemployment Statistics

219. **Deputy Arthur Morgan** asked the Minister for Social Protection the number of persons in long-term unemployment on a county basis in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46955/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The total number of persons on the Live Register at the end of November 2010 was 425,002, of which 150,327 were classified as having been unemployed for over one year. A breakdown of the 150,327 by county is contained in the tabular statement.

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The number of persons in long-term unemployment at end November 2010.

County	> 1 year
Carlow	2,361
Cavan	2,773
Clare	3,960
Cork	14,153
Donegal	8,031
Dublin	35,676
Galway	8,351
Kerry	5,185
Kildare	5,572
Kilkenny	2,566
Laois	2,944
Leitrim	1,304
Limerick	7,402
Longford	2,170
Louth	6,230
Mayo	4,608
Meath	3,283
Monaghan	2,217
Offaly	3,166
Roscommon	1,352
Sligo	1,803
Tipperary North	2,134
Tipperary South	3,064
Waterford	5,315
Westmeath	3,546
Wexford	6,810
Wicklow	4,351
Grand Total	150,327

Social Welfare Benefits

220. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will reinstate supplementary welfare payment for a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46970/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Health Service Executive (HSE) has advised that rent supplement is not payable to the person concerned as she has refused three offers of accommodation provided by a housing authority.

Social Welfare Appeals

221. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection when an appeal will be heard in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [46974/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Payment of illness benefit, to the person concerned, was disallowed by a Deciding Officer following an examination by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that she was capable of work.

An appeal was opened on 20 November 2010 and the Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that, in accordance with statutory requirements, the Department was asked for the documentation in the case and the Deciding Officer's comments on the grounds of the appeal. In that context, an examination by another Medical Assessor will be carried out. The person concerned will be notified when arrangements for the examination have been completed.

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

Social Welfare Code

222. **Deputy Beverley Flynn** asked the Minister for Social Protection if a person (details supplied) in County Mayo meets the social welfare criteria for a place on a rural social scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46979/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): As the Deputy will be aware, the Rural Social Scheme (RSS) provides supplementary income to certain categories of low income farming and fishing families. The Scheme is operated by my Department and managed at local level by the Local Development Companies in rural areas and Údarás na Gaeltachta in the Gaeltacht.

The person referred to has made an application to participate on the RSS and is currently receiving a qualifying payment. Decisions with regard to the placement of Participants and projects undertaken in the Achill area rests with Údarás na Gaeltachta who will be able to advise the person further.

223. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the case of person (details supplied) in County Westmeath who has been turned down for a mortgage subsidy. [46987/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Mortgage interest supplement is subject to a means test which is normally calculated to ensure that, after payment of rent or mortgage interest, an eligible person has income equal to the rate of basic supplementary welfare allowance appropriate to their family circumstances, less a minimum contribution, currently €24, which each recipient is required to pay from his or her own resources.

The Health Service Executive has advised that there is no entitlement to mortgage interest supplement in this case as the weekly mortgage interest payable by the person concerned of €23.80 is less than the weekly minimum contribution of €24 that applicants are obliged to pay from their own resources.

Pension Provisions

224. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection the way a rate of contributory pension was calculated in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Mayo. [46991/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The qualifying conditions for State pension (contributory) require the applicant to

- have entered insurable employment before attaining the age of 56 years.
- have at least 260 paid contribution weeks, from employment or self-employment, since entry into insurance.
- satisfy the yearly average condition.

The person concerned satisfies the above conditions and has a total of 628 reckonable (paid and credited) PRSI contributions. When this total is divided by 47 (the number of years from date of entry into insurance to the end of the last tax year prior to reaching age 66), this gives a yearly average of 13 contributions, and entitles her to a reduced State pension (contributory) of €115.20 (50% of the maximum rate).

As the spouse of the person concerned is currently in receipt of an increase for qualified adult (IQA) of €130.10 per week in his jobseeker's allowance in respect of her, it was considered more financially beneficial to reject the claim for State pension (contributory) in favour of continued IQA payment at the higher rate.

Departmental Appointments

225. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47006/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The three statutory bodies operating under the aegis of the Department are the Social Welfare Tribunal, the Citizens Information Board and the Pensions Board. In addition, the Pensions Ombudsman comes under the remit of the Department.

There have been no appointments to any of the above statutory bodies since 22 November 2010 to date.

226. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47021/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The three statutory bodies operating under the aegis of the Department are the Social Welfare Tribunal, the Citizens Information Board and the Pensions Board. In addition, the Pensions Ombudsman comes under the remit of the Department.

The Social Welfare Tribunal

There are no new appointments to the Social Welfare Tribunal scheduled for the period 14 December 2010 to 28 February 2011. The current members of the Tribunal were appointed on the 5 of October 2009 and are not due for renewal until 4 October 2012.

Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board has one vacancy at present. The name of the appointee has yet to be decided.

The Pensions Board

The current term of office of Pensions Board members is due to expire on 20 December 2010 and I am in the process of appointing new members for a period of 5 years as provided for in legislation. There are 17 members of the Pensions Board including the Chairman. All appointments are made by me, of which 9 are on the nomination of certain bodies.

Section 9 of the Pensions Act 1990 as amended and the First Schedule to the Act, provides that the Board shall consist of a Chairman and 16 ordinary members, who shall be appointed to the Board by the Minister. The term of office of the Chairman and the Board Members shall be for a period not exceeding 5 years.

The Pensions Board is a representative body and while all of its members are appointed by the Minister for Social Protection, the Pensions Act provides that of the 16 ordinary members, the Board must comprise representatives of:

- Trade Union Members,
- Employers,
- Occupational Pension Schemes,
- The Actuarial Profession,
- The Accounting Profession,
- The Legal Profession,
- Consumer Interests,
- Pensioner Interests,
- The Minister for Finance, and
- The Minister for Social Protection.

The Minister will, by order, appoint a new Chairman and ordinary members to the Board with effect from 21 December 2010.

Office of the Pensions Ombudsman

There are no appointments due to be made by the Minister in respect of the Office of the Pensions Ombudsman during the period specified.

Social Welfare Benefits

227. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review a decision denying the habitual residence of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47025/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The person concerned was refused jobseeker's allowance on the grounds that she does not satisfy the habitual residence condition. She was advised of this decision and of her right of appeal.

228. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 222 of 30 November 2010, if he will explain where income is coming from for a person (details supplied) in County Mayo in view of the fact this person has not worked since January 2010. [47051/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The information which formed the basis of the means assessment for fuel allowance in this case was taken from the claimant's income from employment for 2009. As the Department has no evidence of cessation of the claimant's employment, and he did not indicate cessation of his employment in his claim form, income for 2010 was taken to be the same as that for 2009, for the purposes of the means assessment.

If the person concerned has ceased employment, he should provide a copy of his P45 to this office at his earliest convenience. His entitlement to fuel allowance will then be re-examined and he will be informed in writing of the outcome without delay.

Question No. 229 withdrawn.

230. **Deputy Seán Sherlock** asked the Minister for Social Protection the position regarding a rent allowance application in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Limerick; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47060/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): In the time frame available, I regret that my Department is not in a position to reply to this question. My Department will be in contact with the Deputy over the coming days and will reply in full to the question raised.

231. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Social Protection if rent allowance will be paid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; if he will expedite a response. [47081/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): In the time frame available, I regret that my Department is not in a position to reply to this question. My Department will be in contact with the Deputy over the coming days and will reply in full to the question raised.

Social Welfare Appeals

232. **Deputy Michael Ring** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 229 of 10 November 2010, when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will be assessed by a medical assessor; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47134/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Payment of disability allowance, to the person concerned, was refused by a Deciding Officer following an assessment by a Medical Assessor of the Department who expressed the opinion that she was medically unsuitable for disability allowance. An appeal was opened and in the context of that appeal, her case was reviewed by a second Medical Assessor who also expressed the opinion that she was medically unsuitable.

I am informed by the Social Welfare Appeals Office that, in the light of this second medical opinion, that office decided to afford her an opportunity of setting out the complete and up to date grounds of her appeal. On receipt of her response the relevant departmental papers will be requested from the Department and the appeal will then be referred to an Appeals Officer for consideration.

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

Social Welfare Code

233. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection further to Parliamentary Question No. 1258 of 29 September 2010, if he will review the rejection of an appeal in respect of a person (details supplied); if he will consider that the appeals officer refers to the close proximity of the separated parents' accommodation while, in reality, they live at opposite sides of the city; if he will consider that where each party has custody for 50% of the time one party is judged to have no obligation to provide accommodation; if he will indicate in cases of joint custody, where rent allowance is paid to one party only, the percentage of cases it is paid to the father only; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47171/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): Supplementary welfare allowance scheme is administered by the Health Service Executive (HSE) on behalf of the Department. Neither I nor my Department has any input into individual decisions.

The HSE has advised that the person concerned was refused a rent supplement on the grounds that his rent was in excess of the limit prescribed for his family circumstances. The HSE has further advised that this decision was upheld by the HSE's designated Appeals Officer and that this decision was subsequently upheld also by the Social Welfare Appeals Office.

As I stated in my previous reply every claim for rent supplement is determined by the HSE having regard to the particular circumstances of the applicant. Any person seeking a rent supplement must first satisfy the Executive that they have a housing need that they are unable to meet from their own resources. In addition, the Executive must be satisfied that the residence is reasonably suited to the residential and other needs of the claimant. In a case where parents have joint custody of a child, the needs of both parents to have adequate accommodation to look after the child are taken into account by the Executive when an application for a rent supplement is being determined.

It is open to the person concerned to apply for rent supplement in respect of accommodation below the prescribed rent limit.

There are no statistics available on the payment of rent supplement in relation to household affected by joint custody orders.

Social Welfare Benefits

234. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Social Protection if he will review the case of a person (details supplied) in County Cork; if he will offset the amount of €1,679.80 from the arrears of disablement benefit on grounds of financial hardship; if he will also reduce to €10 the amount to be deducted to clear the amount overpaid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47198/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): It is the Department's policy to seek recovery of overpayments as soon as possible.

In determining the appropriate rate of recovery of overpayments, the department considers all relevant facts or circumstances including how the overpayment occurred and a person's ability to repay. The department may withhold any arrears due to a customer including arrears due from another scheme or claim.

The person concerned incurred this substantial overpayment amounting to €18,636.20 from 2 January 2003 to 4 May 2005 when he failed to disclose his income from employment, while he was in receipt of One-Parent Family Payment. His local social welfare office wrote to him on 7/7/2005 notifying him of the overpayment and seeking his repayment proposals. In doing so it was suggested that he repay in a single lump sum or monthly instalments of €100 by standing order to the Department.

He chose neither, and from 7 July 2005 to 2010 while he was in employment, he did not repay any part of this overpayment. This is despite the fact that his income from employment was in excess of the average industrial wage.

The person's current weekly entitlement before deductions is:

	€
Disablement Benefit:	45.40
Illness Benefit ($\frac{1}{2}$ Rate):	98.00
One-Parent Family Payment:	285.40
	<hr/>
	428.80

His current actual payments after deductions are:

	€
Disablement Benefit:	25.40
Illness Benefit ($\frac{1}{2}$ Rate):	98.00
One-Parent Family Payment:	275.40
	<hr/>
	398.80

His current payments are €113.40 per week over the supplementary welfare allowance rate for a person of his circumstances.

On this basis, the department has determined that it is appropriate that the lump sum arrears due to him, in the sum of € 1,679.80, in respect of his claim for disablement benefit be offset against the existing overpayment and that he should repay €30 per week. On this basis, if the person remains on a social welfare payment, this overpayment will be recovered in approximately 11 years.

The department may review this repayment plan should his circumstances change.

Social Insurance

235. **Deputy Joan Burton** asked the Minister for Social Protection if, in view of the equalisation of PRSI rates paid by employees and the self-employed as announced in budget 2011, self-employed workers will be entitled to claim jobseeker's benefit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47218/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): In 2011, self-employed workers will be liable for PRSI at the Class S rate of 4% — the same personal rate as is paid by ordinary employees.

However, employers also make a PRSI contribution of 10.75% in respect of their employees, resulting in the payment of a combined 14.75% rate per employee under full-rate PRSI Class A. As a result, ordinary employees can build entitlement towards the full range of social welfare benefits. Class S contributions will continue to provide cover for long-term benefits such as state pension (contributory) and widow's/widower's pension (contributory) only.

PRSI coverage is related to the risks associated with employment or self-employment, the annualised system of contributions for self-employed people and the practicalities of administering and controlling access to short-term payment for self-employed people. A system of separate arrangements for employed and self-employed workers within a social insurance context is common in other European social protection systems.

It may also be noted that the 2005 Actuarial Review of the Social Insurance Fund, found that the fund favours the self-employed over the employed when both employer and employee contributions are included in respect of the employed person. The analysis demonstrates that, despite the fact that they are eligible for a narrower range of benefits, self-employed persons can gain substantially more from the fund than employees.

There are no plans to extend cover for short-term benefits to this group of insured workers. Any such measure would have significant financial implications and would have to be considered in the context of a much more significant rise in the rate of contribution payable.

Social Welfare Appeals

236. **Deputy Jimmy Deenihan** asked the Minister for Social Protection when a decision will issue on an appeal for carer's allowance in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kerry; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47232/10]

Minister for Social Protection (Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív): The Social Welfare Appeals Office has advised me that an appeal by the person concerned was registered in that office on 29 June 2010. 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 back in the Social Welfare Appeals Office on 10 November 2010 and the appeal will be referred 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.

Questions Nos. 237 to 240, inclusive, withdrawn.

Departmental Expenditure

241. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport the amount of money, under each heading, spent by her on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [46920/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): As the Deputy will be aware, I assumed responsibility as Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport earlier this year. The total amount spent on the items in question in the context of ministerial meetings and functions in the 2010 calendar year to date is €577. It is not possible to break down the amounts under the headings listed by the Deputy as this information is not readily available. The refreshments are sourced from various local establishments.

Departmental Appointments

242. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport if she will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if she will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47008/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): I assume that the Deputy is referring to appointments to State boards. In that context, I have made no formal appointments to any state boards under the aegis of my Department since 22 November 2010.

243. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport if she will list all public appointments that she is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47023/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The following table sets out current vacancies and vacancies expected to arise between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011, in agencies under the aegis of my Department.

