



Government Progress Report

**Progress Report on the
Implementation of An Agreed Programme
for Government
between Fianna Fáil
and
the Progressive Democrats.**

June 2002-June 2003

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3	HOUSING	35
WORKING FOR PEACE	5	AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT	38
BUILDING PEACE AND JUSTICE	5	<i>Rural Development</i>	40
IRELAND AND EUROPE	6	PROMOTING TOURISM	41
IRELAND AND THE WORLD	8	MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES	42
DEFENCE	9		
SUSTAINING A STRONG ECONOMY	11	BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY	45
BUDGETARY AND ECONOMIC POLICY	11	BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY	45
<i>Public Expenditure</i>	11	HEALTH	46
<i>Taxation</i>	11	EDUCATION	53
<i>Delivering Major Capital Programmes</i>	12	CRIME	57
EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE	13	OLDER PEOPLE	60
<i>Improving the conditions of employment</i>	16	PENSIONS	61
RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION	17	CHILDREN AND CHILDCARE	61
INSURANCE AND ROAD SAFETY	20	DISABILITY AND CARING	63
ENSURING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	23	SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE	65
DEVELOPING THE REGIONS & THE ISLANDS	23	ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION	66
<i>Islands</i>	24	EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM	68
AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY	25	TACKLING DRUG ABUSE	69
<i>Integrated Transport</i>	25	REGENERATING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES	70
<i>Railways</i>	26		
<i>Roads</i>	27	SUPPORTING CIVIC LIFE	72
<i>Cycleways and Footpaths</i>	27	GOOD GOVERNMENT	72
<i>Rural Transport</i>	28	<i>Integrity in Public Life</i>	72
<i>Traffic Corps</i>	28	<i>Delivering Value for Money</i>	72
<i>Taxis</i>	28	<i>e-Government</i>	72
<i>Aviation</i>	29	<i>Proven Partnership</i>	73
THE ENVIRONMENT	29	<i>Semi-State Sector</i>	73
Air Quality	29	<i>Dáil and Local Government Reform</i>	74
Water Quality	30	<i>Electoral Participation</i>	75
Waste	31	BETTER FACILITIES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION	75
Litter	33	ARTS CULTURE AND HERITAGE	76
Climate Change	34	THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE GAELTACHT	78
Funding/Eco Taxes	34	LEGISLATION	80
Enforcement	35	<i>Bills Enacted (6 June 2002-6th May, 2003)</i>	80
Partnership	35		
Nuclear Safety	35		

INTRODUCTION

One year ago the Irish people gave Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats a renewed and an enhanced mandate for Government. We stood for election on a proud record. But our case to the people was based not on past achievements. It was based upon future plans. The mandate that the people gave is not for what we have done. It is for what we had yet to do.

Ireland is a country with vast potential, a potential we have only begun to realise. This Government has the political imagination to see what can be achieved. It has the courage to lead. It has the capacity to deliver. In our Programme for Government, we have set out in practical steps how we plan to realise our vision. This is our pact with the people.

At the end of our first year in office, we offer this account of our progress. We set out in detail what we said we would do. We account in detail for what we have done so far.

Our immediate priority on re-election was to put the Treaty of Nice to the people. We listened to public concerns about our engagement in Europe and we acted upon them. Ireland's involvement in the European Union is now more transparent and more accountable. It is also now strongly reaffirmed. The Government is energetically engaged with the Convention on the Future of Europe. This great debate across the continent is an opportunity not a threat and it is an opportunity that Ireland is engaging with.

At home our priority was to renew social partnership and to negotiate a successor to the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness. *Sustaining Progress* is now agreed and provides a basis for economic stability and social progress over the coming period.

So in a short time difficult steps have been taken and major milestones have been achieved.

In Northern Ireland, the Government has worked tirelessly to achieve the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. Although progress has been made and full agreement came tantalisingly close, final agreement remains to be achieved. But the Government's resolve is undiminished and our optimism is unabated. We have come too far to turn back. And so with renewed determination we

shall again engage with the historic challenge of this generation which is to achieve a lasting, a just and a peaceful settlement.

Government is not just about delivering upon promised plans, although that is very important. The ultimate test of Government is in dealing with unexpected crisis. War in Iraq was such a crisis. While we remained on the UN Security Council, through our first six months in Government, we worked tirelessly to achieve unity in fact as well as in name at the UN. Faced with the reality of war and disunity in the Security Council, the Government steered Ireland on a course that was both sensible and principled.

At home, the attention of the Government is focused on our economy and on our public services. In a difficult year, Ireland, one of the most globalised economies in the world, is continuing to grow at over three times the euro area average. Our resilience at home, in the face of adversity abroad is founded on the fundamental reforms we have completed in our economy. By having fairer taxes on workers and more competitive taxes on companies, we are holding onto jobs that others are losing. Today, Irish workers enjoy the third lowest tax burden among rich countries. The significance of this is for the future and for our capacity to take advantage of an international upturn when it comes.

A priority of this Programme for Government is the quality of life of our people as well as on the competitiveness of our economy. On top of the massive increases of recent years in all areas of public investment, we have invested an additional 7% in public spending in 2003. This increase is a prudent response to our own economic circumstances as well as being generous by the standards of our competitors. We are managing our economy prudently because it is in the national interest to do so. The security of the jobs we have, the prospects of the jobs we hope to have, as well as the continued sustainable investment in our public services, depend upon the careful management of our affairs.

In Government, we are taking the path that we promised the people we would if elected. This Government is leading as it promised, not misleading as it is alleged.

Our public finances are sound. Our economic prospects remain better than many of our neighbours. While we must be careful, we can also be confident.

Bertie Ahern, TD
Taoiseach

What we have set out to fulfil is the destiny of the Irish people, living in prosperity on an island at peace with itself. This is our vision for our country. Step by step, promise by promise, year by year this Government is delivering on its promises and is keeping faith with the people. This is the report of our progress at the end of the first of the five years of our mandate.

Mary Harney, TD
Tánaiste

WORKING FOR PEACE

BUILDING PEACE AND JUSTICE

Over the next five years, our overriding priority will be to secure lasting peace in Ireland through the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, the consolidation of its institutions, and the development of a spirit of friendship and cooperation between North and South. This we will do without prejudice to the ultimate goal of achieving a united Ireland in peace and agreement.

- The Joint Declaration and associated documents published by the Governments on 1st May sets out the acts of completion necessary to provide trust, implement the Agreement fully, restore devolved government and attain a fully normal society in Northern Ireland and forms the basis of the Governments approach in seeking agreement between the parties on the way forward.

We will work to consolidate the success of the North-South Ministerial Council, and of the Implementation Bodies. Also cooperate with the British Government in the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference and bilaterally, on non-devolved matters.

- Prior to the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the North/South Ministerial Council had met a total of sixty-five times. The Council will meet again on the restoration of devolved government.
- The agreed work programme of the Council is being taken forward at official level, and the Implementation Bodies continue to operate throughout suspension on a care and maintenance basis.
- Two meetings of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference have taken place since October 2002.

Within the framework of the British-Irish Council, seek to develop strong bilateral relations with Scotland and Wales, as well as with the UK as a whole.

- The British-Irish Council is proving a valuable forum for consultation, discussion and the exchange of information

among its membership, and there have been three summit meetings since November 2001.

- Work is continuing in eight priority areas of work, including drugs, in which Ireland takes the lead within the Council.

We will pursue an active policy of reconciliation between differing traditions.

- Development of the historic Battle of the Boyne site and support for the work at Messines continues.
- Groups involved in reconciliation work are also supported, both directly, through the Reconciliation Fund (administered by various government programmes) and indirectly through the wider EU PEACE II and I.F.I. programmes.

We will work for the formation of the North-South Parliamentary Body envisaged in the Good Friday Agreement.

- Recognising that this is primarily a matter for the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Government and the Northern Ireland Administration, working together in the North/South Ministerial Council, have discussed the establishment of a North/South Parliamentary Forum.
- Further progress on this issue is dependent on the restoration of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We will put in place an All-Ireland travel scheme for pensioners resident in all parts of this island.

- This is under review as part of North/South dialogue.
- Implementation of this scheme will require detailed discussions and agreements with the relevant authorities and transport providers on both sides of the border. Work on this proposal will commence as soon as possible.

We will support the principle of full public enquiries into the murders of Pat Finucane, Robert Hamill and Rosemary Nelson, and use our good offices to advance the establishment of the truth.

- There are ongoing contacts and meetings between

government officials and the families, and with the relevant NGOs, on these cases.

- The Taoiseach met with the Finucane family on 13 February 2003 and reiterated the Government's call for a public inquiry.

We will also fully support the work of Judge Peter Cory who has been appointed by the Irish and British Governments to investigate these (Finucane, Hamill and Nelson) and other cases.

- Close and continuing contact has been maintained with Judge Cory and his team and arrangements have been put in place for them in advance of their move to Dublin to take up the cases that arise in this jurisdiction.

We will act upon the recommendations of the Barron Enquiry into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and continue to work to ensure that all persons and agencies, both here and abroad, cooperate fully with the enquiry.

- The Barron Inquiry is ongoing.
- We have raised specific concerns of the families, including regarding the British Government's cooperation with the Inquiry, directly with the British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and through the mechanism of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference.
- We continue to impress upon the British Government the need for full co-operation.

We will work to ensure that 'the right to freedom from sectarian harassment' set out in the Agreement becomes a reality.

- In contacts with the British Government, we have pressed for greater protection for vulnerable/interface communities affected by sectarian violence, including by improved police action; there have been improved policing arrangements since last Summer.
- We have also encouraged community-based efforts to alleviate interface tensions.
- This issue is also being addressed in the Joint Declaration published on 1st May.

In so far as it lies within our power, we will strive to create and maintain a secure environment for political progress and bring about, both through the application of law and by persuasion, a complete and lasting cessation of all paramilitary

activity in Northern Ireland and throughout these islands, including punishment beatings and shootings, and the transformation of movements linked to paramilitary organisations into exclusively democratic organisations and completion of the process of putting arms beyond use.

- These issues are being taken forward in the context of the Joint Declarations and discussions taking place between the two Governments and pro-Agreement parties.

We will encourage maximum cooperation between police forces North and South.

- The Intergovernmental Agreement on the implementation of Patten Recommendations on co-operation between the Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland came into force in November 2002.
- The Garda Síochána (Police Co-operation) Bill, 2003, which will give effect to Articles 1 and 2 of the above Agreement, was debated and passed by Seanad Éireann and following on from this will be debated in the Dáil.

We will improve North-South infrastructural links and facilitate cross-border planning.

- We are working to improve cross-border and all-island infrastructural links and strategic planning across a range of areas, including through the North/South Ministerial Council and the Implementation Bodies, and, bilaterally, in areas such as Energy and Communications.
- The all-island dimension is an essential element of all new policy development and accordingly each Government Department has a dedicated North/South Unit.
- We have issued a Policy Direction to the Commission for Communications Regulation directing the Commission to have regard to the Government's commitment to improvement of North-South infrastructural links and cross-border planning in carrying out its work.

IRELAND AND EUROPE

Based on the mandate conferred on both parties in the General Election, submit the Nice Treaty on enlargement to the people in a referendum to be held later this year in a way which seeks to address the concerns of the people as expressed during previous referendums and in the National Forum on Europe.

- In June 2002, the Government, through the Seville Declarations, secured confirmation by the European

Council that the Treaty of Nice in no way affected Ireland's traditional policy of military neutrality.

- Following passage by the Oireachtas of the 26th Amendment to the Constitution Bill, which sought to authorise ratification of the Treaty of Nice and to prohibit the State from entering into a common defence, the necessary amendment to the Constitution was approved by referendum on 19 October 2002.
- All formalities connected with ratification were completed in order to allow ratification in December 2002, in line with the objective set out above.

An intergovernmental conference to agree any future changes to the Treaties will only take place in a few years time, probably in 2004, well after the expected conclusion of at least the first wave of enlargement negotiations.

And,

we will play a full part in the European Convention and the Europe-wide debate on the future shape of the European Union.

- Through its representatives at the Convention, and in discussion with other Governments both bilaterally and at meetings of the European Council and the Council of Ministers, the Government is playing an active and constructive role in seeking to shape an outcome which both protects specific Irish concerns and promotes the renewal and reform of the European Union.
- In particular, Ireland has worked with other Member States to ensure that the principles of institutional balance and equality between Member States are respected in the Convention's Report.
- The Convention Report will form an important input into the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) which now looks set to commence later this year. We will continue to work within the IGC for an outcome which protects Ireland's core national interests and equips the European Union to meet the challenges posed by an ever changing global environment and a constantly evolving membership.

We believe that the broad institutional balance, as it currently exists, serves the Union well. We will oppose efforts to have existing integration supplanted by purely intergovernmental cooperation, or important common policies, such as the Common Agricultural Policy or regional and social policy, extensively renationalized.

- In the final negotiations on enlargement which took place at the European Council meetings in October and

December, 2002, Ireland fully supported the accession of ten new Member States.

- We also ensured that the financing arrangements for enlargement provided safeguards for the funding of the EU including the Common Agricultural Policy up to 2013.

We believe that commitment to the EU and its development in no way implies support for a European superstate or for an ambitious federalist project which is detached from public opinion.

And,

in addition, we believe that fiscal policy should remain the preserve of national administrations.

- We are very much in the mainstream in seeking an EU where sovereignty is pooled where necessary to tackle common challenges while preserving the primary role of the Member States as the cornerstone of a democratic Europe.
- On fiscal policy, we will continue to press the case strongly for the preservation of unanimity in the decision making process at EU level.

We believe Ireland's best interests lie in assisting and working with the applicant countries. Within the next twelve months, we will publish a specific programme to ensure the expansion of social, cultural and economic cooperation with all countries that are joining the European Union.

- We have been pursuing a programme of upgrading relations with the candidate countries and will intensify this programme over the coming year, in advance of the historic accession, which will take place during Ireland's Presidency of the European Union.

We will take part in peace support and humanitarian operations (Petersberg tasks) in missions that are endorsed by the UN. We will work directly with the UN as well as with our EU partners under a UN mandate, to protect human rights and to prevent ethnic conflict and humanitarian disasters. We will work to ensure that the European Security and Defence Policy continues to develop in the service of peace.

- Ireland is actively contributing to the development of European Security and Defence Policy in the European Union in the service of peace.

- Ireland is participating, through members of the Garda Síochána, in the European Union Police Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which the European Union took over from the United Nations at the beginning of this year.
- While not in a position to participate directly, we have also been supportive of the European Union military monitoring/stabilisation mission in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

We will implement Dáil reforms to ensure improved scrutiny of EU legislation and developments.

- Enhanced arrangements for Oireachtas scrutiny of EU business were introduced on 1 July 2002 and were placed on a statutory basis on 23 October 2002.
- Under the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002, draft legislative measures including regulations and directives, joint actions and common positions under the Common Foreign and Security Policy and a range of measures in the Justice and Home Affairs area, are subject to scrutiny by the Oireachtas.
- In addition, Ministers appear before Oireachtas Committees to brief them on developments at EU level on a regular basis.
- In addition, in March 2003, the Government published *Ireland and the European Union : Identifying Priorities and Pursuing Goals (2nd Edition)* which sets out key national objectives in the European Union for the coming period in a way that is accessible to the public.

We will run a proactive and efficient EU Presidency in 2004.

- Preparation for the Presidency is well underway and is increasing in intensity as the Presidency approaches. It involves enhanced Ministerial and Departmental coordination, contacts with previous and future Presidencies and enhanced contacts at all levels with the EU institutions and with current and new Member States.
- Three interdepartmental committees have been established to oversee logistics and policy matters.
- Work has already advanced considerably, in particular in relation to staff training and deployment, development of the calendar of Council meetings, programming matters and other essential preparatory work.

IRELAND AND THE WORLD

We believe Ireland must continue to play an active role on promoting development, human rights and democracy in the world.

- Ireland concluded its two-year term on the UN Security Council on 31 December 2002.
- As a member of the Council, Ireland worked to ensure that the Council's primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security was sustained.
- The Government remains committed to the primacy of the UN in promoting constructive international relations.

In the pursuance of our foreign policy objectives, we remain committed to the primacy of the UN's role in promoting constructive international relations.

- In keeping with our commitment to conflict prevention and the protection of human rights, we are continuing to support and participate in a number of UN authorised peace support operations around the world, including in Bosnia and Kosovo.
- On 1 January 2003, Ireland commenced a three-year term on the UN Commission on Human Rights.
- On the Commission, Ireland will work to promote the universal acceptance and implementation of human rights standards, and an appropriate response by the international community where human rights are violated or abused.

We will promote our strategic political and economic interests and contribute to other nations by expanding our resident diplomatic missions in particular with EU applicant countries and in Asia and Latin America.

- New Embassies have been established in Estonia, Slovenia, Slovakia and Cyprus.
- Consideration is being given to the possibility of opening missions in other candidate countries.
- The question of opening further missions in Latin America and Asia is kept under ongoing review on the basis of a thorough assessment of the costs and benefits involved.

- We are continuing to expand our network of non-resident accreditations, particularly in Africa and in Asia.

We will complete our major expansion of our overseas development aid programme, achieving the UN target of 0.7% of GNP by 2007.

- The Ireland Aid Budget increased from €340million in 2002 to €374million in 2003, an increase of €34m.
- The percentage level achieved by total ODA in 2002 (0.41% of GNP) is likely to be maintained this year.
- Ireland is currently the sixth largest donor in the world in percentage terms.

The aid programme will be developed along the lines of the Ireland Aid Review Report with the principal aim being to contribute to the reduction of global poverty, inequality and exclusion.

- The recommendations made by the Ireland Aid Review Report are being systematically implemented.
- Implementation under each heading of the Report is being monitored carefully.
- The reduction of global poverty, inequality and exclusion are the paramount objectives of the Ireland Aid programme.

Particular initiatives will be taken both in the aid programme and at the highest political level to fight the HIV/AIDS crisis which is ravaging many poorer countries, especially in Africa.

- Over €40million was spent last year by Ireland Aid on a wide-range of HIV/AIDS programmes (e.g. support for prevention campaigns in our programme countries, support for international research on vaccines, care for orphans and funding for Irish NGOs working on various aspects of the crisis).
- We have contributed €10million to the new Global Fund for AIDS, TB and malaria.
- In August 2002, the Taoiseach launched a regional HIV/AIDS strategy for the Ireland Aid programme covering nine countries in southern Africa.
- We have also advocated a stronger political response abroad to the pandemic and have pressed for greater contributions from the UN, the EU and institutions such as the World Bank.

DEFENCE

We believe that maintaining a defence capacity related to security needs is an important expression of national sovereignty.

We will follow through the implementation of the 2000 Defence White Paper, designed to equip our Defence Forces to meet peace-time challenges at home and abroad and to develop our Defence Forces.

- White Paper runs to 2010 and commitments continue to be rolled out.
- Our extensive modernisation programme continues through equipment purchases (25 additional armoured personnel carriers and 8 trainer aircraft) and barracks re-investment.
- Considerable progress on organisational aspects of White Paper, including Implementation Plan for Reserve Defence Force which was recently approved in principle and will be rolled out over the next six years.

We will maintain a full complement of 10,500 in the Permanent Defence Force, with the option of an extra 250 recruits at any one time.

- Average number of 10,600 being maintained for 2003.

A new career development plan, involving the continuation of a policy of regular recruitment will be implemented.