Body	Current Number of Vacancies	Vacancies expected to arise between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011
National Archives Advisory Council	6	0
Tourism Ireland Ltd	1	0
National Sports Campus Development Authority	1	4
Arts Council	0	5
Abbey Theatre	1	1
Board of Governors and Guardians of the National Gallery of Ireland	2	0
National Museum of Ireland	Up to 6	0

Departmental Funding

244. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport if a grant has been approved for the development of a facility (details supplied) in County Donegal; the amount of funding that has been approved; if part of the grant has been paid; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47047/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The club in question applied for funding under the 2007 and 2008 Sports Capital Programmes. These eligible applications were assessed and received grant funding under the programme of €750,000 in 2007

and €500,000 in 2008. These provisional allocations were made towards the new stadium in Stranorlar. The club was also successful under the 1999 programme and received a grant of €190,461 for Finn Park.

These grant allocations are subject to the terms and conditions of the Programme, which include the execution of a Deed of Covenant and Charge. A Deed provides, inter alia, for a refund of the grant in the event of the facility not continuing to be used for the purpose for which the grant was allocated. The Department's legal adviser, the Chief State Solicitor's Office (CSSO), deals with the grantee's solicitor in executing this Deed. The signed deeds were returned to the CSSO at the start of December for onwards transmission to the Club's solicitor. Once the legalities have been finalised and it is understood that they are almost completed, arrangements for a payment will be made.

245. **Deputy Joe Costello** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport if she will help secure the continued operation of an organisation (details supplied) from their current location; if she will consider purchasing the building as an arts facility; if she has engaged with the National Asset Management Agency in looking at the use of vacant buildings for creative arts projects; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47049/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): Capital funding for arts and cultural projects supported by my Department is primarily provided from the Cultural Development subhead, D5, of Vote 35 of the Revised Estimates Volume.

Under this subhead, capital grants have been awarded for the development of arts and cultural infrastructure throughout the country. Integrated arts centres, theatres, museums, galleries, arts studios and creative and performance spaces have received capital funding. The purchase of buildings is not considered as eligible expenditure under this subhead. A capital grant of €14,000 was provided in 2010 to the Complex Arts Space for stage lighting equipment.

Current funding for organisations such as Complex Arts Space is normally provided by the Arts Council, who are statutorily independent in making funding decisions.

Sports Capital Programme

246. **Deputy Seán Power** asked the Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport the number of successful applications submitted and the amount of funding granted to an organisation (details supplied) under the national lottery sports capital programme; and if she will make a statement on the matter. [47225/10]

Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Deputy Mary Hanafin): The club in question has received six allocations since 1999 totalling €746,185 under the Department's Sports Capital Programme. This funding has been drawn down in full by the grantee.

Waste Management Charges

247. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding old age pensioners and their refuse collection in the past in that when the county councils collected the refuse there was a waiver scheme in operation for OAP's and those on low incomes but now that they are privatised they have to pay the full cost; if there are schemes that they can avail of to assist with such payment; his plans to introduce an allowance like the telephone or electricity allowance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47075/10]

257. **Deputy Billy Timmins** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding old age pensioners and their refuse collection in that in the past when the county councils collected the refuse there was a waiver scheme in operation for OAPs and those on low incomes but now that they are privatised they have to pay the full cost; if there are any schemes that persons can avail of to assist with such payment; his plans to introduce such a grant; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47074/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 247 and 257 together:

Waste management services have traditionally been provided at a local level, with individual arrangements being locally determined and tailored to local circumstances. The present legal framework reflects this. In accordance with section 52 of the Protection of the Environment Act 2003, the determination of waste management charges, and any associated waiver scheme, is a matter for the relevant local authority, where it acts as the service provider. Similarly, where a private operator provides the collection service, it is a matter for that operator to determine charges. Generally speaking, waiver schemes do not operate in respect of privately supplied collection services.

My Department has previously engaged with the Department of Social Protection to explore the issues involved in relation to waivers. These discussions did not identify a role for the social welfare system in providing income support in that regard.

My Department also understands that previous legal advice obtained by a local authority suggests that in an area which is serviced by the private sector the local authority may not provide a waiver in respect of charges for a service which is not directly provided by the local authority. However, a local authority does have discretion itself to provide a waste collection service, including a waiver of some or all of the charges which it may determine, or to procure competitively for a service provider to collect waste on its behalf. The Programme for Government agreed in 2007 signalled a fundamental change of policy in relation to waste management. The Programme's objectives to implement this policy change included a commitment to carry out an international review of waste management plans, practices and procedures and to act on the conclusions. The report, by a group of Irish and international consultants engaged to carry out a major study to underpin the conclusion of the review, was published in November 2009.

In July 2010, I published a Draft Statement of Waste Policy for public consultation as part of the development of a new national waste management policy for the coming decade and beyond. One of its proposals is to make local authorities responsible for collection of household waste. This would provide a framework, through which they, or one or more agents acting on their behalf, would be able to deliver high quality services, while affording operators the economies of scale provided by such an organisation of the market.

Delivery of such a changed market structure would be achieved through a competitive tendering process. This approach would in turn facilitate the delivery of various public service obligations including the provision of waivers for customers of both public and private sectors, ensuring that the cost of such provision is borne in an equitable manner. The public consultation period has now closed and I am currently examining the 77 submissions received with a view to finalising the Waste Policy Statement and bringing it to Government at the earliest opportunity.

Social and Affordable Housing

248. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local

Government the number of persons in Waterford city and county who were allocated social housing in each of the past ten years and to date in 2010; the categories of housing involved; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46873/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): My Department collates and publishes a wide range of housing statistics that inform the preparation and evaluation of housing policy. The full range of data compiled can be viewed on my Department's website, www.environ.ie, where data on First Time Lettings by local authorities (up to 2006) and on Casual Vacancies (to 2009) are displayed.

Local Authority Funding

249. **Deputy Frank Feighan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if the local authority budget for County Roscommon and County Leitrim will remain at the same level as in 2010. [46875/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Under the terms of the Local Government Act 2001, it is in the first instance a matter for each local authority to prepare and adopt a balanced annual budget for the coming year.

Local authorities are required to adopt budgets which are sufficient to meet the expenditure arising in the year in accordance with the terms of section 10A of the City and County Management Act 1955, as inserted in that Act by section 113 of the Local Government Act 2001. General-Purpose Grants are the contribution that my Department makes to local authorities to meet the gap between the cost to them of providing a reasonable level of day-to-day services and the income they obtain from other sources. A total of €790m in General-Purpose Grants will be provided to local authorities from the Local Government Fund for 2011. These grants are allocated having regard to a range of factors including the overall funding available for the grants, the cost to each local authority of providing its services, the income available to each local authority from local sources and specific grants, and the need to ensure that each local authority receives a baseline allocation that will provide financial stability.

I am satisfied that the general purpose allocations I have provided for 2011, together with the income available from other sources, will enable Roscommon and Leitrim County Councils to provide a reasonable level of service to their customers.

Departmental Expenditure

250. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46913/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The information requested is being compiled and will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Election Management System

251. **Deputy Finian McGrath** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the reason one million Irish citizens abroad are not allowed to vote in the next general election. [46959/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): In order to be able to vote at elections and referenda in this jurisdiction, a person's name must be entered in the register of electors for a constituency in the State in which the person ordinarily resides.

Postal voting is provided for in electoral law in respect of certain categories of person who are entered in the register of electors. The Electoral Act 1992 provides for postal voting by whole-time members of the Defence Forces, members of the Garda Síochána, and Irish diplomats serving abroad and their spouses. Subsequent legislation enacted by the Oireachtas has extended postal voting to other categories: electors living at home who are unable to vote because of a physical illness or a physical disability (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1996); electors whose occupation, service or employment makes it likely that they will be unable to vote in person at their local polling station on polling day and full-time students registered at their home who are living elsewhere while attending an educational institution in the State — in these cases, the law provides for completion of the necessary voting documentation at a Garda station (the Electoral Act 1997); certain election staff employed at the poll outside the constituency where they reside (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001); and electors who because of the circumstances of their detention in prison pursuant to an order of a court are likely to be unable to go in person on polling day to vote (the Electoral (Amendment) Act 2006).

While electoral law is subject to ongoing review I have no proposals at present to alter existing arrangements for postal voting.

Environmental Policy

252. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding the Government's policy of green procurement; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46972/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): My Department, in close consultation with the National Public Procurement Policy Unit of the Department of Finance and the National Procurement Service in the Office of Public Works, is in the process of finalising Ireland's first National Action Plan on Green Public Procurement. The provisions of this National Action Plan will apply to procurement officers across the entire public sector. Seven priority areas will be identified in the National Action Plan — construction; transport; energy; food and catering services; paper; textiles; and cleaning products and services. Other areas are likely to be identified as implementation of the Plan progresses. It is intended to finalise and publish the Plan early in 2011.

Special Areas of Conservation

253. **Deputy Mary O'Rourke** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will arrange to have the work expedited on a project (details supplied). [46988/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The proposed works to which the Question refers are within a candidate Special Area of Conservation and are therefore subject to the requirements of the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1997 to 2005. They involve the removal of trees that form part of a priority habitat type — alluvial woodland — for which the site is designated for protection. Any such works are required by EU and national transposing law to comply with Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, which includes a detailed examination of the potential impacts of such

proposed works. My Department is in discussion with the Office of Public Works in relation to the steps to be taken in this regard, and is seeking to have the issue brought to a conclusion as soon as possible.

Departmental Appointments

254. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a reappointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47001/10]

255. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47016/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I propose to take Questions Nos. 254 and 255 together.

The following table sets out relevant information in respect of all persons appointed to the state boards under the aegis of my Department since 22 November 2010 and vacancies due to arise between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011.

Day to day operational matters, including travel and subsistence allowances for officials, board members or directors of the agencies under the aegis of my Department, are a matter for the agency or body concerned and my Department does not routinely collect information in this regard.

The agencies have been reminded of the ongoing requirement to adhere to Department of Finance guidelines concerning travel, subsistence and associated expenses. The Government decision to reduce travel and subsistence rates has been brought to their attention and they were instructed to implement the reduced rates with effect from 5 March 2009.

The boards of An Bord Pleanála and the Environmental Protection Agency are executive in nature and the members are full-time salaried positions.

Name of State Body/Board	Public appointments since 22 November 2010	Term of Office	Method of Selection	Fees Per Annum	Re-appointment or New Appointment	Vacancies arising from 14 December 2010 to 28 February 2011
An Bord Pleanála				€		1 Ordinary Board member & 1 Deputy Chairperson
Comhar Sustainable Development Council						Chair of COMHAR
Dublin Docklands Development Authority	Dr. Berna Grist	7 December 2010 to 30 April 2012	Appointed as an ordinary Director to the Executive Board by the Minister under Section 17(3) of the DDDA Act 1997	11,970	New Appointment	
Dublin Docklands Development Authority — Council	Eamonn O'Reilly	7 December 2010 to 30 April 2012	Nominated by the Dublin Port Authority under Section 16(6)e of the DDDA Act 1997	Nil	New Appointment	
The Heritage Council	Caro-lyne Ferris	Five year period (effective from the 31st October, 2010)	Ministerial appointment	5,985	Re-appointment	The Minister may appoint up to a maximum of 6 additional members in order to bring the membership of the Council to the maximum of 17 permitted under the Heritage Act 1995
	Brendan Dunford			5,985		
	Mary Keenan			5,985		
	Gabriel Cooney			Nil		
Housing Finance Agency						1

Name of State Body/Board	Public appointments since 22 November 2010	Term of Office	Method of Selection	Fees Per Annum	Re-appointment or New Appointment	Vacancies arising from 14 December 2010 to 28 February 2011
Private Residential Tenancies Board	Conn Murray	1 December 2010 to 30 November 2014	Ministerial appointment representing City and County Managers	€ Nil	New Appointment	
	Joe Meehan	1 December 2010 to 30 November 2014	Ministerial appointment representing the Department of Social Protection	Nil	New Appointment	
Radiological Protection Institute of Ireland (RPII)						2
National Building Agency	Rich Howlin	In each case 1 year from 1 January 2011	Ministerial appointment	11,970	Re-Appointment	
	Eddie Lewis			Nil	Re-Appointment	
	John O'Connor			Nil	New Appointment	
	Marie McLaughlin			Nil	New Appointment	
	John McCloskey			7,695	Re-Appointment	
	Peter Carey			Nil	New Appointment	
	Ann McGuinness			7,695	New Appointment	
	Gordon Richards			Nil	Re-Appointment	
Housing and Sustainable Communities Ltd*	Marie McLaughlin	In each case 30 November 2010 until the formal establishment of Housing and Sustainable Communities Agency, which is likely to be late 2011.	Ministerial appointment	Nil	New Appointment	
	John McCloskey			Nil	New Appointment	
	Peter Carey			Nil	New Appointment	
	Ann McGuinness			Nil	New Appointment	

*Housing and Sustainable Communities Ltd was formed as a Private Single Member company subsidiary of the National Building Agency. It undertakes functions in relation to management of land arising as a result of the land aggregation scheme and leasing. The Board of "Housing and Sustainable Communities Ltd" will be paid a fee as part of their directorship of the National Building Agency from 1 January 2011 (the board is the same for the NBA and only get paid one fee).

Planning Issues

256. **Deputy Brian O'Shea** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding the review of the retail planning guidelines; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47063/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Ciarán Cuffe): I refer to the reply to Question No. 17 of 25 November 2010. My Department is currently reviewing the Retail Planning Guidelines which were originally published in 2001 and updated in 2005.

An Issues Paper, which set out high-level and strategic issues for retail planning, was published in June 2010 to provide an opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to assist in identifying key issues to be considered in the context of preparing and drafting revised guidelines. Almost 200 submissions were received through this consultation process and the issues raised in these submissions are currently being examined in drafting the updated guidelines.

It is intended that revised draft guidelines will be published for public consultation early next year, thus affording stakeholders and interested parties a further opportunity to input into the policy formulation process before the statutory guidelines are finalised later in 2011. In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding on Specific Economic Policy Conditionality between Ireland and the EU/IMF, the review is also addressing the issue of the cap on retail floor space contained in the current guidelines.

Question No. 257 answered with Question No. 247.

Departmental Correspondence

258. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he has received representations in respect of a matter (details supplied); if, on foot of these representations, he has made any further representations to Departments or agencies; if he will detail each such communication and the response received; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47096/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): I received correspondence from the promoters of the project referred to in the question on 28 January 2010. Further correspondence on the matter was received from Wicklow County Council on 3 November 2010.

I wrote to the Minister for Transport on 4 May 2010, setting out my understanding of the transport issues related to the proposed development and sought his assistance in facilitating further dialogue between the National Roads Authority and Wicklow County Council on these issues. I received no response from the Minister for Transport on the matter.

Turbury Rights

259. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the provision made in the 2011 Estimate to compensate turf cutters; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47129/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): As set out in the reply to Question no. 11 on 25 November 2010, I intend to revert to Government shortly regarding the arrangements for those who have been affected by the requirement to cease turf cutting on protected raised bogs. The provision of compensation will be considered

in that context, having regard to the overall resources available to my Department from the Exchequer and the Environment Fund.