- The new career development plan is part of the Integrated Personnel Management System.
- Regular recruitment continues, 500 enlisted in 2002, with 117 currently in training.

The new Integrated Personnel Management System will be introduced.

- Target date of end 2003 set for completion of Integrated Personnel Management System (IPMS).

100% of revenue from property sales will be invested in infrastructure and equipment.

- All revenue from property sales reinvested in infrastructure and equipment.

- Five of the six barracks identified for closure have either been sold or in the process of being sold.
- Completion of sale on Ballincollig and Clancy Barracks expected soon.
- Total revenue expected from property being divested expected to be in the region of €100 million.

Civil Defence will be managed by a Civil Defence Board underpinned by a modern legislative framework.

- Civil Defence Bill enacted.
- New Board established and members appointed.
- Decentralisation to Roscrea, Co. Tipperary expected in late 2003.

Irish troops will continue to be available to serve abroad on international peacekeeping missions.

- Approximately 440 personnel currently serving overseas on UN missions, the bulk of whom are in Kosovo and Eritrea.
- KFOR Transport Company in Kosovo due to be replaced by 250 strong infantry contingent in late 2003.

- Up to 850 personnel continue to be available at any one time as part of United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS).
- In the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU, 850 personnel committed to the Headline Goal from within our existing UNSAS commitment.

The Office of Emergency Planning will take the lead role in planning to meet threats from international terrorism and will work with all Government Departments and agencies who have planning responsibilities.

- The Office provides a key support to the work of the Government Task Force on Emergency Planning, which is chaired by the Minister for Defence, and co-ordinates the work of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Emergency Planning.
- The Office promotes the co-ordination of emergency planning functions across all Government Departments and agencies and continues to have oversight of the emergency planning process.
- The long-term goal for Government is to provide effective co-ordinated planning and response across the whole threat spectrum.

SUSTAINING A STRONG ECONOMY

BUDGETARY AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats are committed to sustaining economic growth and maintaining full employment in the Irish economy. We see low inflation and responsible and effective fiscal policies as central to this.

We will keep the public finances in a healthy condition and we will keep down personal and business taxes in order to strengthen and maintain the competitive position of the Irish economy.

- Notwithstanding the more difficult economic circumstances in which we find ourselves, a modest budget surplus was still achieved in 2002 and spending for the year was within target.
- In terms of personal taxes, the income level at which people enter the tax net has been increased from €209 per week to €223 per week (compared to €98 per week in 1997/8).
- OECD figures demonstrate that we have the lowest tax wedge (percentage of wage costs paid in tax, PRSI and levies) in the EU for a single worker on the average production wage.
- The special income exemption limits for those aged over 65 was increased by 15 per cent almost doubling the limits since 1997.
- The standard rate of Corporation Tax for trading income was reduced from 16 per cent to 12.5 per cent from 1 January 2003. This signals our strong commitment to the continuation of our successful industrial development strategy in order to foster further employment creation and economic growth.

Within these constraints we will concentrate the resources available to us on improving the quality of public services and delivering further real improvements to pensioners and people on low income.

- Given scarce resources, increases in public expenditure were focused on areas of health, social welfare and education as well as areas of physical infrastructure. Health expenditure increased to €9bn (+10%), social

welfare expenditure to €5.6bn (+9%) and education spending to €5.86bn (+9%).

- Budget 2003 also provided an additional €209m for national roads construction. This will bring the Department of Transport's capital allocation for roads to €1.25bn in 2003.

Public Expenditure

The EU Stability and Growth Pact provides the overriding framework for our budgetary policy. Under the pact Ireland has given a commitment to keep the finances of general government close to balance or in surplus and to take corrective action when there is an actual or expected divergence from this objective. Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats will respect this commitment.

- The careful management of the country's finances in 2002 ensured that the terms of the stability and growth pact were fully adhered to.

Taxation

Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats have delivered dramatic reductions in taxations over the last five years. The policy has helped to generate unprecedented growth in the Irish economy, a spectacular increase in the number of people at work and the effective elimination of long-term unemployment.

The parties remain committed to the achievement of the taxation objectives set out in the Action Programme for the Millennium. Over the next five years our priorities with regard to personal taxation will be:

to achieve a position where all those on the national minimum wage are removed from the tax net.

- Notwithstanding the significant increase in the minimum wage, 90 per cent of those workers on it continue to be exempt from income tax. Further progress will be made as resources permit.

to ensure that 80% of all earners pay tax only at standard rate.

- This remains a priority in the context of personal tax policy and a measure of the progress we have made to date is demonstrated in OECD figures which show Ireland having the lowest tax wedge in the EU for a single worker on the average production wage.

to use the potential of the tax credit system to effectively target changes and to pursue further improvements in the income tax regime if economic resources permit.

- In this year's budget by increasing the employee tax credit, we have raised the entry point to the tax system for a single person from €209 per week to €223 per week. The progress we have delivered in this area is highlighted by the fact that when we formed our first administration in 1997 the relevant entry point was €97.77 per week.

We will complete the reduction of the standard rate of Corporation Tax to 12.5 % in 2003.

- This reduction was completed in Budget 2003.

We will vigorously pursue actions to ensure that everyone is tax compliant.

- High-level Revenue Powers group established, chaired by a former Supreme Court Judge to review powers.
- In order to maintain our low tax rates, the tax base must not be eroded by the exploitation of certain provisions for tax avoidance purposes.
- Closing those loopholes swiftly helps to protect the tax base and the revenue yield to the Exchequer.
- To this end, the 2003 Finance Act included twelve provisions designed to put a stop to such schemes. These include a provision to counter schemes whereby capital allowances on buildings are transferred from companies to individual investors.
- Another closed off a loophole involving tax reliefs available to certain trading companies being transferred to individuals who, although nominally trading, are in practice passive investors.

Delivering Major Capital Programmes

Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats will address Ireland's infrastructural deficit in a

coherent and determined way over the next five years.

- The Government has accorded top priority to investment in economic and social infrastructure and have more than delivered on our financial commitments to this priority in the National Development Plan.
- In recognition of the key importance of the NDP National Roads Programme, an additional €209m was allocated to that programme in the Budget for 2003, bringing total Exchequer investment in the Roads Programme to €1.25bn.
- We will continue to invest in infrastructure as a priority in sustaining economic and social progress. Investment in the Public Capital Programme in 2002 amounted to €8.6 billion or 8.3 per cent of GNP, one of the highest levels of capital expenditure in the EU.
- Continuing this commitment, the Public Capital Programme for 2003 has increased the provision for capital expenditure by nearly 3 per cent over the 2002 figure.

We believe that new methods of financing major capital developments are required. These must take account of the need to maximise efficiency, delivery, value for money and appropriate risk transfer across complex multi-annual programmes.

- We have opened up new opportunities for private companies to invest in public infrastructure through PPP projects.
- We believe this investment should contribute to relieving infrastructural bottlenecks while ensuring optimal value for money.
- Enactment of the *State Authorities (Public Private Partnerships Arrangements) Act 2002* has provided the necessary statutory framework for moving the PPP programme forward, while the establishment of the NDFA, as both an advisory body for procuring authorities and a potential source of funding for projects, has further strengthened the institutional structures within which PPP operates.
- In addition to the water and waste management sectors, PPP projects are also being developed in the sustainable energy, urban regeneration and housing sectors, as well as a broad range of projects across local government.

We will establish under the auspices of the NTMA, a National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) to finance major public projects and to evaluate financing options for PPP projects. This vehicle

may finance both commercial and non-commercial type projects.

And,

the NDFA will enable the Government to apply commercial standards in evaluating financial risks, costs and options associated with projects thereby ensuring that the best financing package is availed of in each instance. The NDFA may compete with, but will not substitute for, private financing of PPP projects but will be an additional mechanism to be used in the context of achieving value for money and risk transfer in PPP projects.

- The National Development Finance Agency has now been established on a statutory basis and its board appointed.
- The board recently appointed the Agency's first chief executive.
- The Agency will play an important part in the Government's resolve to address the country's infrastructural deficit.

Where significant once-off revenues accrue to the State through, for example, the sale of assets or the restructuring of the Central Bank, we will use these revenues to create a National Transformation Fund. This fund, which will be managed by the NTMA, will be used to finance multi-annual infrastructural development programmes.

- The Minister for Finance is working on putting the necessary arrangements in place to utilise the proceeds realised from the sale of State assets for investment in infrastructure.

EMPLOYMENT AND ENTERPRISE

The huge increase in employment and fall in unemployment which has been achieved in recent years cannot be taken for granted. Work is still required to protect employment levels and to expand both the distribution and quality of opportunity throughout the country.

We will encourage and support multinational and indigenous firms to develop higher productivity and knowledge-based activities which are likely to be retained during periods of global rationalisation.

- During 2002, Enterprise Ireland actively sought to ensure that new jobs created were high value in nature.

- Over 40% of first time jobs in 2002 were created in the Internationally Traded Services area, compared with 30% and 34% in the previous two years.
- This indicates a rise in the quality of new jobs created, as these tend to be in the highly paid software and financial services sector.
- Regional growth is a key priority for IDA Ireland. To continue high levels of economic development in the regions in the future, the creation of key centres of growth, spread across the country, is essential.
- While job creation remains an objective of IDA Ireland, it is no longer the over-riding driving force of the organisation. Consolidating and building on the value of the 1,100 existing IDA supported companies is a major part of IDA's work, for example by adding high value research activities to their Irish operations.
- We are working with the IDA to ensure that these companies continue to increase their value and make an increased contribution, both to their own corporate success and to the Irish economy.
- In some of the internationally traded services sectors, particularly financial services, 2002 was a very strong year with total employment in financial services increasing by over 18%.
- 2002 was also strong in the pharmaceuticals and healthcare sectors, with employment growing by over 2% and some very strong new investments negotiated.

We will encourage a better spread of jobs throughout the country.

- Our agencies drive to raise job creation levels in the BMW region has been headlined by the IDA commitment to deliver 50% of Greenfield jobs to the BMW region in 2000 to 2006. While this has been in some way hampered by the economic downturn, the figure rose to 45% in 2000 and 42% in 2001, from about 25% in 1999.
- In 2001, the BMW region accounted for 26% of the national population and 25% of the workforce. In 1999, the region accounted for 18.0 per cent of gross job gains in agency-assisted companies. The corresponding figures for 2000 and 2001 show an increase to 20% and 25% respectively.
- Data in respect of 2002 will be available later this year and the regional share of employment in agency-assisted companies will continue to be monitored into the future.

We will carry out a fundamental review of training and employment supports to ensure that they focus on the needs of the most marginalized and

disadvantaged groups to help them to progress to open the labour market.

- A PPF-mandated review of all Active Labour Market Programmes (ALMP), including CE, is currently in progress under the aegis of the Standing Committee on the Labour Market.
- This Committee includes representation of the community pillar, employers and trade unions, as well as certain government departments and FÁS.
- A key element of the review of ALMPs will be towards reorienting ALMPs more closely in future to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups. It is hoped the Committee will have completed its work by the Autumn.
- In addition FÁS is undertaking an internal review of CE, which includes an assessment of the role of CE in providing community services. This review is almost complete.
- Separately, a cross-departmental senior officials group is considering options for the future provision of community services, having regard to the contribution now being made by CE and concerns expressed by the Social Partners and key stakeholders.

We support the positive role of the Community Employment Scheme to meet the needs of both the long-term unemployed and communities.

- During 2002, the emphasis in Community Employment programmes continued to shift from the provision of work experience towards programmes with a greater level of training content, which typically demonstrate higher rates of progression to employment.
- FÁS prioritised projects according to the types of services provided and levels of unemployment in the locality.
- Priority groups include the Drugs Task Forces, childcare service provision and designated disadvantaged areas covered by the new RAPID programme and BMW regions.
- A small number of individuals continue to experience difficulties in getting jobs following their participation on CE, usually due to age, health, literacy and/or numeracy problems, or a lack of suitable jobs in their locality.
- In recognition of this, the three-year limit on participation for people over 50 years of age was removed in certain cases in 2002.
- In addition, FÁS was given the flexibility to offer a further period of participation of up to one year for those in the younger age groups who are also experiencing difficulty in obtaining employment.

We will seek to ensure that new social economy projects are effectively targeted at areas which have traditionally had a high dependence on the Community Employment Scheme.

And,

we will develop the value of the social economy programme through the further creation of social economic enterprises.

- The Social Economy Programme supports the development and operation of enterprises that provide locally demanded services in and for disadvantaged communities, and meaningful employment opportunities for long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged persons.
- The budget for the Programme in 2002 was €20.55 million, increased to €30.836m for 2003. By end 2002, 302 enterprises had commenced operations employing 1,902 grant-supported employees.

We will introduce new supports for those experiencing or likely to experience severe employability barriers. This will involve a training fund of up to €2,500 per person.

- The High Supports Process was finalised in 2002 for implementation in 2003.
- The purpose of the process is to provide supports to meet the needs of those people who, because of age, literacy or other barriers, are unlikely to succeed in getting and keeping a job in the open labour market.
- The High Supports Process builds on the existing guidance and counselling services provided under the dual stranded National Employment Service to help people become job ready.

We will extend the Employment Action Plan prevention strategy to all persons on the Live Register for longer than 6 months.

- We have extended the Employment Action Plan approach to all those aged up to 55 who pass six months on the Live Register from March 2003 and in addition to all those on the Live Register for more than 9 months living in designated High Unemployment Areas under RAPID.
- Referrals to FÁS in respect of those over six months on the Live Register, who are under 55 and have not been previously through the EAP will commence in May 2003. Initial referrals will be in the Dublin region and other regions will commence before end of 2003.

FÁS will engage with redundant workers and people facing the prospect of long-term unemployment to ensure that the period out of work for a substantial number of people is kept to a minimum.

- Under the preventative strategy, we are committed to intervening with all unemployed young people before they reach six months of unemployment, and with all adult unemployed before they reach nine months of unemployment, with a view to offering them a job, training or other employability support.
- During 2002, of the 9,809 under-25s approaching six months on the Live Register referred to FÁS, 6,109 (62%) had signed off the Live Register.
- Of the 21,208 25-54 year olds approaching nine months on the Live Register referred to FÁS during 2002, 11,797 (56%) had signed off the Live Register.
- The PPF-mandated review of Active Labour Market Programmes was also progressed under the aegis of the Standing Committee on the Labour Market.
- In all instances, where collective redundancy notifications were made during 2002, the local FÁS office was contacted by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment to facilitate early interaction with the newly redundant workers leading to the provision of employability and training supports.

We will give a fresh impetus to the important role of small business in Ireland and ensure that the interests of small business are taken into account in formulating and implementing policies that impact on the enterprise sector.

- A number of meetings of the Round Table for Small and Medium Enterprises were held during 2002.
- Issues discussed included insurance, opportunities for SMEs presented by the enlargement of the EU, intellectual property, and entrepreneurship.
- The Round Table was also provided a platform to discuss the EU Commission Internal Market Strategy for Services.

We will seek to resolve potential issues, difficulties and conflicts in the spirit of social partnership.

- We have agreed to consult with the social partners as appropriate on policy proposals and the design of the implementation arrangements in respect of matters covered by the new Agreement *Sustaining Progress*.
- *Sustaining Progress* provides for the continuation, with an enhanced role, of the National Implementation Body (NIB)

which was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness to ensure the delivery of the industrial relations stability and peace provisions of the new Agreement.

Through the Expert Group on Future Skills we will identify the priority skills needs of the economy and work to adjust education and training provision accordingly.

- In 2002, we continued to work with FÁS, Forfás and the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs address the issues impacting on our ability to mobilise labour supply in the economy.
- In 2002, the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs expanded its research activities.
- During the course of the year, the group published a number of reports including the Human Resource Requirements of the Logistics Industry in Ireland; Labour Participation Rates of the over-55's in Ireland; and a book on Engineering as a Career.
- Studies on a number of key sectors in the economy were carried out, including the Food and Biotechnology/Pharmaceutical sectors.
- In addition, a major National Vacancy Study, both of the public and private sectors, was undertaken under the aegis of the group.

We will vigorously pursue a programme of regulatory reform with particular emphasis on removing unwarranted constraints on competition in all sectors of the economy and placing the consumer at the top of the policy agenda.

- A new Competition Act was enacted in 2002. The new Act sets out in one statute the regulatory system for competition and mergers and introduces significant reforms, particularly in relation to competition enforcement the Competition Authority and the control of mergers and acquisitions.
- The Company Law Review Group, established with the goal of modernising and restructuring Irish company law, published its first report in 2002.
- The general objectives of the report are that the reformed and streamlined companies code should be effective, intelligible to company law directors and shareholders and that the law should reflect how business is actually transacted.
- The central concept driving the modernisation is that company law should centre principally on the private company limited by shares, rather than the PLC, as is

currently the case. This accords with the reality that 89% of all Irish companies are private companies limited by shares.

- A number of Statutory Instruments have now been made to give effect to provisions of the Company Law Enforcement Act 2001. Auditors are now obliged to report suspected indictable offences under the Companies Acts to the ODCE.
- Regulations on food labelling aimed at resolving prosecution issues were introduced during the year.
- Unit Pricing Regulations were also amended to provide greater price transparency by helping consumers to compare prices more readily.
- The Water Services Bill will consolidate and simplify the legislative code for water services, which currently comprises some 18 Acts dating back to the 19th century.
- The Bill is at an advanced stage of preparation and it is anticipated that it will be published in 2003.
- Preparatory work on a codification of the entire liquor licensing code has commenced.
- The codification will have two aspects: firstly, a consolidation of the licensing law which is currently spread across many statutes into a single instrument; secondly, a reform of licensing law drawing on the recommendations of the Commission on Liquor Licensing and the Strategic Task Force on Alcohol.

Improving the conditions of employment

The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989, will be updated.

- Drafting work has commenced on a new Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Bill.
- The planned new legislation builds on recommendations received from the Board of the Health and Safety Authority, following a comprehensive review of the 1989 Act.
- The aim is to significantly strengthen provisions dealing with safety management, safety training, safety consultation, safety representation, offences and penalties.
- It is anticipated that the Bill will be published this year.

The recommendations of the review of the statutory redundancy scheme will be examined with a view to implementation.

- Government approved the Redundancy Review Group's report in October, on foot of which a number of key changes are to be implemented.

- In addition, under the terms of *Sustaining Progress* statutory redundancy payments will be increased to two weeks per year of service for all employees made redundant regardless of age while the bonus week will be retained.
- Legislation to implement these changes will be published shortly for priority passage through the Oireachtas.

A fundamental review will be undertaken of the functions of the Employment Rights Bodies.

- We will initiate the review of the interaction and functional relationships between the Employment Rights Bodies towards the end of the year.
- It is envisaged that the review will consider the current Employment Rights legislation and the legislation governing the Labour Court, the LRC, the Rights Commissioner Service and the Employment Appeals Tribunal.
- The aim of the review will be to make recommendations on the services of the employment rights bodies to ensure that these are clear, coherent and user-friendly.

We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.

- We are committed under *Sustaining Progress* to strengthening the Parental Leave Scheme in line with the agreed recommendations of the social partners arising from Working Group on Parental Leave.
- The Working Group's recommendations are currently being examined in detail with a view to bringing concrete proposals to Government as soon as possible.

We will review ways in which older people can be encouraged, where they so wish, to extend their working lives without financial penalty and in conditions which suit their personal lifestyle wishes.

- The special income exemption limits for those aged over 65 was increased by 15 per cent, resulting in an almost doubling of the limits since 1997.