Local Authority Staff

260. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the salary of each county manager by local authority; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47131/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): Salaries of City and County Managers are set out in the City and County Managers (Remuneration) (No.2) Order 2010. The salaries for City and County Managers are set out in the table.

Local Authority Manager	Salary
	€
Dublin City Council	189,301
Cork County Council	162,062
Fingal County Council	
South Dublin County Council	
Cork City Council	153,260
Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	
Kildare County Council	
Meath County Council	
Limerick City Council	142,469
Clare County Council	
Donegal County Council	
Galway County Council	
Kerry County Council	
Kilkenny County Council	
Limerick County Council	
Louth County Council	
Mayo County Council	
South Tipperary County Council	
Westmeath County Council	
Wexford County Council	
Wicklow County Council	
Galway City Council	132,511
Waterford City Council	
Carlow County Council	
Cavan County Council	
Laois County Council	
Leitrim County Council	
Longford County Council	
Monaghan County Council	
Offaly County Council	
Roscommon County Council	
Sligo County Council	
North Tipperary County Council	
Waterford County Council	

Local Authority Funding

261. **Deputy Jan O’Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the amount of money that has been allocated in 2010 to Limerick City Council, Limerick County Council and Clare County Council to provide houses for persons who are moving from regeneration areas; the amount that has been spent by each local authority for this purpose; if there is an upper limit on the sum to be paid for any individual house; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47161/10]

Minister of State at the Department of the Environment; Heritage and Local Government (Deputy Michael Finneran): Under the Limerick Regeneration Programme there is a commitment to provide replacement housing for those individuals and households where the properties they currently occupy are scheduled for demolition in the short to medium term or where the individual or household has expressed a wish to move elsewhere within the regeneration areas, or where the acquisition of the property by Limerick City Council will promote the sustainable communities objectives and address issues relating to anti-social behaviour or criminality. In these situations, Limerick City Council, in partnership with the Limerick Regeneration Agencies, may offer replacement housing within the regeneration areas or within the City Council area, and, subject to compliance with an agreed protocol with Limerick County Council and Clare County Council, within the administrative areas of Limerick County and Clare County Councils.

As part of the overall allocation of €35 million for Limerick Regeneration in 2010, the following allocations were made for the purposes of relocating households to facilitate regeneration:

	Allocation 2010	Claimed to Date
	€ million	€ million
Limerick City Council	10.15	5.80
Limerick County Council	3.50	3.55
Clare County Council	0.50	0.35
Total	14.15	9.70

Only a proportion of the relocations facilitated by Limerick City Council actually involve the movement of individuals or households outside of the regeneration areas with many opting to remain in Moyross, Southill, Ballinacurra Weston and St. Mary’s Park. Of the €5.8 million recouped to date to Limerick City Council, €3.94 million related to relocations outside of these areas.

In terms of the cost of acquiring properties, all acquisitions are subject to a regional acquisitions threshold and an independent valuation. Details of the cost thresholds for the relevant local authorities are set out in the following table:

	Benchmark Threshold	Upper Threshold
	€	€
Limerick City Council	224,000	244,000
Limerick County Council (City Environs)	224,000	244,000
Limerick County Council	184,000	204,000
Clare County Council	184,000	204,000

Motor Taxation

262. **Deputy Thomas P. Broughan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if he will provide a breakdown of motor tax receipts by each CO₂ category and engine size category for 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47186/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley): The information requested is set out in the tables.

Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private Standard in 2008 by Engine CC.

Engine CC	Total
not over 1,000	28,572,674
1,001 to 1,100	2,374,754
1,101 to 1,200	34,353,318
1,201 to 1,300	48,518,291
1,301 to 1,400	174,460,779
1,401 to 1,500	24,097,023
1,501 to 1,600	134,598,264
1,601 to 1,700	3,664,703
1,701 to 1,800	69,288,551
1,801 to 1,900	81,163,826
1,901 to 2,000	126,776,918
2,001 to 2,100	511,471
2,101 to 2,200	20,996,326
2,201 to 2,300	6,689,736
2,301 to 2,400	4,406,952
2,401 to 2,500	23,798,235
2,501 to 2,600	2,296,210
2,601 to 2,700	5,553,074
2,701 to 2,800	6,449,561
2,801 to 2,900	1,429,904
2,901 to 3,000	28,491,563
3,001 or more	23,543,955
Total	852,036,088

Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private CO₂ in 2008 by Band.

CO ₂ Band	Total
A	368,999
B	3,186,985
C	3,435,052
D	1,571,545
E	1,021,219
F	634,512
G	64,064
Total	10,282,376

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Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private Standard in 2009 by Engine CC.

Engine CC	Total
not over 1,000	27,165,763
1,001 to 1,100	2,143,283
1,101 to 1,200	32,042,014
1,201 to 1,300	44,689,520
1,301 to 1,400	169,724,019
1,401 to 1,500	22,949,126
1,501 to 1,600	133,621,526
1,601 to 1,700	3,389,735
1,701 to 1,800	67,142,744
1,801 to 1,900	82,988,447
1,901 to 2,000	127,705,985
2,001 to 2,100	486,124
2,101 to 2,200	20,955,236
2,201 to 2,300	6,827,757
2,301 to 2,400	4,304,336
2,401 to 2,500	22,943,683
2,501 to 2,600	2,267,499
2,601 to 2,700	5,737,108
2,701 to 2,800	6,414,289
2,801 to 2,900	1,142,923
2,901 to 3,000	28,306,956
3,001 or more	22,546,205
Total	835,494,278

Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private CO₂ in 2009 by Band.

CO ₂ Band	Total
A	1,441,301
B	10,225,842
C	11,250,677
D	6,637,357
E	4,221,404
F	2,643,443
G	530,622
Total	36,950,646

Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private Standard in 2010 (Jan to Nov) by Engine CC.

Engine CC	Total
not over 1,000	23,681,073
1,001 to 1,100	1,820,372
1,101 to 1,200	27,708,420
1,201 to 1,300	37,998,618
1,301 to 1,400	148,870,577
1,401 to 1,500	20,410,910
1,501 to 1,600	118,302,963
1,601 to 1,700	2,995,620
1,701 to 1,800	59,010,807
1,801 to 1,900	75,925,389
1,901 to 2,000	114,110,049
2,001 to 2,100	406,911
2,101 to 2,200	18,823,184
2,201 to 2,300	6,204,516
2,301 to 2,400	3,732,043
2,401 to 2,500	20,053,896
2,501 to 2,600	1,991,469
2,601 to 2,700	5,015,573
2,701 to 2,800	5,719,893
2,801 to 2,900	804,195
2,901 to 3,000	24,655,550
3,001 or more	19,040,001
Total	737,282,029

Breakdown of Motor Tax Receipts for Vehicles taxed as Private CO₂ in 2010 (Jan to Nov) by Band.

CO ₂ Band	Total
A	4,597,285
B	15,996,620
C	14,465,775
D	8,946,758
E	5,222,695
F	3,443,319
G	1,005,550
Total	53,678,002

Environmental Policy

263. **Deputy Joanna Tuffy** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government the position regarding moneys contributed to the Global Climate Change Alliance; the person to whom this money will be allocated and the amount of same; the projects on which the money will be spent; the way the moneys will be administered; the oversight of the expenditure of the moneys that will take place; if overseas aid will play any role in relation to the expenditure; the amount of moneys in total that Ireland has committed itself to pay to

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the Global Climate Change Alliance in addition to the contribution; the dates on which we agreed we have to pay our contribution; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

[47278/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

Following approval by Dáil Éireann, my Department is in the process of finalising arrangements to make the fast start finance contribution of €23 million which was the subject of the supplementary estimate debate at the Select Committee on the Environment, Heritage and Local Government on 9 December 2010. As indicated in my statement on the supplementary estimate, the contribution will be made through the Global Climate Change Alliance established and operated by the European Commission. The contribution, once transferred to the Commission, will be used together with other EU funding provided through the Alliance, in accordance with the main objectives which I set out in my statement. Administrative and oversight arrangements are elements of the ongoing discussions between my Department and the European Commission.

The contribution is additional to overseas development assistance. However, it is positive that the Alliance is already active in a number of Ireland's priority overseas development assistance (ODA) countries. My preference, which is being pursued in the discussions with the Commission, would be to target our contribution to support adaptation in one or a number of our priority ODA countries.

The fast start finance package was a positive outcome at the Copenhagen climate conference in 2009, and I am pleased that the outcome of the recent Cancún climate conference shows welcome signs of progress in rebuilding trust between the Parties and moving the process forward.

The developed country Parties who associated with the Copenhagen Accord (including the EU and all Member States) agreed to provide the fast start finance package for developing countries over the three years 2010 to 2012. Ireland's commitment made at Copenhagen is for a €100 million contribution over the three year period. The practical arrangements for making the actual contributions are a matter for each of the developed countries supporting the package.

I cannot over-emphasise the responsibility that rests on developed countries to strengthen and progress the international negotiations by honouring the fast-start-funding commitment in the Copenhagen Accord. The proposed contribution through the Global Climate Change Alliance is a very positive step for Ireland, both in helping developing countries deal with climate change and in supporting the ongoing international effort to find agreement on an effective global response.

Wildlife Protection

264. **Deputy Maureen O'Sullivan** asked the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government if, in view of the position taken by National Parks and Wildlife Service to ban the hunting and shooting of wild birds because of the severe weather, he will consider a similar ban on the hunting of mammals such as fox, hare, deer and so on. [47299/10]

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (Deputy John Gormley):

Due to the recent severe weather conditions I decided to introduce a temporary closure of the hunting season for wild birds for the period from 8 December, 2010. This temporary closure ends tonight (14 December).

I have no powers to control the hunting of foxes as they are not a protected species under the Wildlife Acts. I did not consider it necessary to ban the hunting of deer or hares or other animals protected under the Wildlife Acts. I am aware that some of the hunting bodies brought in voluntary hunting bans for deer for their members and I appreciate their efforts in this regard. In relation to hares I understand that a number of coursing meetings were postponed during the recent severe weather.

My Department will continue to monitor and review the situation regarding the hunting of wild game on a daily basis as long as the threat of very cold weather persists.

Departmental Expenditure

265. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46908/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I can inform the Deputy that the amount spent in my Department on refreshments for meetings and functions, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 from the Department's catering allocation, is as set it in the table below.

There has been an ongoing review of spending and value for money analysis across the administrative budget over the last three years. As the Deputy will see this review has resulted in significant decreases in spending over the period in question.

There is a small additional spend on refreshments from "programme" allocations in respect of some meetings but this small spend is not disaggregated from the overall spend in these instances.

Period	Amount
	€
2008	42,287.98
2009	26,261.00
Jan–Sept 2010	9,154.91
Total	77,703.89

Telecommunications Services

266. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if his attention has been drawn to the fact that the draft code of practice from premium rate phone services as published by ComReg has no provision for refunds unlike its RegTel predecessor; if his further attention has been drawn to other areas that are not covered by this new draft code of practice that were previously covered by RegTel; his views on these changes; if he has been alerted to instances where companies are in breach of RegTel's code of practice but have not been investigated by ComReg; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46971/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The Communications Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010 transferred the function of regulating premium rate services to Com-

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Reg. Under that Act, ComReg shall make regulations specifying the licence conditions which premium rate service providers must comply with. These conditions will include the basis and circumstances upon which refunds may be made. Section 9 of the Act, also provides that where ComReg finds that a premium rate service provider has not complied with or has breached a condition attached to his or her licence, it shall require the provider to remedy the non-compliance or breach and to refund any charge imposed by the provider on any end user in respect of the premium rate service connected with the non-compliance or breach within a specified time period.

Unlike the previous regulatory regime, which was governed by a non-statutory code of practice, the provisions of the 2010 Act place the regulation of premium rate services and the issue of refunds on a statutory basis, and thus ensure that the users of premium rate services are fully protected in law. As ComReg is independent in its functions, it is a matter for ComReg to determine, following consultation with all stakeholders, whether the code of practice should also include provisions for refunds.

It shall be a condition of a premium rate service licence that any code of practice to be published by ComReg will be complied with. I am confident that ComReg, in consultation with all interested parties, will ensure that its code of practice will include all the necessary provisions that are necessary for the effective regulation of this sector.

Energy Resources

267. **Deputy Liz McManus** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the amount spent on fossil fuel imports for each year 2007, 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; if he will provide a breakdown of total fossil fuel use here across the main sectors; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46973/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The Energy Policy and Statistical Support Unit (EPSSU) of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland gather and publish a wide range of data on energy related matters. This includes detailed data on energy consumption and prices, broken down by sector.

SEAI does not publish official financial estimates due to the inherent difficulties associated with the fact that fuel prices change through time, and different prices are charged for different volumes. Specific data on the amount spent on imports is therefore not available; however it is possible to estimate overall expenditure by the consumer on the basis of an overall price approximation.

Total Primary Energy (and imports)

	2007	2007 (imports)	2008	2008 (Imports)	2009	2009 (imports)
Coal	1,554	1,463*	1,475	1,635	1,214	1,326
Peat	701	0	845	0	856	0
Oil	9,023	9,064	8,964	9,169	7,745	8,081
Gas	4,292	3,924	4,491	4,135	4,309	3,988

All figures expressed in ktoe (kilo tonnes of oil equivalent).

Total Final Consumption (2009)

	€000	%
Total Final Consumption	12,990,074	
Coal	156,161	1%
Peat	200,267	2%
Oil	8,441,917	65%
Gas	735,881	6%
Renewables	77,315	1%
Electricity	3378534	26%
Sectoral Breakdown		
Industry	1,818,727	14%
Transport	6,338,428	49%
Residential	3,152,739	24%
Services	1,404,359	11%
Agriculture	275,821	2%

Telecommunications Services

268. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the arrangements he has made for locations (details supplied) in County Donegal who are not included in the rollout of the national broadband scheme and who are unable to avail of broadband in their areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46989/10]

269. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources when he plans to launch the rural broadband scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46990/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 268 and 269 together.

The provision of telecommunications services, including broadband services, is a matter for private sector service providers operating in a liberalised market regulated by the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg). Broadband services are provided by private service providers over various platforms including DSL (i.e. over telephone lines), fixed wireless, mobile, cable, fibre and satellite.

ComReg's website www.callcosts.ie provides detailed information on the various private sector telecommunications products and services available on a county by county basis, including County Donegal.

Broadband services are now available throughout the entire National Broadband Scheme area and a list of the Electoral Divisions (EDs) covered by the NBS in County Donegal is provided below.

However, despite Government and private investment in broadband, I am aware that there continues to be a small percentage of premises throughout the country that will not be capable of receiving broadband services. This is primarily due to technical and other reasons (suitability of a telephone line, distance from an enabled exchange, no line of sight etc.).

The European Commission has set aside a portion of the European Economic Recovery Programme (EERP) funding for rural broadband initiatives. Using this funding, which will be augmented by an Exchequer contribution, I intend, subject to Government approval, to for-

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mally announce the launch of a Rural Broadband Scheme before the end of this year. This scheme will aim to provide a basic broadband service to individual un-served rural premises outside of the NBS areas. Un-served premises in Crove Upper, Carrick, County Donegal, will be eligible to apply under the scheme.

There will be a competitive process to engage a service provider who will offer a broadband service to qualified applicants under the scheme.

While the exact details have yet to be finalised, I expect that the service offered under this scheme would at least match the service offered under the NBS. This process will be technology neutral — it will be a matter for the bidders to decide which technical approach they propose in their bids.

Information in relation to acceptance of applications and the process of qualification under the scheme will be made available in due course when the scheme is launched.

National Broadband Scheme

Electoral Divisions (ED) Covered by the NBS in County Donegal

ED Name	ED Reference No.
ALTNAPASTE ED	57001
ARAN ED	57003
ARDMALIN ED	57005
ARDS ED	57006
BALLINTRA ED	57007
BALLINTRA ED	57008
BALLYSHANNON URBAN ED	57012
BINBANE ED	57014
CARROWKEEL ED	57025
CARTHAGE ED	57026
CAVANGARDEN ED	57031
CHURCH-HILL ED	57032
CLIFF ED	57033
CLOGHAN ED	57034
CLOGHER ED	57036
CREENASMEAR ED	57043
CREESLOUGH ED	57044
CROVEHY ED	57046
DOE CASTLE ED	57052
DUNAFF ED	57056
DUNLEWY	57060
EANYMORE ED	57061
FANAD NORTH ED	57064
FANAD WEST ED	57065
FEDDYGLASS ED	57066
FINTOWN ED	57068
GARTAN ED	57069
GLEN ED	57070
GLENALLA ED	57071
GLENLEHEEN ED	57076

ED Name	ED Reference No.
GORTAHORK ED	57081
GRAFFY ED	57083
GROUSEHALL ED	57090
KILGOLY ED	57094
KILLYMASNY ED	57099
LAGHY ED	57104
LETTERMACAWARD ED	57108
LOUGH EASK ED	57110
MAAS ED	57112
MALIN ED	57116
MALINBEG ED	57117
MEENACLADY ED	57119
MEENCARGAGH ED	57120
PETTIGOE ED	57126
SEACOR ED	57134
ST JOHNSTOWN ED	57135
TAWNAWULLY ED	57139
TEMPLECARN ED	57140
TEMPLEDOUGLAS ED	57141
TERMON ED	57142
TULLYNAUGHT ED	57146

Departmental Appointments

270. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46996/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I assume that the Deputy is referring to appointments to boards of State bodies under the aegis of my Department.

There has been one new appointment made by me to a State board since 22nd November 2010. This was an appointment to the board of Bord Gáis Éireann on 23rd November 2010 as follows:

Body	Number of new appointments since 22/11/10	Annual amount of fee due	Selection Process	Term
Bord Gáis Éireann	1	€15,750	Ministerial appointment under relevant statute	Up to 5 years

The payment of expenses to directors of boards is a day to day operational matter for each body in line with the relevant Department of Finance guidelines.

271. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47011/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I assume that the Deputy is referring to appointments to boards of State bodies under the aegis of my Department. I can inform the Deputy that the existing vacancies and vacancies that are anticipated will arise are as set out in the table below:

State Body	Total Number of Vacancies (existing and due to arise)
An Post	1
Commission for Communications Regulation (no board — 3 person commission)	1
Digital Hub Development Agency	8
Bord na Móna	4
Electricity Supply Board	6
Irish National Petroleum Corporation Ltd	1
Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	1
Inland Fisheries Ireland	1
The Mining Board	1

Inland Fisheries

272. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number and types of fishing licences issued in County Waterford in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47035/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): Salmon and eel fishing licences are issued by Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) in accordance with the Fisheries Acts 1959 to 2010. I have been informed by IFI that the following number and types of licences have been issued in County Waterford from 2005.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Salmon — Commercial Licences						
Draft	5	5	0	0	2	2
Head Weir	1	1	0	0	0	0
Snap	15	15	0	0	7	7
Drift	162	162	0	0	0	0
Total	183	183	0	0	9	9
Salmon — Angling Licences						
One day	73	121	156	152	100	80
Annual district	232	442	316	313	330	330
Annual national	88	216	58	107	115	107
Annual Juvenile	8	62	219	84	35	39
21 day licence	118	542	310	418	400	316
Eel Fishing Licences						
Basket (baited pot)	16	16	16	16	0	0

Telecommunications Services

273. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the reason a person (details supplied) is being charged for a telephone connection for broadband; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47052/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): The provision of electronic communications networks and services is undertaken by telecommunications service providers who operate in a fully liberalised market. The regulation of telecommunications service providers, including regulatory issues surrounding fixed line and broadband services is the responsibility of the Commission for Communications Regulation (ComReg), in accordance with its functions under the Communications Regulation Act 2002, as amended, and the EU Regulatory Framework for Electronic Communications.

In accordance with Regulation 3(4) of the European Communities (Electronic Communications Networks and Services) (Universal Service and User's Rights) Regulations 2003 (S.I. No. 308 of 2003), ComReg may specify requirements to be complied with by the designated Universal Service Provider (eircom) in relation to the reasonableness of requests for connection at a fixed location to the public telephone network. ComReg currently deem a threshold level of €7,000 on expenditure for connection to the public telephone network at the standard connection charge to be a reasonable and proportionate cost to be borne by the USP. Where connection cost exceeds this threshold, applicants will be offered the option of getting service by paying the excess above the €7,000 limit.

There are, however, a number of platforms for delivery of broadband. Service providers are now offering broadband by fixed wireless, mobile, satellite, cable, fibre or DSL over standard telephone cable across the country. The general area of Broadford, County Clare is covered by the National Broadband Scheme (NBS). The NBS service provider "3" is providing broadband services in all of the designated Electoral Divisions within the NBS area, including in the Broadford area. 3 may be contacted at telephone number 1800944791 regarding the National Broadband Scheme.

Departmental Bodies

274. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources the number of persons, either employees or contractors, in a company (details supplied) who received payments in excess of €250,000 in the years 2009 and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47113/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): RTÉ is an independent national public service broadcaster whose remit and obligations are set out in the Broadcasting Act 2009.

Section 114(1) of the Broadcasting Act, 2009 states the principal objects and associated powers of RTÉ and Section 98 provides that it shall be independent of the pursuance of these objects, subject to the requirements of the Act. As such I, as Minister, have no function in RTÉ's day to day matters such as general staffing levels and salaries.

I do, however, have a role in the appointment of the Director General of RTÉ. Section 89(3) of the Broadcasting Act, 2009 provides that the consent of Government is required before RTÉ appoints or removes the director general or alters his or her remuneration or his or her terms and conditions.

[Deputy Eamon Ryan.]

I can confirm that the remuneration of the Director General of RTÉ was set at €260,726 on 1 June 2009 after a salary reduction of 12.5% was applied to this remuneration. The current salary of the Director General remains at this level.

Departmental Expenditure

275. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure by his Department on petroleum services in 2010; the estimated expenditure of same for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47213/10]

276. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure by his Department on mining services in 2010; the estimated expenditure of same for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47214/10]

277. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure by his Department on geoscience initiatives in 2010; the estimated expenditure of same for 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47215/10]

278. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources if he will provide a detailed breakdown of expenditure by his Department on energy research programmes in 2010; the estimated expenditure of same in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47216/10]

Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (Deputy Eamon Ryan): I propose to take Questions Nos. 275 to 278, inclusive, together.

The following table sets out the 2010 estimate, the 2010 spend to end November and the 2011 estimate as announced in last weeks Budget for the expenditure programmes raised by the Deputy.

While it is likely that there will be some under spend at year end, it is expected that it will be lower than end November spend might suggest as timing issues resolve themselves and increased uptake on some programmes translates into increased expenditure.

Subhead	2010 Estimate	2010 Expenditure*	2011 Estimate
	€000	€000	€000
<i>Energy Research</i>			
House of Tomorrow R&D	305	262	
Renewable Energy R&D	2,013	1,348	
Low Carbon / Passive Housing	1	—	
Ocean Energy	8,105	2,493	
Energy Policy & Statistical Support / Modelling	1,250	959	
Smart metering	750	383	
Micro-generation	489	501	
Renewable Energy Technologies in Fuel & Transport R&D	624	215	
Energy Research Centre	—	—	
Other Energy Research Programmes	800	601	
	14,337	6,762	20,400

Subhead	2010 Estimate	2010 Expenditure*	2011 Estimate
	€000	€000	€000
<i>Petroleum Services</i>			
Funding of Petroleum Scholarships	1	—	
Petroleum Infrastructure Support Group	5,166	—	
Continental Shelf	16	1	
North West Forum	34	—	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	150	77	
	5,367	78	1,367
Mining Services	6,710	469	4,700
Geoscience Initiatives	4,285	800	2,208

* To end November 2010.

Question No. 279 withdrawn.

Grant Payments

280. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive the outstanding amount of grants due to them under the single payment area aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46896/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 10 May 2010. However a number of the land parcels listed on the application required digitisation. An advance payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme issued to the person named on 21 September and an advance payment under Single Payment Scheme issued on 18 October in respect of the clear eligible area. A balancing payment under Single Payment Scheme issued on 1 December based on the clear eligible area.

An official from my Department has made direct contact with the person named in relation to a mapping issue that arose during the processing of the application. The applicant is submitting a map to enable my Department resolve this outstanding query.

Immediately this process is complete, provided no further errors are identified, the application will be processed in full with a view to payments due issuing shortly thereafter.

281. **Deputy Ulick Burke** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Galway will receive their single farm payment; if the necessary adjustments have been made to the digitised maps so that payment can be made to the approved area; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46897/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 14 May 2010.

This application was selected for a Ground Eligibility and Animal Identification Inspection. The inspection process is complete and the results have now been processed.

During the course of the Ground Eligibility inspection discrepancies were found with the following parcels G29626023 and G29637024. Inadequate deductions were made for scrub and

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swamp/bog was found in parcel G29828016. This resulted in the claimed area of 18.77ha being reduced to 11.69ha. As there is an over declaration of over 20% no payment will be made under the Single Payment Scheme/ Disadvantaged Area Scheme for the year in question.

A formal decision issued to the person named on 1 October 2010 that advised him of his right to seek a review of the decision within 21 days to the District Inspector and of his right to appeal the outcome of any such review to the Independent Agriculture Appeals Office.

282. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the delay in issuing payment of single farm payment in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Waterford; if he will ensure that an advance payment is expedited to prevent any financial hardship; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46899/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 17 May 2010. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility and Full Cross Compliance Inspection. The inspection process is complete and the results are now being processed.

Under EU regulations governing the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the Single Payment Scheme all Ground Eligibility Inspections must be completed before any payment can issue to any applicant under either scheme, including those not selected for a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

In the vast majority of cases that were inspected 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. Processing of these changes is continuing with priority being given to applications that were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

Departmental Expenditure

283. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name and the address of the company used to supply the refreshments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46907/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Due to the volume of the information requested by the Deputy, it was not possible to provide it in the required time. I will forward it to the Deputy as soon as it is available.

Grant Payments

284. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an application for the calf welfare scheme will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46926/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named had seven animals for consideration under the 2009 Suckler Welfare Scheme. While payment has already been made in respect of six of these, an error was identified in respect of the remaining animal, which has been notified to the person named. Immediately this matter is satisfactorily resolved, the further payment due will issue.

285. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46933/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 4 May 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

286. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46936/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2010. During the validation of the application, an over-claim was identified in respect of one land parcel. This matter has now been resolved following correspondence between the person named and my Department.

A number of parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation; immediately this process is complete, provided no errors are identified, the application will be further processed.

287. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46937/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 15 May 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly .

288. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46938/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 15 May 2010. The 50% advance payment, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

289. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be processed in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46941/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 17 May 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

290. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) will receive their payment; the reason for the delay in same; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46946/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 10 May 2010. During the processing of the application a number of queries arose, in addition to the necessary re-digitising of a number of parcels. The initial queries were resolved and the re-digitising of parcels completed, thereby allowing payments to issue to the person named on 16 November and 1 December.

However, subsequently another query was highlighted, relating to the eligibility of a number of forestry parcels; this has recently been resolved and, provided no further errors are identified, the outstanding balancing payment due will issue shortly.

Animal Welfare Bodies

291. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the *ex gratia* payments to animal welfare groups will be paid now to ensure that shelters are not forced to close due to shortage of funds during the current cold snap; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46947/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): My Department is currently finalising arrangements to provide *ex gratia* payments to a number of animal welfare bodies and the payments will issue shortly.

Grant Payments

292. **Deputy Denis Naughten** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food further to Parliamentary Question No. 537 of 6 May 2009 the position regarding the recovery of funds; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46952/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Agreement was reached with the company in question for a full and final settlement of €10,000 of the original grant-aid amount of €65,280.

The settlement amount recovered reflected the fact that the equipment was in use for its intended purpose for a significant part of the four year period on restriction on change of use and was not disposed of during the four year period.

Animal Welfare

293. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide emergency funding to the various societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals nationwide or to local authorities to deal with the many starving, abandoned or neglected horses around the country who during the snowy period have virtually no access even to grazing sustenance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46975/10]

294. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the urgently required animal protection and welfare legislation is ready for publication and if it places responsibility for equine welfare firmly with the Department as the current divided role between the Department and local authorities is not working to protect horses; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46976/10]

295. **Deputy Olivia Mitchell** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide emergency funding to local authorities for distribution to the prevention of cruelty to animals nationwide or to deal with the many starving, abandoned or neglected horses around the country who during the snowy period have virtually no access even to grazing sustenance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46977/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): I propose to take Question Nos. 293 to 295, inclusive, together.

I am aware from ongoing communications between officials of my Department and representatives of Local Authorities and Animal Welfare Organisations that there is a continuing risk of abandonment of horses. Horses are usually found straying or abandoned on waste lands/public roads etc and Local Authorities have powers to deal with these issues under the Control of Horses Act 1996. This Act assigns to Local Authorities the primary role for dealing with such horses and it contains provisions on the seizure and detention of stray horses, the confiscation of horses which stray repeatedly and the disposal of seized horses.