We will request the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP) to establish a forum on the workplace of the future to help establish a comprehensive agenda on this issue.

- Preparations for the establishment of the Forum — which are being made by a steering group representing the

Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance, Enterprise, Trade and Employment, as well as the NCPP — are well in hand.

- Work is ongoing on the preparation of a consultation paper setting out the main themes for discussion at the Forum. In addition, a survey is to be conducted for the NCPP on employee attitudes to changes in the workplace; their experiences in the workplace; and their expectations in respect of a future workplace. It is planned to carry out a similar survey of employers' attitudes. The consultation paper and surveys will help to focus the work of the Forum.
- The consultation paper is to be completed by June and the surveys are due to be completed by September. This would enable the Forum to begin its work in September and would in turn ensure that its work is sufficiently well advanced to feed in to our EU Presidency next year.

RESEARCH, DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

We believe that ongoing action is required to ensure that Ireland continues to be a world leader in the knowledge-based industries.

We will ensure the putting in place of open access broadband on a national basis.

- Under the Regional Broadband Strategy we are currently managing the construction of a €70m high-speed, fibre optic open access Metropolitan Area Network in 19 cities and towns throughout the country and in the Digital media district in Dublin.
- We are finalising the process for the contracting of a Management Services Entity to manage and maintain these networks on behalf of the State going forward.
- We are currently engaged in an extensive review of the broadband policy options for the future.

We will ensure that that the full range of options, including wireless technologies, are utilised to expand broadband access in rural areas.

- We are promoting a trial programme at the moment which will concentrate on a number of different technologies — including WLAN technologies.
- We are exploring with different agencies and telecoms companies the possibility of further trials in offshore, remote and under served regions.
- Progress has been made on Broadband via Electricity Networks with a view to conducting pilots in rural areas over the next six months.

We will create real competition for local loop services by ensuring the unbundling of the local loop.

- Regulation (EC) No 2887/2000 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2000 deals with unbundled access to the local loop.
- This regulation had direct effect and did not require special transposition into Irish Law, however, for emphasis, the Commission for Communications Regulation has been given functions in relation to the Regulation under Section 10(4) of the Communications Regulation Act, 2002.
- Requests for unbundling have been made and have been implemented at a number of sites around the country, under the supervision of Comreg.

We will ensure that the full range of options, including wireless technologies, are utilised to expand broadband access in rural areas.

- We are promoting a trial programme at the moment which will concentrate on a number of different user communities — including WLAN trials.
- We are also exploring with different agencies and telecoms companies the possibility of further trials in offshore, remote and under served regions.
- Discussions have taken place involving the regional development agencies in the context of broadband investment in the West Region.
- Progress has also been made on Broadband via Electricity Networks with a view to conducting pilots in rural areas and around the Digital Hub.
- ESB have agreed in principle.

We will drive forward the Schools IT programme based on the principle of school-based planning and devolved funding. We will ensure that progressive training courses are available to teachers.

- Since 1998 almost €140m has been made available to schools in order to realise the Government's vision of preparing all students for the information age.
- Over 75% of teachers have received training in the use of ICT in schools.
- Initial indications from the data now available from a national census show that significant reductions have been achieved in the computer-to-pupil ratios in schools.
- Since 1998, pupil/computer ratios have been reduced from 35:1 to less than 11:1 at primary level and from 16:1 to less than 9:1 at second level.

We will work to ensure that Ireland develops a world-class research capacity. We also recognise the importance of encouraging a dynamic research culture and will continue to support research on the basis of recognizing the distinct, but also interconnected roles of different programmes, from individual grants up to more targeted support for areas of national strategic interest.

- This commitment also extends to the Institutes of Technology, where the Technology Research Programme supports three strands;
 - Postgraduate Research and Development Skills Programme (77 awards made),
 - Enterprise Platform Programme (112 awards made), and
 - Core Research Strengths Enhancement (9 applications approved).
- The commitment to individual researchers has also been strengthened through increased financial support to the two research councils — Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences and Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology.
- In 2002, the number of awards made by both councils was 442.

We will build the capability of firms to carry out and manage R&D in Ireland.

- Proposals for Research and Development tax credits were developed during the year.

We will place Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) on a statutory basis as a dynamic vehicle to provide funding for areas of strategic national importance including ICTs and Biotechnology.

- The Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) Bill was published on 19 December 2002, and is currently awaiting Committee Stage in the Dáil.
- During 2002, Science Foundation Ireland also administered the Science Foundation Ireland Fellow Awards to support highly competitive research programmes in Ireland, the Science Foundation Ireland Research Centres for Science and Technology Grants to fund collaborations with industry, the E.T.S. Walton Visitor awards to attract researchers to Ireland, and the SFI Investigator Programme Grants.

We will ensure that the Programme for Research in Third-Level Institutions administered by the

Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Government is maintained with funding rounds being placed on a multi-annual basis.

- Since the launch of the dedicated programme of research in third-level institutions, the cumulative impact has been significant. The key achievements include:
 - New research funding to 15 third level institutions in total, including 6 Institutes of Technology.
 - 9 Research Centres completed in 2002 (in addition to the four completed in 2001).
 - 62 new and expanded research programmes established.
 - 40 new inter-institutional programmes/initiatives have been established.
 - Over 2,000 peer reviewed publications to date arising from PRTL funded programmes (over 2.5 years).
 - This represents a 250% increase in output in those funded areas compared to the previous period.

We will bring together the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology and the Irish Council for Humanities and Social Sciences Research as parts of a new council.

- At the request of the Government the HEA has undertaken detailed review and analysis, drawing on international experience, with a view to identifying favoured options for the development of a statutory framework for the two councils. This work is near completion.

We will ensure that all major research funding is based on external assessments.

- All proposals for funding under each of the research programmes put in place in the higher education area are externally evaluated before any approval to funding is given.
- For example, under PRTL, proposals are evaluated by an international panel of distinguished researchers and scholars under three criteria (strategic planning, research quality and impact in improving the quality of teaching in the institution).

In order to ensure that structures and mechanisms for overseeing national policy on research are improved, we will implement change on an agreed basis.

- We have requested the Irish Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (ICSTI) to convene a Commission to bring forward proposals for an appropriate

framework for an overarching National Policy for Research and Technological Development.

- The Commission was comprised of key officials in the Irish science, technology and innovation funding system, academia, enterprise and overseas experts.
- We received the ICSTI report in December 2002 with a view to action arising out of the report to be taken in due course.

We will work to ensure that Ireland maximises its draw down under the EU Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Development.

- During 2002, the Department took part in the negotiations on the Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), which were concluded in September 2002. FP6 will run from 2003 to 2006 and has a total budget of €16.27 billion. A network of National Delegates and National Contact Points was put in place and launched in December.
- The network is the main structure for the provision of advice, practical information and assistance to potential participants in FP6 and is designed to ensure that Ireland secures the maximum benefits from the research programme over the next four years.
- In addition, a new National Support and Information Service has been established within Enterprise Ireland, which will play an important co-ordinating role in promoting FP6.

We will actively support research collaboration between firms and third-level institutions.

- Funding to support collaborations between colleges and firms increased significantly in 2002.
- In 2002, funding of €24 million for business incubation centres in eleven Institutes of Technology was announced.
- Very significant investment is being made in the research system to create the conditions necessary for future economic growth.
- This investment will not only develop high quality skills, it will also lead to commercial opportunities, in the form of new, technology based firms, and technology that may be licensed.
- A Commercialisation Fund is aimed at bringing ideas emerging from research through to commercial reality.

We will seek to improve structures and practices to enhance the commercialisation of publicly funded research.

- Our enterprise policy aims to promote a significant increase in investment in Research, Technological

Development and Innovation (RTDI) aimed at enhancing competitiveness and employment.

- We have made provision for €1.5 billion in investment in RTDI for industrial development activities during the lifetime of the National Development Plan.
- This investment is being targeted at increasing innovation and raising competitiveness levels within Irish companies.

We will review available fiscal instruments for the support of advanced connectivity.

- Proposals are being examined in the context of the 2004 estimates campaign.

We will implement an ambitious eGovernment agenda aimed at ensuring that the public will be able to access most key Government services electronically.

- The eDepartment Initiative (eDI) established a Department-wide network of eControllers, aimed at reviewing and improving the Department's website, eForms and ePublications.
- The BASIS website provides integrated public sector information to the business community, and provides a single point of access to information on public sector services.
- The BASIS project undertook a feasibility study, which identified a number of priority services for early delivery over the Internet.

We will support the establishment, following competitive funding procedures, of interactive science centres and awareness programmes aimed at enhancing knowledge and interest in science.

- The STI Awareness Programme aims to raise science and technology awareness among the general public, particularly among young people, and to highlight the increasingly central role of STI in national economic and social development.
- The programme organises and sponsors a number of high profile annual events, including the Journalism Awards, Primary Science Day and Science Week Ireland, during which 200 events were arranged by the scientific community nationwide.

- A Primary Science Clubs initiative has also been introduced.

We will actively promote the study of physics, chemistry and maths.

- In terms of physics and chemistry, new syllabi in both Leaving Certificate subjects were examined for the first time in June 2002.
- The number of students taking both subjects in the 2002 Leaving Certificate examination showed an increase over the previous year. Current indications are that there will be a further increase in 2003.
- A revised syllabus in Junior Certificate science has been finalised and will be introduced in schools. The revised syllabus has an increased emphasis on scientific investigation and on hands-on student practical work.
- A joint committee of the Department of Education and Science and Forfás is working on progressing the recommendations of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences. Forfás is currently developing a response to the Task Force recommendations in relation to the promotion of science.
- A new Junior Certificate maths syllabus will be examined for the first time in June 2003. The syllabus will be examined at three levels. Calculators will be permitted as part of this examination for the first time.
- Mathematical literacy has been the principal focus of the 2003 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The programme has been conducted across 30 OECD countries. In Ireland, 15-year-old students in approximately 150 schools participated in the programme. Ireland finished 15th of 27 OECD countries in PISA 2000, when mathematical literacy was a minor focus of the programme.
- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is re-examining the structure of the Mathematics curriculum at Senior Cycle level.