In view of the pressure being placed on Local Authorities in dealing with an increasing number of abandoned horses, I have to date this year approved payments of almost €2 million to Local Authorities to assist them in their work under the Control of Horses Act. The issue is not one of funding but on how to bring greater efficiencies to the operation of the Act in dealing with, for example, horses that are found wandering and straying repeatedly. In this respect, officials of my Department are continuing to work with Local Authority representatives on a strategy to improve implementation of the Act throughout the Local Authority areas and will examine those Local Authority areas where the Control of Horses Act has been working particularly well with a view to extending some of the best practices to all areas.

Mindful too of the work carried out by welfare bodies in delivering animal welfare, in December 2009 my Department made ex-gratia payments totalling €1.185m to 112 animal welfare organisations to assist with their work during in 2010. My officials are in regular contact with representatives of welfare bodies, particularly through the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council and they have asked those welfare organisations that have the capacity to deal with larger animals, such as horses, to consider placing greater resources in promoting horse welfare. In July last, in response to my Department's invitation to animal welfare bodies on provision of ex-gratia funding in 2010 a large number of applications were received. Processing of these applications is now being finalised and I expect shortly to be in a position to announce this year's funding to welfare organisations.

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I would like to emphasise that, regardless of the amount of state funding being provided to assist with horse welfare, owners and keepers are ultimately responsible for protecting the welfare of animals in their care. The main legislation in the State governing cruelty to horses is the Protection of Animals Act 1911 and the Protection of Animals (Amendment) Act 1965 which states that any person causing cruelty or unnecessary suffering to any animal shall be guilty of an offence. This legislation is enforced by the Garda Síochána.

As the Deputy is aware, my Department's statutory responsibility extends to the welfare and protection of farmed animals only i.e. animals normally bred or kept for the production of food or for use in or for the purpose of farming. However, the Government recently approved for drafting the Animal Health and Welfare Bill which gives effect to commitments in the Programmes for Government, including the updating of existing animal health and welfare legislation to ensure that the welfare of all animals, including non-farmed animals, is properly protected and penalties for offenders are increased significantly. The Bill provides for my Department to assume responsibility for policy and legislation relating both to the health and welfare of all animals, including non-farmed animals, but it is envisaged that, for practical reasons, operational responsibility will remain with local authorities, the Garda etc, where it is more efficiently discharged. An important provision of the Bill will provide for powers of intervention where an animal is deemed to be at risk. It is also proposed that there will be a specific duty of care on owners/keepers to ensure that the welfare and well-being of animals is adequately protected as well as addressing such issues as the prevention of unnecessary suffering of animals and abandonment of animals.

Grant Payments

296. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their single farm payment. [46984/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2010. The 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 21 September and 18 October 2010 respectively, were on the basis of the land cleared at that stage, as a number of parcels declared required digitising.

Balancing payments under the scheme, would, in normal circumstances, be confined to those whose applications are fully processed, specifically, where all digitising is finalised. However, following recent consultation with the EU Commission, agreement was reached whereby, in addition to issuing balancing payments to those farmers whose applications are fully processed and whose maps are fully digitised, payments will also issue to those farmers where some or all of their maps are still to be digitised, with the payment being calculated on the basis of the digitised land confirmed otherwise eligible.

I am pleased to say that, because of this change, many farmers, including the person named, whose balancing payments would otherwise have been delayed until their digitising is complete, have now received an interim balancing payment; in the case of the person named, the interim balancing payment issued on 1 December. These farmers, including the person named, will receive the final instalment of their balancing payment when their maps are re-digitised and their applications are fully clear.

Departmental Appointments

297. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46995/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The information sought by the Deputy is as follows:

Public Appointments since 22.11.2010	Salary	Expenses or other compensations	Length of tenure	Re-appointment or new appointment	Selection Process for this appointment
	€	€			
Mr Kieran Dunne	11,970	T&S as per Civil service rates	30 Nov 2010 – 29 Nov 2013	Re-appointment	Ministerial decision.
Prof Fergal O’Gara	11,970	T&S as per Civil service rates	2 Dec 2010 – 1 Dec 2013	Appointment	Nominated by Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation under the Acts of An Bord Bia.

298. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47010/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The following list represents the vacancies due to arise during the period referred to by the Deputy for the State Bodies that come within the remit of my Department.

Body	Vacancies between 14 December 2010 to 28 February 2011
Aquaculture Licensing Appeals Board (ALAB)	4
Bord Bia	1
Bord Iascaigh Mhara	1
Coillte Teoranta	1
Horse Racing Ireland	3
Marine Institute	1

Grant Payments

299. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the balance of area aid based payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47045/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on 14 April 2010. The 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme, which issued on 21 September, was on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This

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process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

300. **Deputy Dinny McGinley** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the balance of single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Donegal. [47046/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 14 April 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

301. **Deputy Tom Hayes** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Tipperary; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47050/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 17 May 2010. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility and Full Cross Compliance Inspection. The inspection process is complete and the results are now being processed. Under EU regulations governing the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the Single Payment Scheme all Ground Eligibility Inspections must be completed before any payment can issue to any applicant under either scheme, including those not selected for a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

In the vast majority of cases that were inspected 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. Processing of these changes is continuing with priority being given to applications that were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

302. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) will receive their single farm payment. [47055/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 17 May 2010. A payment under the Single Payment Scheme issued to the person named on 8 December in respect of the clear eligible area, however, some of the land parcels listed on the application required digitisation. This process is now complete and the balancing payment due will issue shortly.

303. **Deputy John McGuinness** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the balance of single farm payment will be paid in respect of a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [47083/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 4 May 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the

further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

304. **Deputy Willie Penrose** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the steps he will take to expedite single farm payment, disadvantaged area scheme and REP scheme payments due to a person (details supplied) in County Westmeath; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47091/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 6 May 2010. The 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 21 September and 18 October 2010 respectively, were on the basis of the land cleared at that stage, as a number of parcels declared required digitising.

Balancing payments under the scheme, would, in normal circumstances, be confined to those whose applications are fully processed, specifically, where all digitising is finalised. However, following recent consultation with the EU Commission, agreement was reached whereby, in addition to issuing balancing payments to those farmers whose applications are fully processed and whose maps are fully digitised, payments will also issue to those farmers where some or all of their maps are still to be digitised, with the payment being calculated on the basis of the digitised land confirmed otherwise eligible.

I am pleased to say that, because of this change, many farmers, including the person named, whose balancing payments would otherwise have been delayed until their digitising is complete, have now received an interim balancing payment; in the case of the person named, the interim balancing payment issued on 1 December. These farmers, including the person named, will receive the final instalment of their balancing payment when their maps are re-digitised and their applications are fully clear. The REPS application of the person named will be processed further immediately as the necessary digitising is completed.

305. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive the balance of their area aid related payment and single farm payment as they have only received payment relevant to nine hectares out of 52 hectares; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47202/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on 29 April 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 5 November, the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, as well as the 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme which issued on 21 September, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

306. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their single farm payment and disadvantaged area aid payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47121/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme / Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 5 May 2010. Following digitising of a parcel declared, an over-claim was revealed, which has since been resolved following correspondence with the person named. Outstanding payments under both Schemes will issue shortly.

307. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their payment under the cow suckler scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47122/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The person named registered 14 animals under the 2009 Suckler Welfare Scheme. While one animal was deemed ineligible, as it was sold before weaning, and a second animal was born as a twin (each Suckler Cow is only paid on once in a scheme year, the twin being therefore not eligible), payment in respect of the remaining 12 animals issued to the person named last week. This represents full payment due to the person named.

Horse Racing Ireland

308. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the pay increases awarded to staff at the Horse Racing Ireland in the years 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the amounts of any increases and the reasons for same; if any pay increases have been awarded to management at the company; the amounts of any such increases and the reasons for same; if any bonuses have been awarded to staff or management at the company in those years; the total amount of any such bonuses and the amounts received by individuals; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47140/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The policy in relation to determining and approving the remuneration of each Chief Executive of each state body under the auspices of my Department is that set out by Government and in Department of Finance guidelines.

The CEO of Horse Racing Ireland was awarded two pay increases of 2.5% in 2008, on 1 March and 1 September. These increases were in accordance with Government guidelines. The CEO subsequently took a voluntary pay reduction of just over 8% in 2010 to give a current salary of €175,200.

The CEO was awarded a bonus of €65,000 in respect of his performance in 2008 and a bonus of €57,000 in respect of his performance in 2009. To date, €43,911 of the 2008 award and €40,539 of the 2009 award has been paid.

Remuneration of other members of staff in Horse Racing Ireland is an operational matter that falls within the remit of the Board.

Departmental Schemes

309. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if new applicants will be facilitated with the agri-environment options scheme; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47155/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): I intend, subject to the constraints of the expenditure ceilings set out in of the National Recovery Plan 2011-2014, to re-open AEOS in 2011 for up to 10,000 participants with a maximum payment level of

€5,000. Entry into the scheme will be open to farmers who were participants in REPS in the past or to those who wish to participate in an agri-environment scheme for the first time.

Grant Payments

310. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47156/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 22 April 2010. During the validation of the application, an over-claim was identified in respect of one land parcel as well as three parcels with forestry dual claims. These matters have now been resolved following correspondence between the person named and my Department. However, one further land parcel listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation; immediately this process is complete, provided no errors are identified, the application will be further processed.

311. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single farm payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47172/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 10 May 2010. Under EU Regulations, applicants, who afforest part of their holding from 2009 onwards and wish to benefit from the Single Payment, are required to retain at least 10% of the eligible hectares declared in 2008 (by the applicant or their predecessor) in an agricultural activity, subject to a minimum of 3 hectares. This requirement was clearly specified in the Scheme Terms and Conditions.

Under the 2010 Scheme, the person named declared 0.71 eligible hectares, the remaining lands declared comprising Forestry. Consequently, no 2010 Single Payment is payable to the person named.

Departmental Schemes

312. **Deputy Pat Breen** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a person (details supplied) did not qualify for their agri-environment option scheme in a special area of conservation from the time of application; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47174/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The EU rules governing the AEOS and Natura Schemes require that comprehensive administrative and validation checks must be carried out on all applications before letters of approval may issue. Natura and Commonage applications, which included a Sustainable Management Plan, required additional checks to be carried out in order to satisfy eligibility and audit requirements.

These additional checks have now been completed and all Natura/Commonage farmers and a letter has issued to the person named the person approving his participation in the scheme with a start date of 1st November, 2010.

Grant Payments

313. **Deputy Phil Hogan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a single

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farm payment and a disadvantaged area payment will be paid to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47175/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on 17 May 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October, the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, as well as the 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme which issued on 21 September, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

Departmental Bodies

314. **Deputy Martin Ferris** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will guarantee that Coillte and the lands in its custody will not be sold off to private interests. [47181/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): As the Deputy may recall, a Review Group on State Assets and Liabilities, under the chairmanship of Mr. Colm McCarthy, was established by the Minister for Finance earlier this year to examine and provide advice on the proper stewardship of state assets and on opportunities for the better use of those assets. The outcome of that review is awaited.

Departmental Schemes

315. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the actions he has taken with the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to ensure that the current validated planning application will suffice for the purposes of the requirements of the sheep handling and fencing scheme to ensure that the maximum number of applicants can be processed before the closing date in four weeks; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47190/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The terms of the Sheep Fencing/Mobile Handling Equipment Scheme provide that the closing date for receipt of applications shall be 31 December 2013 rather than the period referred to by the Deputy. I do not propose, therefore, to treat applications as valid under the Scheme where they are accompanied by proof of having lodged an application for planning permission with the relevant local authority where full planning is required in order to complete investment works under the Scheme.

Proposed Legislation

316. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason for the delay in finalising the proposed Animal Health and Welfare Bill; and the actions still to be taken and the expected timing of these actions in order to bring the Animal Health and Welfare Bill to publication. [47192/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The Government recently approved the drafting of the Animal Health and Welfare Bill 2010. The Bill gives effect to commitments in the Programmes for Government including the updating of existing

animal health and welfare legislation and provides for significantly increased penalties for offenders.

Domestic Abattoirs

317. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the number of trained auxiliaries in meat plants are adequate to requirements and if anticipated savings have occurred; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47193/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Slaughterhouses and meat processing plants operate under the approval of my Department in accordance with the terms of EU Regulations which are collectively known as the ‘Hygiene Package’. These plants are supervised by veterinary inspectors employed by the Department, assisted in their duties by technical staff and by temporary veterinary inspectors (TVIs) drawn from private practice on a rota basis.

Recommendations arising from a Value for Money (VFM) review relating to the use of the services of TVIs in slaughter plants under the supervision of the Department, along with recommendations arising from other reviews relating to the optimum deployment of the national veterinary public health inspectorate, are being taken into account in revised arrangements for controlling meat plants.

In this context, while it is intended that the use of auxiliaries as recommended by the VFM review will be introduced in certain areas, initially on a pilot basis, a number of issues remain to be addressed. Supplementary training will be required to allow technical staff to carry out post-mortem meat inspection, except in relation to poultry meat (as the Department has already assigned some post mortem inspection duties to technical staff working in poultry processing establishments). In addition, such a reassignment will require consultation with the representatives of the technical staff concerned and the TVIs.

Departmental Funding

318. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the amount of money allocated under the European agricultural guarantee fund and the European agricultural fund for rural development returned to the EU Commission for the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, by fund. [47194/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): In regard to the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) it is presumed that the Deputy is referring to EU-funded or co-funded expenditure undertaken by my Department which was the subject of an adjustment under the Clearance of Accounts procedure and had to be reimbursed to the Commission. The amounts are:

Year*	Amount
	€
2005	1,207,467.70
2006	170,297.64
2007	4,708,670.72
2008	4,679,023.51
2009	3,155,401.13

*Indicates the year in which the formal decision by the Commission to recover the money was published.

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Regarding the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, prior to 2007, the Guidance section of the European Agriculture Guarantee and Guidance Fund covered payments under the Rural Development Programme 2000-2006 and the relevant details are included under paragraph above on EAGF.

The EAFRD replaced the Guidance section from 1 January 2007. All EAFRD allocations were drawn down on foot of eligible expenditure and no amounts have been returned to the Commission.

Departmental Expenditure

319. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the amount of money spent on agriculture export refunds for the years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009; the amount that was from the national budget; and the amount from the EU [47195/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Expenditure on Export Refunds for the period 2005-2009 was as follows:

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
€160,237,000	€97,851,000	€57,222,000	€13,361,000	€28,311,000

Export refunds are 100% EU funded.