INSURANCE AND ROAD SAFETY

We will take a comprehensive set of actions to address the rate of injuries and deaths on our roads and we will tackle high costs of insurance particularly motor and employer liability cover.

We will take actions to improve road safety and driver behaviour, to reduce the legal cost of accident claims and to make the insurance market more consumer-friendly.

We will implement urgently the recommendations of the Motor Insurance Advisory Board.

- Penalty points for speeding have been operating since 31 October, 2002.
- In August 2002, a high level Implementation Group produced an Action Plan to give effect to the Motor Insurance Advisory Board recommendations.
- The MIAB Action Plan specifies how the 67 recommendations of the MIAB will be implemented.
- It identifies the stakeholder responsible for delivery of each recommendation, a statement of the time frame for implementation and a projection of the anticipated impact on insurance costs.
- A number of the MIAB recommendations were implemented when the Motor Insurance (Provision of Information) (Renewal of Policy of Insurance) Regulations, came into effect on 31 October 2002.
- These require clients to be given 15 days prior notice of the renewal of their insurance policy as well as a 'no claims bonus' certificate where applicable.
- Furthermore, many of the MIAB recommendations will be dealt with in the Bill covering commitments in the Government Programme in the area of personal injuries/civil liability.
- The general scheme of this Bill is being prepared with the aim of completing it this year.
- The Committee on Court Practice and Procedure is examining all aspects of practice and procedure relating to personal injuries litigation.
- Some recommendations have been implemented or otherwise responded to i.e. restrictions on advertising by solicitors and leaving the civil jurisdiction limits of the courts unchanged.

We will enact the legislation required to provide for the new Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority which will regulate insurance in the consumer interest.

- The Irish Financial Services Regulatory Authority has been established following the enactment of the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Bill 2002.
- The relevant Departmental functions, including consumer-related functions of the Office of the Director of Consumer Affairs and the Registrar of Friendly Societies transferred to the new body, effective from 1 May 2003.

We will support the achievement of a single EU market in Insurance.

- The Competition Authority is carrying out a major study of the Insurance market in Ireland. This study will contribute to the development of policy at both national and EU level.
- In the Irish case it will help to identify factors which create barriers to entry and thus inhibit the full functioning of the single market.
- In addition, the overall thrust of the insurance reform programme to lower the cost of insurance should help to make the Irish market more attractive to new entrants.

The costs of insurance claims will be reduced by a series of actions we will take to reform civil law procedures, as set out in the section of this Programme for Government on Crime and Law Reform.

- A general scheme of a Bill covering commitments in the Programme for Government in the area of personal injuries/civil liability is in preparation.
- Also, the Committee on Court Practice and Procedure is examining all aspects of practice and procedure relating to personal injuries litigation. The latest information is that a report will be available by summer.

We will establish the Personal Injuries Assessment Board.

- The Report of the Implementation Group set up to progress the establishment of the Personal Injuries Assessment Board (PIAB) was published in October 2002.
- Following that, the interim PIAB was appointed in November 2002.
- The social partners, the insurance industry, the legal and medical professions and consumer interests are represented on the Board.
- Its primary focus is on developing a pragmatic and workable system for handling insurance claims to the benefit of the claimant and policyholders in general.
- Intensive preparatory work got underway late in 2002 in advance of the inaugural meeting of the Board.

We will ensure improved standards of driving by establishing a training scheme for new drivers. Initially the scheme will be voluntary and will aim to attract lower insurance premiums for those who participate. If this voluntary scheme is successful we will consider making it compulsory.

- One major insurance company has begun a scheme for its policyholders which will result in lower premia once successfully completed.

- There is a voluntary Register of Approved Driving Instructors already in operation and the possibility of extending this scheme is under active review, rather than creating a totally new structure to duplicate what already exists.
- The immediate priority is to reduce long term reliance on a provisional licence and measures on this will be announced gradually during the second half of this year.

We will bring forward road safety measures and safe driving education in the secondary school curriculum.

- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has recently completed its advisory work on driver education in the school curriculum.
- The advice of the NCCA is currently being considered.

Work on the penalty points system will be completed to ensure its implementation at an early date.

- Penalty points for speeding have been operating since 31 October, 2002.
- Work is progressing on the development of the IT systems of the Gardaí and the Courts Service after which the full application of the penalty points system will be achieved.
- Penalty points notices are being issued from the Vehicle Registration Unit in Shannon in support of the interim penalty points system.

A renewed three-year Road Safety strategy will be introduced to target speeding, drink driving, seatbelt wearing and pedestrian safety in order to significantly reduce road deaths and injuries.

- The High Level Group on Road Safety has been tasked with the preparation of this new strategy that will span the period 2003 – 2005.
- It is expected that specific proposals for the strategy will be brought to Government later this year.

We will establish a dedicated Traffic Corps.

- Detailed consultation process involving the Departments of Transport, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Garda Síochána is being progressed.
- We are also examining the position internationally in order to establish the practice in other EU States.

The high cost of business insurance is undermining enterprise and job creation. We will take actions to limit the cost of public liability insurance on business. The civil law reform measures we will take will be central. In particular:

- We will establish a set of guidelines for damages for particular injuries
 - We will initiate urgent consultations on the issue of making employer liability insurance compulsory in order to benefit from bonding/compensation arrangements.
- A Reform Programme was announced on 25 October 2002, with the objective of bringing about a reduction in insurance costs by the industry, to the benefit of consumers and business alike.
 - The Programme seeks to improve the functioning of the market and to investigate the competitiveness of the market.

- The Reform Programme draws together the commitments above into an integrated package.

We will require certain forms of action to be supported by sworn affidavits so as to create a liability in perjury for fraudulent claims.

- A general scheme of a Bill covering commitments in the Programme for Government in the area of personal injuries/civil liability is being prepared.
- The intention is to provide that the plaintiff must swear an affidavit verifying the details of his/her claim and that, where any element of a claim is made in bad faith, the whole claim will fail.

We will ban 'no-foal, no-fee' advertising by solicitors.

- This has been implemented by the Solicitors (Amendment) Act 2002 and the Solicitors (Advertising) Regulations 2002, both of which became fully operational in this regard on 1 February 2003.

ENSURING BALANCED REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPING THE REGIONS & THE ISLANDS

We will complete and implement the National Spatial Strategy, which is aimed at ensuring that all the regions develop to their potential.

- The National Spatial Strategy (NSS) was published in November 2002.
- The Minister for the Environment and Local Government will be responsible for leading the implementation of the NSS, through establishing and supporting the necessary interaction, monitoring and other mechanisms to ensure consistency between the NSS and the spatial aspects of relevant policies and programmes.
- Structures and mechanisms to integrate the NSS into planning and activities at Government, Departmental, State Agency, regional and local levels are being put in place to ensure that it directs the spatial aspects of public sector planning, policies and programmes, including the determination of investment priorities.
- The NSS will also be rolled out through regional and local authorities, starting with the preparation and adoption of regional planning guidelines.
- Integrated planning frameworks will be put in place for the gateways and hubs identified in the NSS.
- The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Housing, Infrastructure and Public Private Partnerships will monitor the implementation of the NSS.

While seeking to consolidate and enhance the international competitiveness of Dublin and our other main cities, we will further encourage a greater proportion of new inward investment to focus on areas outside the Greater Dublin Area, in line with the National Spatial Strategy.

- We are involved in ongoing contact with our agencies to ensure that their plans and strategies are fully in line with the policies of the National Spatial Strategy.
- Overall strategy is based on a Gateway approach to regional economic development, coinciding with the nine NSS gateways.

- The intention is that each Gateway town will lead the economic development of its region through stimulating growth in its surrounding hinterland and a number of related towns and rural areas.
- Both IDA and Enterprise Ireland have re-focused their resources on regions outside Dublin, and particular account is taken of the needs of the BMW area in matters such as transport, roads, education and telecommunications infrastructure.

We will move forward the progressive decentralisation of Government Offices and Agencies taking into account the National Spatial Strategy.

- The issue of decentralisation is being reviewed in the context of recent developments relating to the Spatial Strategy.
- As part of the deliberative process, careful consideration is being given to a wide range of important issues before a final decision on a new programme is taken.

We will ensure that the particular development needs of the Border, Midlands and West region continue to be addressed.

- Our National Spatial Strategy (NSS) is a 20 year planning framework designed to enable every part of the country to grow and develop to its potential.
- It recognises that various regions of the country have different roles, and aims to organise and co-ordinate these roles in a complementary way.
- The objective of the NSS is to allow regions to become more competitive in terms of investment and job opportunities, while ensuring a high quality urban environment, as well as vibrant rural areas.
- The Strategy aims to build up the strengths of different areas in order to achieve more balanced regional development and population growth.
- It crucially recognises that a greater share of economic activity must take place outside the Greater Dublin Area.

- As part of the implementation of the NSS, each of the Regional Authorities in the BMW region will prepare Regional Planning Guidelines for its region.

The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be pushed through to a successful conclusion. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.

- Grant-aid of €9.2 million for 2002 and 2003 was approved following the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Regional Operational Programmes.
- A renewed three year PSO air services programme to the regional airports was launched in 2002.

We will significantly improve transport services in the regions.

- See section on 'Rural Transport' in this document.

We will extend the gas grid and ensure that significant investment is made in developing the electricity grid in the regions.