Decentralisation Programme

320. **Deputy Andrew Doyle** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the actions taken by him in 2009 and 2010 under the decentralisation programme and their estimated cost; the actions intended under this programme in 2011; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47197/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): As the Deputy will be aware, the original Government decision on the decentralisation of my Department was that 600 headquarter posts would move to Portlaoise; some 100 posts in the local offices in Cork city would move to Fermoy; and up to 100 posts in the laboratories in Cork and Limerick would move to Macroom. The Government announced, in 2008, that the moves of my Department's offices to Fermoy and Macroom had been deferred pending a review in 2011.

The Fisheries function was transferred to my Department in 2007 and the administrative staff of the fisheries area, comprising some 85 posts, were decentralised to Clonakilty.

My Department's original Decentralisation Implementation Plan allowed for a phased move to Portlaoise, so as to minimise risk, aid continuity of business and maintenance of service delivery to stakeholders. Since the programme began there has been an increase in Portlaoise of some 300 posts bringing the total there to almost 500 posts.

Regarding costs of decentralisation, the Department sends a quarterly return to the Decentralisation Implementation Group, which details the non-property costs such as travel. To the end of Quarter 2, April to June 2010, these costs amounted to €609,843 since the programme began.

The Office of Public Works (OPW) deals with matters relating to the procurement of property and the associated costs. The purchase of a site for the Department's offices in Portlaoise was completed in 2007 and the OPW subsequently announced a preferred tender as part of a

PPP (including other Government offices in Mullingar and Carlow). In the context of the last budget, the Minister for Finance decided that the PPP would not go ahead but that the Department's building in Portlaoise would proceed 'on a traditional procurement basis' and this is now being considered by the OPW.

Work on progressing this programme further in 2011 will take account of the evolving operating environment and will have regard to the moratorium on staff numbers and the National Recovery Plan.

Grant Payments

321. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when single farm payment and REP scheme payment will issue to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [47207/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The herd-number previously held in the sole name of the person named was transferred into the joint names of the person named and another person on 20 February 2010. To qualify for payment under the Single Payment Scheme, the Single Payment entitlements should also be transferred from the sole name of the person named into joint names.

My Department issued letters on 14 April 2010 to the parties concerned that outlined the need to transfer the Single Payment entitlements and indicated that no payment could issue until the transfer of entitlements was completed. A Transfer of Entitlements form was enclosed. To date no reply has been received from the parties concerned and consequently no payment has issued.

An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 11 May 2010. The application form was signed by the person named only. As the herd-number was in joint names at the time of application, the application form needed to be signed by each of the joint herd-owners. My Department has written to both joint herd-owners regarding this matter. On receipt of a satisfactory reply, the application will be further processed.

The REPS application belonging to the person named cannot be progressed until the issue with their SPS application outlined above are dealt with.

322. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the balance due on single farm payment and disadvantaged area payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Kilkenny. [47208/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on 8 April 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October, the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, as well as the 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme which issued on 21 September, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

323. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will receive their single farm payments and area aid; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47221/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 13 May 2010. The 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 21 September and 18 October 2010 respectively, were on the basis of the land cleared at that stage, as a number of parcels declared required digitising.

Balancing payments under the scheme, would, in normal circumstances, be confined to those whose applications are fully processed, specifically, where all digitising is finalised. However, following recent consultation with the EU Commission, agreement was reached whereby, in addition to issuing balancing payments to those farmers whose applications are fully processed and whose maps are fully digitised, payments will also issue to those farmers where some or all of their maps are still to be digitised, with the payment being calculated on the basis of the digitised land confirmed otherwise eligible.

I am pleased to say that, because of this change, many farmers, including the person named, whose balancing payments would otherwise have been delayed until their digitising is complete, have now received an interim balancing payment; in the case of the person named, the interim balancing payment issued on 1 December.

These farmers, including the person named, will receive the final instalment of their balancing payment when their maps are re-digitised and their applications are fully clear.

324. **Deputy Bobby Aylward** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the balance due on a single farm payment will be made to a person (details supplied) in County Limerick. [47227/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 30 April 2010. Payments under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme have commenced nationally on 18 October 2010. The application from the person named was submitted with land parcels identified as requiring re-digitisation. My Department has now completed this process.

The advance, interim and final balancing payments under the Single Payment Scheme were made to the person named on 18 October 2010, 1 December 2010 and 8 December 2010 respectively. The person named has now been paid in full.

325. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will receive the balance of their area aid and single payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47230/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Area Scheme was received from the person named on 26 April 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October, the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, as well as the 75% advance payment under the Disadvantaged Area Scheme which issued on 13 September, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being processed, with a view to the further payments due issuing shortly.

326. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a single farm payment and area based payment has not been paid to a person (details supplied) in County Galway; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47241/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on 12 May 2010. A number of the land parcels listed on the application required re-digitisation. Following completion of this digitising, one of the parcels was identified as being over-claimed. The applicant was written to in this regard on 23 September and a reply to this letter was received on 10 December. This issue has now been resolved and payments due under the Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Areas Scheme will issue shortly.

327. **Deputy John Perry** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Sligo will receive their single farm payments and area aid payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47242/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 17 May 2010. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility and Animal Identification Inspection.

The inspection process is complete and the results are now being processed.

Under EU regulations governing the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the Single Payment Scheme all Ground Eligibility Inspections must be completed before any payment can issue to any applicant under either scheme, including those not selected for a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

In the vast majority of cases that were inspected 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. Processing of these changes is continuing with priority being given to applications that were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

328. **Deputy Paul Connaughton** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food the reason a person (details supplied) in County Galway has not been paid the single farm payment or area based payment due; if the results of inspections have now been processed; if subsequent plots have been digitised; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47243/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 13 May 2010. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility and Animal Identification Inspection.

The inspection process is complete and the results are now being processed.

Under EU regulations governing the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the Single Payment Scheme all Ground Eligibility Inspections must be completed before any payment can issue to any applicant under either scheme, including those not selected for a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

In the vast majority of cases that were inspected amendments have had to be made to the maps in order that the Land Parcel Identification System that is used for making payments to

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farmers is kept up-to-date. Processing of these changes is continuing with priority being given to applications that were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

329. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their REP scheme 4 payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47245/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): The EU Regulations governing REPS 4 and other area-based schemes provide that payments issue in two instalments. The first instalment of 75% may be paid once all administrative checks on all applications, as well as cross-checks against areas declared on Single Payment Scheme applications, have been completed. These checks have now been completed and payment will issue to the person named within 10 working days. The balancing payment of 25% can issue once all on-the-spot inspections for the year have taken place and these will be completed shortly.

330. **Deputy John O'Mahony** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Mayo will receive their payment under REP scheme; the reason for the delay in making payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47291/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): REPS 4 is a measure under the current 2007-13 Rural Development Programme and accordingly is subject to EU Regulations which require detailed administrative checks on all applications to be completed before any payments can issue. Queries have arisen during the administrative checks on the plan of the person named which have required further examination. Officials in my Department are currently examining this file and will shortly be in contact with the person named.

331. **Deputy Tom Sheahan** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) will receive their single farm payment and disadvantaged area aid payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47301/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the Single Payment Scheme/Disadvantaged Areas Scheme was received from the person named on the 7 May 2010. This application was selected for and was the subject of a Ground Eligibility and Animal Identification Inspection.

The inspection process is complete and the results are now being processed.

Under EU regulations governing the Disadvantaged Areas Scheme and the Single Payment Scheme all Ground Eligibility Inspections must be completed before any payment can issue to any applicant under either scheme, including those not selected for a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

In the vast majority of cases that were inspected 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. Processing of these changes is continuing with priority being given to applications that were the subject of a Ground Eligibility Inspection.

332. **Deputy Seán Fleming** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when an area aid payment will be paid in full to a person (details supplied) in County Kildare; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47314/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): An application under the 2010 Single Payment Scheme was received from the person named on 29 April 2010. The 50% advance payment under the Single Payment Scheme, which issued on 18 October and the further 30% payment under the same Scheme, which issued on 1 December, were on the basis of those parcels cleared for payment at that stage, as a number of other land parcels listed on the application of the person named required re-digitisation. This process is now complete and the application is being further processed, with a view to the balancing payment due issuing shortly.

333. **Deputy Seymour Crawford** asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when a person (details supplied) in County Monaghan will be paid the balance of their area aid and single payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47315/10]

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Deputy Brendan Smith): Under the provisions of the governing EU Regulations, payments under the Single Farm Payment may be made only in respect of eligible land and applicants under the Scheme are obliged annually to declare to my Department the land parcels available to them. Details of the eligible area of the land parcels are recorded on my Department's Land Parcel Identification System (LPIS). It is also necessary for applicants to exclude ineligible features such as scrub, roadways, etc. Therefore, the LPIS database has to be amended on an ongoing basis to reflect any permanent changes such as parcel boundary changes, addition of new parcels, etc. In the vast majority of cases, applicants make sufficient deductions for the ineligible features.

The person named was found to have claimed fully on parcels which contained buildings. As buildings are ineligible under the Scheme, the person named was found to have been over-paid and he was advised accordingly, in writing. These over-payment amounts were fully recouped from the payments due to the person named under both the 2010 Single Payment Scheme and Disadvantaged Area Scheme.

Redundancy Payments

334. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of redundancies reported to him in Waterford city and county in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46889/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): Unfortunately, I am unable to provide the Deputy with all the specific information he has requested in relation to the breakdown of redundancies between Waterford city and county, as the Department does not collate statistics on that basis. The figures for the redundancy claims received for Waterford county for the past five years and to date in 2010 are set out in the table below.

Actual Redundancy claims for Waterford county:

Year	Number of Redundancy Claims
2005	998
2006	675
2007	631
2008	549
2009	2,457
2010 (Jan-Nov) provisional figs	1,523

Departmental Expenditure

335. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas, coffees and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46912/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The amount of money spent by me and my predecessors during the years 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees and bottled water is outlined in the tabular statement below.

	2008	2009	2010 to date
Minister Batt O’Keeffe	Nil	Nil	€259 (From 25/3/2010 to end Nov 2010)
Tánaiste Mary Coughlan	€447 (From 8/5/2008 to 31/12/2008)	€881	€133 (From 1/1/2010 to 24/3/2010)
Minister Micheál Martin	€258 (From 1/1/2008 to 7/5/2008)	Nil	Nil

The companies who supplied the above refreshments together with their addresses were as follows: G Elliott & Sons Ltd, 4/10 Camden Row, Dublin 8, and Jemanges, c/o Davitt House, 65 Adelaide Rd, Dublin 4.

Departmental Appointments

336. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47000/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Two appointments were made since 22 November, 2010, as follows:

1. An Order re-appointing Mr Kevin Duffy as Chairman of the Labour Court for a further period of 3.5 years, with effect from 21 December 2010, was signed on 23 November, 2010. The remuneration for the post is €164,464 p.a., and Mr Duffy may claim for any relevant travel and subsistence at standard Civil Service rates. He also qualifies for a pension under the Labour Court Members Superannuation Scheme.
2. Mr. John Travers was appointed as Interim Director General of Science Foundation Ireland for a period of up to 6 months with effect from Monday 6th December 2010. Given his extensive experience and knowledge of SFI operations, Mr. Travers was selected by the SFI Board, with the approval of the Department of Finance, to lead the Foundation on a short-term basis whilst the recruitment process for a permanent Director General is being conducted. Arrangements regarding Mr. Travers conditions of appointment are still being finalised with the Department of Finance at this point.

337. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47015/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe):The information sought by the Deputy is as follows:

IDA Ireland

Legislation provides that appointments to the Board of IDA are made by the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, with the consent of the Minister for Finance.

Each year on 31 December, the 2 longest serving members of the Board of IDA Ireland retire.

In addition this year, another Board member has resigned, resulting in 3 vacancies on the IDA Board, falling to be filled between now and 28 February.

Company Law Review Group

There is currently a vacancy on the Company Law Review Group. It is expected that an appointment will be made to fill this vacancy between now and 28 February 2011.

Competition Authority

There will be 4 vacancies arising in the Competition Authority between the stated dates and it is intended to fill these positions before 28 February 2011.

Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (IAASA)

There are 3 appointments due to be made to the board of IAASA between the stated dates. All 3 appointments will be nominees of bodies designated under the Companies (Auditing and Accounting) Act 2003.

Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB)

There is currently 1 vacancy on the Board of PIAB, following the abolition of the post of Consumer Director of the Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority, which was a designated Board position under PIAB legislation. It is anticipated that the resulting vacancy on the Board will be filled before the end of February 2012.

Forfás

2 vacancies will arise on the Board of Forfás at the end of 2010, therefore, 2 appointments will be made to fill these vacancies.

National Competitiveness Council

There are currently 2 vacancies on the National Competitiveness Council. It is expected that 2 appointments will be made within the stated dates to fill these vacancies.

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Rights Commissioner Service

The Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, under delegated authority, will be reappointing 2 Rights Commissioners at the end of 2010.

The Health and Safety Authority

The Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, under delegated authority, will be appointing a new Board consisting of 1 Chairperson and 11 ordinary members, of the Health and Safety Authority for a period of three years, commencing 20 December 2010.

The Labour Court

The Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, under delegated authority, will be reappointing the Chairman of the Labour Court and appointing an Ordinary Member to the Court within the dates specified.

Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT)

The term for the current Chairperson of the EAT expires on 29 January 2011. An appointment to this position will be made by that date.

Company Registrations

338. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of new companies registered in Waterford city and county in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47036/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Billy Kelleher): The Companies Registration Office does not maintain statistics on new company registrations on a city or county basis.

Departmental Funding

339. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of companies in Waterford city and county receiving funding under the research, development and innovation aid scheme in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; the funding provided in Waterford city and county in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47037/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Conor Lenihan): I am informed by IDA Ireland that in the period from the beginning of 2005 to date in 2010, 5 IDA supported companies received a total of €1,895,164 in RD&I grant payments. Details of the number of companies and the total amounts of RD&I funding paid in respect of each of those years are set out in the tabular statement .

Enterprise Ireland (EI) operates a number of programmes aimed at helping companies to engage in Research and Development both within the company and in collaboration with third level institutions.

The R&D Fund is Enterprise Ireland's primary mechanism for driving in-company Research & Development. I am informed by Enterprise Ireland that in the period in question a total of 18 companies were approved for in-company R&D support worth €3,904,360. Details of the number of companies and the amount approved in each of the years 2005 to date in 2010 are set out in the tabular statement.

Enterprise Ireland and IDA together also offer schemes whereby a Higher Education Institution is supported to undertake an R&D project on behalf of a company. One such industry-academic collaborative support is the Innovation Partnership Programme. I understand from EI that in the period in question total funding amounting to €1,722,486 was approved under this scheme in respect of 12 EI supported companies. The numbers of companies approved, together with the total amount approved in each of those years is set out in the tabular statement.

Another industry-academic collaborative support scheme is Enterprise Ireland's Innovation Voucher Initiative, which provides vouchers worth €5,000 to small businesses to introduce them to innovation by linking them with a network of 38 knowledge providers, North and South of the border. This scheme commenced in 2007 and from then to date in 2010 a total 162 companies have received vouchers totalling €840,000. Details of the number of companies and the total amounts paid in each year are set out in the tabular statement.

TABLE 1: showing the number of IDA supported companies in Waterford City and County paid RD&I funding in each year from 2005 to date in 2010, together with the total amount of funding paid in each of those years.

Year	Number companies	Total amount paid
		€
2005	0	0
2006	3	1,259,588
2007	1	471,096
2008	1	164,480
2009	0	0
To date in 2010	0	0

TABLE 2: showing the number of Enterprise Ireland supported companies in Waterford City and County approved under the EI R&D Fund in each of the years from 2005 to date in 2010 together with the total amount of such funding approved in each of those years.

Year	Number companies	Total amount approved
		€
2005	0	0
2006	3	1,034,502
2007	1	97,360
2008	7	1,145,591
2009	6	436,907
To date in 2010	1	1,190,000

[Deputy Conor Lenihan.]

TABLE 3: showing the number of companies in Waterford City and County approved under the Innovation Partnership programme in each of the years from 2005 to date in 2010 together with the total amount of funding approved for partnering colleges in each of those years

Year	Number companies	Total amount approved
		€
2005	1	162,500
2006	1	87,280
2007	6	818,969
2008	1	272,408
2009	3	381,329
To date in 2010	0	0

TABLE 4: showing the number of Enterprise Ireland supported companies in Waterford City and County paid under the Innovation Voucher Initiative in each of the years from 2007 to date in 2010 together with the total amount of such funding paid in each of those years

Year	Number companies	Total amount approved
		€
2007	27	135,000
2008	25	135,000
2009	53	285,000
To date in 2010	57	285,000

340. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of companies in Waterford city and county receiving funding under the environmental aid scheme in 2009 and to date in 2010; the funding provided in Waterford city and county in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47038/10]

341. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of companies in Waterford city and county receiving funding under the investment aid for small and medium enterprises scheme in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the funding provided in Waterford city and county in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47039/10]

342. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the number of companies in Waterford city and county receiving funding under the training support scheme in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; the funding provided in Waterford city and county in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47040/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): I propose to take Questions Nos. 340 to 342, inclusive, together.

The Investment Aid for SMEs Scheme is available in the non assisted regions of Ireland. It is not applicable to undertakings in Waterford which is in an assisted region and therefore qualifies for investment aid under the Regional Aid Map for Ireland 2007-2013 approved by the European Commission.

Enterprise Ireland and IDA Ireland provided no support to companies in Waterford under the Environmental Aid Scheme in 2009 and to date in 2010.

Information regarding supports provided by Údarás na Gaeltachta is a matter for my colleague the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Funding for Training for 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 to companies in Waterford.

	2008 Funding	No. of companies	2009 Funding	No. of companies	2010 (to date) Funding	No. of companies
	€		€		€	
IDA	37,614	1	59,767	1	28,892	1
Enterprise Ireland	149,106	17	95,606	11	30,502	5

Employment Rights

343. **Deputy Niall Collins** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the length of time it now takes for a person to have his or her case heard by the Employment Appeals Tribunal from the date the person lodged his or her claim with the tribunal. [47089/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): The Employment Appeals Tribunal is one of the front-line services directly affected by the downturn in the economy. There has been an unprecedented level of increase in claims being submitted to the Tribunal — from 3,173 in 2007 to 9,458 in 2009. This trend has continued in 2010 with approximately 8,571 new claims lodged between January and the end of November. This level of increase has had an impact on case processing timeframes.

I am informed, from information provided by the Tribunal Secretariat, that the longest recorded waiting periods at the end of November for a hearing of the Tribunal ranged from 52 weeks to 77 weeks. In the case of hearings concerning redundancy claims, the range was between 23.5 weeks and 63.5 weeks.

Efficiencies introduced have increased the Tribunal's output, with 5,698 claims processed between January and the end of November this year, which compares with 2,807 claims processed for the whole of 2007. A business process review is being conducted of all administrative processes within the Tribunal to find further efficiencies, and the Tribunal is participating with other employment rights and industrial relations Bodies in to identify any further procedural and administrative measures that might be implemented to ensure better and more appropriate use of services. That review will be completed shortly. Once it is completed, arrangements will be put in train to put a new IT system in place for the Tribunal.

The Tribunal is taking further measures in order to address the upward pressure on case processing timeframes. These include increasing the number of hearings per day, and increasing the average number of cases being heard at each sitting.

I hope to make additional staff resources available to the Tribunal within the next few weeks with a view to enabling it, in particular, to increase the number of Hearings in Dublin, where the greatest backlog now exists, and also to establish a specialist Division for the hearing of redundancy related cases. In a recent pilot project in Cork, the temporary deployment of an extra Division there with a special focus on redundancy-related cases, allowed the waiting-time for such cases to be reduced from 44.5 weeks to 19.5 weeks.

Tax Collection

344. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the

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number of companies in Waterford city and county availing of the 12.5% rate of corporation tax in each of the past five years and to date in 2010; the number of jobs supported by those companies in each of those years; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47119/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The collection of taxes, including Corporation Tax, is not monitored by the enterprise development agencies under the aegis of my Department. All issues in relation to Corporation Tax are a matter for the Revenue Commissioners.

The employment figures available to my Department are those in respect of firms assisted by the State Development agencies — IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland and the County Enterprise Boards (CEB’s), which come under the aegis of my Department. Agency employment figures are compiled in the Forfás Annual Employment Survey, the most up to date of which details figures for jobs supported until end 2009. As the information is compiled on an annualised basis, the figures in respect of 2010 will not be available until 2011. Details of the agency figures are set out in the following tabular statement.

Figures relating to net jobs existing in the CEB supported micro-enterprises are compiled through the completion of an annual CEB Employment Survey and details are set out in the following tabular statement. Figures in respect of 2010 will not be available until early in 2011.

Number of Employees in IDA Supported Companies

County Waterford	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Full Time Jobs	5,692	6,193	6,386	6,079	5,581

Number of Employees in Enterprise Ireland Client Companies

County Waterford	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Full Time Jobs	4,842	5,014	5,257	4,735	3,640

Net Jobs Existing in Waterford City and Waterford County Enterprise Board Assisted Companies

CEB	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Waterford City	824.00	866.50	832.00	809.50	662.0
Waterford County	573.00	636.00	665.50	587.50	547.0
Total	1,397.00	1,502.50	1,497.50	1,397.00	1,209.00

Job Creation

345. **Deputy Lucinda Creighton** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the way he plans to create 30,000 jobs through his Department’s agencies; the public bodies under his remit that will take responsibility for their delivery; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47130/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): The role of my Department is to ensure that we have the right policies in place to support and grow our

enterprise base in order to facilitate job creation. The State Development agencies under the aegis of my Department — Enterprise Ireland and the IDA, are continuing to drive and promote enterprise development, and consequently employment creation in our economy.

Budget 2011 saw €508 million in capital spending alone dedicated to driving Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth through increased exports, more foreign direct investments and the smart economy by significantly investing in research and development.

This multi-billion capital investment in growth and jobs is routed through my Department and its agencies, IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Science Foundation Ireland and the County and City Enterprise Boards. This investment and other measures outlined in the National Recovery Plan will support the achievement of the targets set out in the Government's Trading and Investing in a Smart Economy strategy, including the target to create 300,000 new direct and indirect jobs in the enterprise and tourism sectors by 2015.

It will deliver nearly 30,000 new jobs in 2011, including both direct and indirect jobs, just from the IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland client base alone.

Enterprise Ireland will support the achievement of these job creation targets through a number of key interventions such as:

- support for start-ups, R&D and Innovation, and securing exports.
- Supporting the establishment and growth of High Potential Start-Ups.
- supporting companies to target new opportunities in overseas markets.
- continuing to be focused on supporting company investments
- continuing to invest in R&D both in terms of in-company investments, and by supporting the commercialisation of Ireland's research.

A vibrant and growing Foreign Direct Investment sector remains central to an economic recovery based on export led growth and the development of the Smart Economy. Earlier this year, IDA launched its strategy "*Horizon 2020*", which set out the Agency's targets for the period 2010 to 2014. To date in 2010, there have been 75 announcements in relation to job creation by IDA client companies with the potential to create over 5,000 jobs.

To support these targets, the IDA has established a new High Growth Markets Team to achieve 20% of Greenfield investments into Ireland by 2014 originating from these markets, with a further team targeting new High Growth companies. Additionally, IDA has developed a suite of support mechanisms to assist companies, which will form the basis of the agency's ongoing interaction with its client companies at both local and corporate level.

Redundancy Payments

346. **Deputy Michael Creed** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation further to Parliamentary Question No. 345 of 23 November 2010, when a person (details supplied) in County Cork will receive their redundancy payment; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47158/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): My Department administers the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) in relation to redundancy matters on behalf of the Department of Social Protection. There are two types of payment made from the SIF — rebates to those employers who have paid statutory redundancy

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to eligible employees, and statutory lump sums to employees whose employers are insolvent and/or in receivership/liquidation.

In my previous response to the Deputy on 23 November last I indicated that, on the basis of valid claims entered on the Redundancy Payments System in my Department, there was no record of a redundancy claim having been received in respect of the individual in question. I understand that this position still obtains in that no claim has yet been received in my Department.

Departmental Properties

347. **Deputy Róisín Shortall** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation if he will report on a recent planning permission obtained by Enterprise Ireland for works to their premises on Old Finglas Road, Dublin 11; the estimated cost of these works; if it is intended to proceed with them in view of the changed economic cost of these works and pressure of departmental budgets; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47210/10]

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Batt O’Keeffe): Following an application by Enterprise Ireland (EI), planning permission was granted by An Bord Pleanála on September 27th 2010, for a new vehicular entrance to their site on Old Finglas Road, Dublin 11.

The purpose of this new vehicular entrance and associated works is to facilitate the continued operation of the National Metrology Laboratory of Ireland, (NML) as a stand alone entity, on the Glasnevin site, following its transfer from EI to the National Standards Authority of Ireland (NSAI). The completion of this work is critically important to allow the NML operate in an efficient and secure environment.

Following a competitive tendering process a contractor was selected and has now commenced work on the project. The value of the contract cannot be disclosed due to its commercially sensitive nature.

Redundancy Payments

348. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation the reason a person (details supplied) in County Dublin has not been paid their redundancy payments despite the fact that they were made redundant over 14 months ago; the channels available to the employee to ensure that they receive their rightful payments; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47292/10]

Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation (Deputy Dara Calleary): My Department administers the Social Insurance Fund (SIF) in relation to redundancy matters on behalf of the Department of Social Protection. There are two types of payment made from the SIF — rebates to those employers who have paid statutory redundancy to eligible employees, and statutory lump sums to employees whose employers are insolvent and/or in receivership/liquidation.

I can confirm that my Department received two statutory redundancy lump sum claims in respect of the individual concerned on 28 October and 27 November 2009, one from a Liquidator and one from a Receiver. An application for minimum notice pay was also received in respect of the same individual.

I understand that in this case, the Liquidator mistakenly submitted the first application for payment of statutory redundancy for the person mentioned. The person had not left employ-

ment but was retained in employment in a transfer of undertaking situation. The Receiver is running the business as a going concern. However, the Receiver subsequently made the person redundant and submitted the second redundancy claim in November 2009.

Where there is a change in ownership of a business but the employee, by arrangement, continues to work for the new owner with no break in employment, the employee is not entitled to redundancy payment at the time of change of ownership. Continuity of employment is preserved with the new employer who can of course subsequently make the employee redundant at a future date.

In relation to the redundancy claim submitted by the Receiver, to date, no Deed of Appointment has been received by my Department from the Receiver as required, nor has any Statement of Affairs been provided as is required to facilitate both payment of statutory redundancy and minimum notice entitlements under insolvency legislation.

The Receiver has been asked to submit a copy of the Deed of Appointment and to provide a Statement of Affairs in relation to the business, which is being run as a going concern. Payment cannot be effected by my Department until these documents have been submitted and are in order.

Departmental Bodies

349. **Deputy Olwyn Enright** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his views on the review by Waterways Ireland of the land lettings in an area (details supplied) along the Grand Canal; if his attention has been drawn to the concerns of the families affected by this review; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47173/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I am informed by Waterways Ireland that it is currently reviewing land lettings in an area concerned along the Grand Canal as part of the pro-active management of property in its care. Under the review Waterways Ireland is seeking to modernise historic agreements and more accurately capture details on the ground. The appraisal will fully consider the concerns of those affected, the history attached to each individual case and any entitlements which those using the land may have acquired.

Anti-Poverty Strategy

350. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he is satisfied with the progress made to date regarding the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion; the number of social inclusion projects or strategies reached since this Government took office in 2007; the number of projects or strategies put on hold; the number that have had their conclusion deadlines extended due to the economic crisis; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46335/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Combating poverty and building an inclusive society are key priorities for the Government. The overall goal of the *National Action Plan for Social Inclusion*, published in 2007, is to reduce the number of those experiencing consistent poverty in the population to between 2% and 4% by 2012, with the aim of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016. The plan prioritises 12 high level goals in relation to children, people of working age, older people, people with disabilities and communities. It identifies some 150 actions across Departments and agencies with a remit in social

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policy, as part of a strategic approach to make a decisive impact on poverty over the period to 2016.

CSO data from the annual *Survey on Income and Living Conditions* (SILC) shows that in 2008 the consistent poverty rate was 4.2%, having fallen from 5.1% in 2007 and 8.2% in 2003.

The report on the implementation of the National Action Plan to the end of 2008 shows a similar pattern of progress in the actions of Departments to achieve the goals in the plan. This involved significant State investment in education, employment and training for lone parents and for people with disabilities; in health and community care for older people; in local and community development; and in integration initiatives for migrants.

The CSO figures for 2009, published on 25 November last, highlight the continuing importance of social transfers as a stabiliser for people in difficult economic circumstances. In 2009, social transfers reduced the 'at risk of poverty' rate from 46% to 14.1%. This is a 'poverty reduction effect' of 70%.

The rise in consistent poverty to 5.5% indicated in the 2009 figures is a cause for concern and reflects the increase in unemployment. In meeting the challenges that face us in the immediate years ahead, the Government is committed to prioritising those who are the most vulnerable and to protect as far as possible the frontline services in marginalised communities. The overriding objective now is to restore economic growth and maximise employment so that the recent progress made in tackling poverty can be continued and the goals in the National Action Plan for an inclusive and fair society can be achieved.