- Through ESB Networks we are undertaking a significant investment programme to upgrade and develop the transmission and distribution system involving a proposed spend of €4 billion over the period 2002 — 2007.
- This renewal and reinforcement programme will cater for the strong increase in demand for electricity in the Irish market and will support development of the national economy.
- It includes the upgrading and renewal of networks built during the rural electrification era of the 1950s.
- In 2002, a total of €540 million was spent — €136m transmission and €404m distribution. A total of 6,600km of medium voltage (MV) network was refurbished, which compares to an average of approximately 1,600km per annum in the previous three years.
- ESB proposes to spend €604 million in 2003 — €142m transmission and €462m distribution. The company is on target at this stage in achieving this objective. A network refurbishment target of 15,000km of infrastructure is planned for 2003 along with significant upgrading of the high voltage 38kV and 110kV networks.
- In regard to the Natural Gas Network, the second Ireland-UK interconnector (IC2) was completed in November 2002. IC2 enhances Ireland's security of gas supply and has facilitated the expansion of the onshore network.
- A significant point in the development of the onshore

network will be reached this year with the completion of the Ringmain project. The finalisation of this project will mean that Dublin, Galway, Limerick, and Cork will be linked by way of a high-pressure transmission ring that will bring gas to a large number of previously un-serviced areas and strengthen the overall physical security of the network.

- The network is also being developed on an all-island basis with a South/North interconnector linking Gormanston to Belfast due for completion in 2006, and a pipeline between Belfast and Derry due for completion in Autumn 2004.

Islands

We will identify proposals to provide a subsidised cargo service to islands in consultation with island communities and ferry operators.

- A Steering Committee has been established to progress this study and the request for tenders was advertised recently.
- Following the award of a contract, it is expected that the study will be completed within three months.

We will provide a new fixed wing air service to Tory Island, Co. Donegal and Inisbofin, Co. Galway and upgrade the existing infrastructure at Inis Mór, Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, Co. Galway.

- A winter helicopter service is provided to Tory, in addition to a regular subsidised ferry service.
- The Aran Islands are served by two subsidised ferry services (a passenger service from Ros an Mhíl and a service primarily for freight from Galway), together with regular air services from Connemara Airport.
- Work is continuing meanwhile on assessing the capital and current cost implications of proposals for a fixed-wing air service to Tory and Inishboffin, and the upgrading of existing infrastructure on the Aran Islands.

We will provide Broadband technology to offshore islands.

- Discussions are proceeding with CLÁR Programme Managers with a view to running wireless/other pilots in CLÁR area including the islands.

We will introduce a home improvement grant in line with the home improvement grants available to Gaeltacht Communities, to non-Gaeltacht islands, and will increase the level of new house grants on non-Gaeltacht islands to the same level as that available on Gaeltacht Islands.

- It is proposed, in view of the exceptional costs arising in regard to construction on islands, to carry out research which may form the basis of a case for progressing this objective.
- The new-house grant scheme was terminated in order to ensure a sustainable match between expenditure and resources, and to concentrate housing programmes on areas of greatest impact and social need. The Government is committed to increasing the supply of housing and bringing moderation to the rate of house price increases, including increasing investment in the provision of serviced land for housing and the more effective use of that land through improved planning guidelines on residential densities.

We will include transport costs for schoolchildren as a constituent part of the Remote Area Grant.

- The question of including transport costs for Island school children as a constituent part of the Remote Area Grant with effect from September 2003 is being considered in the context of available resources at present.

We will ensure that healthcare provision on the offshore islands is developed in line with the principles of the Health Strategy, particularly in relation to the expansion of primary care services.

- The Primary Care Strategy is being implemented initially through the establishment of ten primary care teams in a diversity of locations and settings around the country.
- Later roll-out of the new primary care model will draw on experience gained in these projects.
- The model will be refined and developed by agreement through the joint learning which these initial implementation projects will allow for.
- The health boards are also being asked to develop plans to “mainstream” the multi-disciplinary team-working concept throughout the system.
- This will provide the context in which plans to apply the principles of the new primary care model to services for offshore islands can be further developed.
- Recent initiatives include the appointment of a doctor to serve Inis Meáin and Inis Oírr, and the opening of a new health centre on Inishturk.
- Funding approved in principle to support the Western Health Board in providing a health centre on Inis Oírr.

We will establish Comhairle na nOileán.

- Discussions are under way with Comhdháil Oileáin na

hÉireann regarding the means by which this objective might be progressed.

AN INTEGRATED TRANSPORT POLICY

Integrated Transport

We will establish an integrated Department of Transport with responsibility for the national roads programme, aviation and public transport.

- Department of Transport established.

We will promote integrated ticketing and smart card technologies which will allow a differential pricing system to be introduced.

- The Railway Procurement Agency has been given statutory responsibility for the implementation of an integrated ticketing system based on smartcard technologies for initial deployment in the Greater Dublin Area. Target date for completion of the project is end-2005.
- In advance of the introduction of full smartcard technologies, Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath and Iarnród Éireann are now offering bus and rail integrated tickets for daily, weekly and monthly travel, based on magnetic strip technology.

We will introduce legislation to establish a new Greater Dublin Land Use and Transport Authority with a strong mandate to bring greater focus and better co-ordination to the implementation of this strategy and to land-use and transport issues generally.

- Proposals announced for regulatory reform of public transport and the restructuring of CIE to the Public Transport Partnership Forum in November, 2002.
- Ongoing dialogue with the various stakeholders in relation to the proposals with the objective of seeking an agreed approach to the reform programme.

We will replace the Road Transport Act 1932 with modernised legislation to allow inter alia for new services in the bus market.

- Statement to the Public Transport Partnership Forum in November, 2002 recognising the need for updating legislation.
- Significant bilateral discussions have been held with the Unions and a Restructuring Implementation Group comprising representatives of the Department of Transport, the Department of Finance and CIE has been established to move the preparatory work.

Further progress will be made on upgrading the bus fleet, providing bus priorities both in Dublin and other cities, and in increasing the level and frequency of service and the interchangeability of commuter tickets on bus and rail.

- Bus Átha Cliath has ordered 58 new buses for delivery in 2003 and 30 commuter coaches have been ordered by Bus Éireann.
- In advance of the introduction of full smartcard technologies, Bus Éireann, Bus Átha Cliath and Iarnród Éireann are now offering bus and rail integrated tickets for daily, weekly and monthly travel, based on magnetic strip technology.

New services will be introduced both to some new housing developments and to existing poorly served communities.

- This is part of public transport reform and is being actively examined in conjunction with the various stakeholders.

We will ensure that access to public transport is one of the criteria taken into consideration by the planning process.

- Section 10 of *Planning and Development Act* provides, inter alia, that local authority development plans must include objectives for the provision of infrastructure, including transport, energy and communications facilities, water supplies, waste recovery and disposal facilities, waste water services and ancillary facilities.
- Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Residential Density pursue our policy of encouraging more sustainable urban development by the avoidance of sub-urbanisation and the promotion of higher residential densities in conjunction with improved public transport systems.
- The Guidelines stress the importance of encouraging higher residential densities along public transport routes.

Railways

We will complete the first rail safety programme and initiate a new five year programme beginning in 2004.

- The Railway Safety Programme 1999-2003 is ongoing and will be completed at the end of 2003.
- Approval for the re-convening of the High Level Task Force on Railway Safety to draw up a new five year programme beginning in 2004.

An independent Railway Safety Authority will be established.

- The Railway Safety Commission will be established following the enactment of the Railway Safety Bill.

We will establish Iarnród Éireann as an independent state company in its own right with full management autonomy.

- Proposals announced for regulatory reform of public transport and the restructuring of CIE.
- Ongoing dialogue with the various stakeholders in relation to the proposals with the objective of seeking an agreed approach to the reform programme.

A strategic rail review will provide a blueprint for the future development of the railways in Ireland and we will introduce new regional and commuter routes.

- The Strategic Rail Review was published in April and this comprehensive report is the most significant review and rigorous analysis of the rail sector ever undertaken in Ireland.
- It is also the first report in the history of the State to recommend the revitalisation and rebuilding of the railways.
- The Government has considered the review and believes it provides the framework within which we can implement an ambitious and realistic programme for the future development of the rail passenger and rail freight sector in Ireland.
- Accordingly, we are establishing an implementation group that will be charged with rigorously monitoring the implementation of the rail investment programme.
- The Strategic Review recommends a rail capital investment programme of €8.5 billion over the next 20 years.

The DART and outer suburban lines will be upgraded.

- Work has begun on the DART upgrade project which, when completed, will double the capacity of the DART system since 2000.

- Capacity on the outer suburban rail network will be increased during the year when 80 new railcars are brought into service.

Improvements to mainline rail services and rolling stock will continue.

- 67 mainline railway carriages were ordered in December, 2002 for delivery in 2005 and the Heuston Station project will also be completed this year.

Dublin Light Rail (LUAS) will be introduced between Tallaght and Connolly Station and between Sandyford and St. Stephen's Green.

- The Railway Procurement Agency (RPA), the body with responsibility for Luas, has indicated that the Tallaght to Connolly Station line will be completed in May 2004 and the Sandyford to St. Stephens Green line in March 2004.
- A period of 2 to 3 months will be required following these dates for testing, commissioning and general safety checking before passenger services commence.

We will develop the metro for Dublin on a PPP basis making the maximum use of private finance and achieving a link to Dublin Airport by 2007.

- Outline Business Case (OBC) for Phase 1 of the Dublin Metro which includes a link from the City Centre to Dublin being examined.
- In the coming weeks, recommendations will be brought to Government, including an assessment of the timescales involved.

We will fully support the independent Railway Procurement Agency.

- Legislation to establish the Railway Procurement Agency has now been enacted.

Roads

We will fully implement the National Roads Programme provided for in the National Development Plan.

- Good progress is being made in the implementation of the national roads development programme provided for in the NDP.
- Exchequer investment in the programme over the period 2000-2003 will amount to approximately €3.8 billion.
- 26 projects have been completed over the period 2000-2002 and a further 13 will open to traffic this year.

- Due to the increased cost of the programme overall, some projects will take longer to implement than originally envisaged but we are committed to maintaining investment at a high level in the upgrading of the national roads network.