Drugs Task Forces

351. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs his plans to assist community organisations involved in the fight against drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46435/10]

358. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the extent to which he has assisted or proposes to continue to assist various groups in County Kildare involved in combating drugs; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46443/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 351 and 358 together.

As has been previously outlined to the Deputy, the majority of expenditure allocated to community groups through my Department for drugs initiatives is channelled through the Local and Regional Drugs Task Forces. Under this process, applications for funding are made directly to the Task Forces.

In 2010, in excess of €31 million in current funding has been made available to fund the activities of the Task Forces, of which €21.045 million was allocated to the Local Drugs Task Forces and €10 million to the Regional Drugs Task Forces. This funding will support some 500 initiatives that the Task Forces have prioritised for investment in their respective areas. In addition, I recently approved funding of nearly €500,000 for small-scale capital projects in the Task Force areas.

Funding in relation to drug initiatives in Co. Kildare is made through the South Western Regional Drug Task Force (SWRDTF). The SWRDTF covers South Dublin, West Wicklow

and Kildare and was allocated €894,750 in 2010. In addition to this, almost €17,000 was provided to fund 3 projects under the Small Capital Premises Fund in County Kildare.

Questions Nos. 352 to 357, inclusive, answered with Question No. 54.

Question No. 358 answered with Question No. 351.

Grant Payments

359. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the total number of applications for grant aid or other assistance received by him from groups or persons based in County Kildare in the past 12 months to date; the extent to which he has responded positively or intends to do so to such applications; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46444/10]

360. **Deputy Bernard J. Durkan** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the total number of applications for grant aid received in his Department under the various headings in the past 12 months; the extent to which he has met such requirements over the period; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46445/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 359 and 360 together.

As the Deputy will be aware, my Department operates a range of grant programmes and schemes, details of which are available on my Department's website at www.pobail.ie. Some of the schemes are administered directly by my Department, while others are administered on its behalf by various intermediary bodies and groups, where applications for funding are submitted directly to the bodies/groups in question.

In relation to applications administered directly by my Department, the details requested by the Deputy in relation to such applications from groups/persons in County Kildare over the past year are reflected in the table below. All of the applications in question were approved.

Number of applicants from County Kildare in past 12 months	Scheme under which application was made
14	Scheme of Community Support for Older People
3	Senior Alerts Scheme
1	Large Capital Premises Fund
4	Local and Community Development Programme
3	European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion Awareness Raising Initiative
1	UN International Day for Eradication of Poverty

It may be noted that funding under the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 is provided through integrated local development companies and all applications for funding are handled directly by those companies. A total of €12.28 million is available for rural development purposes in County Kildare over the lifetime of the programme. Similarly, applications for local drugs projects are made through the Local and Regional Drug Task Forces, and funding is allocated directly by the Task Forces to projects on the basis of priorities for individual areas, having regard to the funding available.

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In relation to the Deputy's request for details regarding all applications for grant aid received by my Department over the past twelve months, I do not consider it feasible to provide such information as the volume of work involved and resources required would far outweigh the potential benefits that would accrue from its compilation. If, however, the Deputy has a specific query in regard to a particular scheme or application, I would be happy to provide him with the relevant information.

Question No. 361 answered with Question No. 54.

Departmental Expenditure

362. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the amount of money, under each heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46909/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I assume that the Deputy is referring to the amount of money spent directly by my private office on refreshments for meetings and functions within the specified timeframe. I am informed that €184.50 was spent in total and the details are set out in the table below. No expenditure was incurred by my office on refreshments during 2010 and no expenditure was incurred within the specified timeframe on bottled water.

Year	Purpose of meetings or functions	Name and Address of Supplier	Amount spent on refreshments (including tea, coffee & sandwiches)
2008	To meet with various groups and stakeholders in relation to matters under the remit of my Department.	Redcoral Catering Ltd, Dublin 2	€ 35.00
		Ramada Hotel, Ballina, Mayo	49.50
2009	To meet with various groups and stakeholders in relation to matters under the remit of my Department.	McWilliam Park Hotel, Claremorris, Mayo	52.00
		O'Briens, Dublin 2	48.00
Total			184.50

Departmental Offices

363. **Deputy Pearse Doherty** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the location of all Údaras na Gaeltachta premises, the size of these premises, when they were last occupied and by which company. [46956/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): Due to the volume of information requested by the Deputy, I have arranged for the details which have been provided to my Department by Údarás na Gaeltachta to be forwarded directly to him.

Departmental Appointments

364. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46997/10]

365. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47012/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 364 and 365 together.

I assume the Deputy is referring to appointments made to State boards/agencies funded from my Department's Vote Group.

I can confirm that no appointments have been made to any such bodies since 22 November 2010. The Deputy may wish to note that a number of bodies funded from my Department's Vote group do not have boards — Waterways Ireland, the Equality Tribunal and the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga.

With regard to appointments that fall to be made before 28 February 2011, the position is as set out below:

- A new board of the Western Development Commission is due to be appointed with effect from 1 February 2011 consisting of a Chairperson and up to eleven members.
- The terms of office of two members of the Dormant Accounts Board are due to expire within the timeframe specified by the Deputy. While legislation to dissolve the Dormant Accounts Board is currently being drafted, it is likely that two appointments to the board will be required in the meantime.
- In the case of the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge, appointments are made by the North South Ministerial Council. The term of office of the current Chair of the Ulster Scots Agency will expire on 30 December 2010. There is also a current vacancy on the board of Foras na Gaeilge.

Departmental Expenditure

366. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, under the North-South cooperation heading, the reason there is a 6% decrease in the 2011 budget as compared to the 2010 budget. [47246/10]

367. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs, under the equality heading, the reasons for a 9% decrease in Budget 2011 as compared to Budget 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47247/10]

368. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reasons, under the disability heading, there has been a 13% decrease in Budget 2011 as against Budget 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47248/10]

369. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reasons for the reduction in the Gaeltacht and island development heading of Budget 2011 as against Budget 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47249/10]

370. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reason for the changes in the rural development heading of Budget 2011 as against Budget 2010 under each subheading; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47250/10]

371. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reasons, under the tackling drugs use heading in Budget 2011, there is a 7% decrease as against Budget 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47251/10]

372. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reasons, under the developing communities heading of Budget 2011, there is a 16% decrease in costs as compared to the 2010 estimates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47252/10]

373. **Deputy Jack Wall** asked the Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs the reasons, under the administration heading of Budget 2011, there is a 15% increase in costs as compared to the 2010 Estimates; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47253/10]

Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht Affairs (Deputy Pat Carey): I propose to take Questions Nos. 366 to 373 inclusive, together

As the Deputy is aware, in the current economic circumstances, we are faced with difficult decisions. The Government has considered a number of measures in the context of the National Recovery Plan 2011-14 to provide the basis for a sustainable approach to the current financial situation. Across Government, our approach has been to do this in as balanced a way as possible.

Taking into account the recent Supplementary Estimate and the full year funding associated with functions transferred into and out of the Department during 2010, gross funding for my Department is reduced by a total of 13% in 2011 — current by 6% and capital by 28%.

Within this context, my primary concern is to make every effort to ensure that the daily front-line services provided with funding from my Department are protected, especially those focused on the needs of the most socially deprived communities.

In our current financial circumstances, it is clear that objectives will have to be pursued with less resources than previously. However, we will continue to strive to achieve good outcomes and value for money notwithstanding these constraints. Every saving that can be made from cutting back on overheads will be pursued so that the urban, rural, Gaeltacht and island communities we serve retain, to the greatest extent possible, the services that have been developed in partnership with them over the years.

Details as to the manner in which the funding will be allocated between various programmes will be published in due course in the Revised Estimates Volume.

Defence Forces Strength

374. **Deputy John Deasy** asked the Minister for Defence the number of Defence Forces personnel stationed in Waterford; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46859/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): I am advised by the Military authorities that there are currently 7 Permanent Defence Force Cadre personnel stationed in County Waterford. A further 142 Reserve Defence Force personnel are stationed in the County. A breakdown of these numbers is provided in the tabular statement under.

	Company Quartermaster Sergeant	Sergeant	Petty Officer	Private	Reserve
Army Reserve A Company 33 INF BN (Waterford)	1	1		1	46
Naval Service Reserve			1	1	55
Army Reserve D Company 33 INF BN (Dungarvan)		1		1	41
Total	1	2	1	3	142

Defence Forces Personnel

375. **Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl** asked the Minister for Defence when payments accruing to an employee (details supplied) will issue on foot of a ministerial determination; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46878/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): The payments accruing to the employee in question will issue on the payroll dated 24 December 2010.

376. **Deputy Ciarán Lynch** asked the Minister for Defence the number of personnel in the Army, Naval Service and Air Corps at present; the amount of sick leave claimed by members of each service in the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46882/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): I am advised by the Military authorities that the strength of the Permanent Defence Force as at 30 November 2010, the latest date for which figures are available, was 9,502 personnel, comprising 7,704 Army, 769 Air Corps and 1,029 Naval Service. The total number of days sick leave claimed by members of the Army, Air Corps and Naval Service in the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010, as advised by the Military authorities, is outlined in the tabular statement below.

The Public Service Agreement, 2010-2014 contains a commitment to review current certified sick-leave entitlements and processes in the Defence Forces. Work on this review is expected to commence and be completed in 2011.

FORMATION	2007	2008	2009	2010
ARMY	71,873	71,083	62,797	65,407
AIR CORPS	8,370	7,569	6,896	6,539
NAVAL SERVICE	9,450	6,485	5,032	4,619
TOTAL	89,693	85,137	74,725	76,565

Departmental Expenditure

377. **Deputy Brian Hayes** asked the Minister for Defence the amount of money, under each

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heading, spent by him on refreshments for meetings and functions, including sandwiches, teas and coffees, and bottled water, in 2008, 2009 and to date in 2010 in tabular form; the name of the company used to supply the refreshments and the address; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46910/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): It has not been possible in the time available to compile the information requested by the Deputy. The information will be forwarded to the Deputy as soon as possible.

Departmental Appointments

378. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Defence if he will list all public appointments since 22 November 2010; in each case the remuneration both in salary, expenses and any other forms of compensation associated with each such appointment; the length of tenure in each case; if it was a re-appointment or a new appointment and if he will detail the selection process undertaken in each instance; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [46998/10]

379. **Deputy Leo Varadkar** asked the Minister for Defence if he will list all public appointments that he is due to make between 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011. [47013/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): I propose to take Questions Nos. 378 and 379 together.

I have not made any appointments to these bodies since 22 November 2010 and do not envisage making any public appointments in the period of 14 December 2010 and 28 February 2011.

Departmental Expenditure

380. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence, further to page B17 of the Summary of Budget Measures 2011, if he will provide details of the number of allowances for overseas deployment to be reduced in 2011; his plans regarding overseas deployment in 2011; the savings which will accrue in 2011 as a result of this reduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47305/10]

383. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence, further to page B17 of the Summary of Budget Measures 2011, if he will provide details of the way €3 million in administrative efficiencies will be achieved in 2011; the way further savings of €21 million will be accrued in a full year; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): I propose to take Questions Nos. 380 and 383 together.

In common with all areas of the public service, the Department of Defence and the Defence Forces will operate with reduced funding for 2011. The gross allocation for Defence and Army Pensions combined in 2011 is €933m, an overall reduction of 4% on the 2010 allocation. Defence spending at €725m, including capital spending, will be down by €30m or 4% on the 2010 Estimate. The provision for Army Pensions (Vote 37) for 2011 is €208m, which is a non-discretionary expenditure.

There has been a reduction in participation in overseas peacekeeping in 2010, particularly the withdrawal from Chad and the reduction in numbers serving in Kosovo and Bosnia-

Herzegovina. Ireland, however, remains open to participation in peacekeeping operations with such participation reflecting the reduced budgetary resources. The cost of overseas allowances in a given year is principally a factor of the number of personnel serving overseas and the time spent overseas. The Defence Forces retain the capacity to deploy overseas. With regard to future deployments of Defence Forces personnel to overseas missions, a number of options have been under consideration by civil and military management. I would hope to be in a position to bring forward recommendations to Government as appropriate in the near future.

Administrative efficiencies of €3m in 2011 will be achieved chiefly through reduced personnel numbers and related costs, in addition to reduced expenditure on telecommunications services. The full year yield of €21m on administrative efficiencies relates primarily to payroll savings across the Vote that will accumulate by 2014.

Defence Forces Civilian Staff

381. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence, further to page B17 of the Summary of Budget Measures 2011, if he will provide details of the reduction of the number of civilian employees attached to military installations to occur in 2011; the locations of each of these employees; the savings which will accrue in 2011 as a result of this reduction; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47306/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): It is anticipated that there will be a reduction of up to 40 civilian employee positions during 2011, primarily through natural wastage. It is estimated that savings amounting to €700,000 will accrue next year as a result of the non-replacement of these employees. Civilian Employees are based at various military installations in every Brigade area.

Defence Forces Equipment and Property

382. **Deputy David Stanton** asked the Minister for Defence, further to page B17 of the Summary of Budget Measures 2011, if he will provide details of the equipment acquisition, building and maintenance projects which will be deferred or cancelled respectively in 2011; the savings which will accrue in 2011 as a result of each of these deferrals or cancellations; and if he will make a statement on the matter. [47307/10]

Minister for Defence (Deputy Tony Killeen): The Department of Defence and the Defence Forces, like all areas of the public service, will operate on a reduced budget in 2011. The gross allocation in 2011 for Defence and Army Pensions combined is €933m, an overall reduction of 4% on the 2010 allocation. Investment in new equipment and infrastructure for the Defence Forces is normally provided for under various Subheads of the Defence Vote relating to defensive equipment, mechanical transport, aircraft, Naval Service ships and stores, property, building and engineering, communications and Information Technology equipment. Each of these Subheads will operate with a reduced allocation in 2011. The exception is the Naval Service Subhead, the allocation for which in 2011 includes continuation of payment for the new ships contract.

The Department is engaged on an ongoing capital building programme designed to modernise and enhance the training, operational and accommodation facilities available to members of the Defence Forces. The programme provides for new starts and the continuation of capital building projects already underway. No projects will be cancelled as a result of the reduced

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capital allocation in 2011. However the capital programme will be revised to reflect available funding.

The specifics in relation to equipment acquisitions that will be deferred or postponed will be the subject of review with the military authorities in January 2011.

The steady investment since 2000 means that the Defence Forces are well placed in addressing the challenges for 2011 and the adjustments required under the National Recovery Plan. The priority in the coming year will be on maintaining the capability of the Defence Forces to deliver effective services across all of the roles assigned by Government.

Question No. 383 answered with Question No. 380.