We will continue with the programme of investment in non-national roads up to 2005 and we will follow this with a further significant investment programme.

- The record levels of funding for non-national roads in 2002 was matched in 2003 with provision of €434 million in Non-National Road Grant Allocations announced in January 2003.
- Local Improvement Scheme Allocations of €11 million for 2003 (the same as allocated in 2002) were announced in March 2003.
- We will also undertake a new Pavement Condition Study in 2003.
- This study will quantify the extent of the remaining deficiencies in the non-national road network and will inform the funding needs and investment decisions for future years.

We will put in place a new 5 year plan to ensure that non-national roads are properly signposted.

- A provision of €5.1 million has been made under a new Regional Road Signposting Programme targeted at high tourism areas.

Cycleways and Footpaths

We will invest in expanding the national network of cycleways in order to encourage more people to cycle and to promote cycling as a safe and healthy mode of transport.

- Traffic Management Grant funding for local authorities which funds measures such as QBC's, cycle routes and traffic management measures is administered by the DTO. €40m is being provided in 2003.
- A high priority continues to be afforded to funding the provision by local authorities of cycle routes under this grant scheme.
- To date, 170kms of cycle network (QBC cycle facilities and dedicated cycle facilities) have been constructed in the Greater Dublin Area, together with 2,500 cycle parking spaces.

- The DTO is currently conducting a review of the regional cycle strategy and facilities together with development of a four-year action plan for cycling 2003-2006.
- A revised cycling design manual is also in preparation and should be published by the DTO in 2003.

We will allocate a portion of the budget on road improvement projects to the provision of new footpaths to allow pedestrians to walk in greater safety and comfort.

- Non-national road grants of almost €434m have been allocated to local authorities in 2003, maintaining the record level of funding provided in 2002. These allocations include grant categories which can be used for the provision of footpaths, such as—
 - Discretionary Improvement and Block Grants allocated to local authorities for a wide range of road improvement works, including the provision and improvement of footpaths and pedestrian facilities. Discretionary Improvement Grants of almost €21m and Block Grants of almost €13m have been allocated to local authorities in 2003.
 - Special Block Grant for Footpath/Carriageway Restoration; over €13.5m has been allocated to local authorities in 2003.
 - Dublin and Regional Traffic Management Schemes; allocations of €5m and just over €2m respectively have been provided in 2003. This funding can be used for different types of traffic management works, including the provision and improvement of pedestrian facilities.

Rural Transport

We will continue to support the Rural Transport Initiative which will run until end 2003.

- It is anticipated that €6 million in funding will have been provided by end 2003.

On completion of the current RTI programme, we will develop in conjunction with the Rural Transport Sub-Committee of the Public Transport Forum a new programme to further promote and support the development of innovative, community based public transport projects.

- A report from an inter-Departmental Committee is being considered.
- We are committed to bringing forward future proposals for rural transport later this year.

We will ensure that every county has a comprehensive rural transport initiative in place.

- The RTI is currently operational in all counties, with the exception of Louth. No application for funding was received from Louth.

We will embark on a new initiative to further develop localised bus services, particularly in rural areas.

- The RTI provides funding for voluntary and community organizations and community partnerships to address the particular transport needs of their rural areas.
- We will bring forward future proposals for rural transport later this year.

Traffic Corps

A dedicated Traffic Corps with its own staff and ring-fenced budget will be established following a six-month consultation process.

- Detailed consultation process involving the Departments of Transport, Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Garda Síochána is being progressed.
- The Department of Transport is also examining the position internationally in order to establish the practice in other EU States.

Taxis

We will work in a fair and equitable way to ensure taxi supply matches demand.

and,

We will continue the process of making taxis wheelchair accessible.

and,

We will implement the recommendations of the Taxi Hardship Panel.

and,

We will appoint a national regulator for the future regulation of licensing, standards and the quality of service.

- We approved proposals for the establishment of an Office of National Taxi Regulator and a Taxi Advisory Commission, initially on a non-statutory basis, pending the development of legislative proposals.

- We approved the implementation on a phased basis of the recommendations of the Taxi Hardship Panel by the National Taxi Regulator.
- The preparation of the necessary legislation is proceeding as a matter of urgency.
- The Government has appointed an interim Chairman of the Commission for Taxi Regulation pending the recruitment of a statutory Chairman.
- The interim Chairman is engaged in detailed consultations with those involved in the taxi, hackney and limousine industry, local authorities, An Garda Síochána and other interest groups with a view to assessing and addressing issues relating to standards in the industry.
- The interim Chairman has also been asked to advise on the appropriate procedures to be used to implement the findings of the Taxi Hardship Panel.

Aviation

We will support the agreed Aer Lingus survival plan.

- The Aer Lingus Survival Plan has been fully implemented and the Company has returned to profitability one year ahead of target.

Low cost travel is the fastest growing sector in the aviation industry. We will ensure that all our State airports will cater for the requirements of this sector.

- Applications by Aer Rianta for planning approval for a temporary facility of this nature to be in place at Dublin Airport for this summer's tourist season and for a permanent facility to be in place in 2004 are currently the subject of third party appeals to An Bord Pleanála.
- Shannon has adequate capacity for the foreseeable future following completion of the terminal extension in 2000.
- Aer Rianta have planning permission for a major new terminal at Cork.

We will ensure that a low cost facility is built at Pier D in Dublin Airport without delay.

- See above

We will examine proposals for a new independent terminal at Dublin Airport and progress them if the evidence suggests that such a terminal will deliver significant benefits.

- Government has approved seeking expressions of interest.

- Expressions of interest received from 13 consortia and companies.
- Report from Panel of Experts will be examined.
- Following consultation process with relevant interested parties, proposals will be brought to Government.

We will support the development of new air passenger services at all airports.

- It is our policy to encourage the development of new air passenger services at all airports.

We will continue to transform Aer Rianta and as part of this process we will ensure that Shannon and Cork Airports have greater autonomy and independence.

- Following consultation process with relevant interested parties, proposals will be brought to Government.

The NDP capital development support for regional airports will be fully implemented. A new three year Public Service Obligation air service programme to regional airports will be launched this year.

- Commitment is being delivered.
- Grant-aid of €9.2 million for 2002 and 2003 has been approved for grant-aid following the Mid-Term Evaluation of the Regional Operational Programmes, which is currently underway.
- A renewed three year PSO air services programme to the regional airports was launched last year and regular PSO air services are now operating to the regional airports.

We will address the key issues required to make Ireland an international hub for airfreight.

- This issue has already been discussed with the Irish Association of International Express Carriers which represents the main international air freight operators including DHL, UPS, Federal Express and TNT.

THE ENVIRONMENT

We are committed to implementing an ambitious environmental programme.

Air Quality

We will implement an upgraded air quality monitoring system, including “real-time” reporting.

- The EPA is the designated competent body for air quality monitoring at national level.

- The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2002 require the dissemination of public information on ambient air quality on a real-time basis and procedures for this are now being developed.

We will extend the ban on smoky coal to additional centres.

- Regulations extending the ban on the marketing, sale and distribution of bituminous coal to Bray, Kilkenny, Sligo and Tralee were made in March 2003 and enter into force on 1st October 2003.

We will prepare and implement a comprehensive strategy to deal with emissions of critical air pollutants.

- A public consultation paper is close to finalisation.
- On foot of responses to the consultation process, a strategy to reduce national emissions as required by the EU National Emissions Ceilings Directive and the UNECE "Gothenburg" Protocol will be brought to Government for approval later this year.

Water Quality

We will ensure that discharges of untreated sewage from our big cities and towns into the sea cease by end 2003.

- Projects providing for secondary treatment or better in most of our major cities and towns have been completed or are at an advanced stage of construction.
- The remaining six projects, Howth, Waterford City, Tramore, Shanganagh, Bray and Bundoran, are all approved for construction in the Water Services Investment Programme 2002-2004 and are being advanced towards construction as a matter of priority.
- A number of large PPP projects currently under way will greatly facilitate the achievement of this objective.
- Construction of the Ringsend DBO (Design, Build and Operate) Wastewater Treatment Plant is now completed and commissioning is underway. It is expected that the plant will be handed over to Dublin City Council by mid-2003.
- Construction of the Cork Main Drainage scheme, also a DBO project, is well underway and is expected to be complete by mid-2003. Limerick Main Drainage Construction (DBO) is well advanced with completion expected by Autumn 2003.

- Other coastal towns where similar PPP projects are at various stages of procurement throughout the country include Arklow, Waterford, Wexford, Donegal and Sligo.

We will ensure that we meet the requirements of the Urban Waste Water Directive in relation to treatment of sewage. In addition, we will provide, or be at an advanced stage of planning, wastewater treatment facilities for all population centres over 1,000 by 2005.

- The Water Services Investment Programme 2002-2004 incorporates all the remaining wastewater schemes needed to comply with the treatment standards for urban areas under the EU Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive.
- Compliance with Directive deadlines is a central objective in the advancement of these schemes.
- There are 109 agglomerations with a population equivalent greater than 1,000 which are not encompassed by the EU Urban Wastewater Directive, either because of their size or the fact that they do not discharge into freshwaters or estuaries.
- Of these 109 agglomerations, 62 already have secondary treatment facilities and a further 36 are provided for under Water Services Investment Programme 2002-2004.
- The 11 remaining locations will be added to future phases of the Programme to ensure that the planning of projects in these areas will be advanced as quickly as possible, and not later than 2005.
- Work is ongoing on a National Waste Water Study which involves collection and analysis of data on 180 urban drainage schemes serving population equivalents of 2000 or more.
- The Study will review existing infrastructure, outline deficiencies, identify policies and strategies for developing sustainable drainage systems in the various collection areas and outline recommendations for upgrading, together with cost estimates for same.
- Local authorities are currently finalising Sludge Management Plans to manage the increasing volumes of sewage sludge arising as a consequence of the major investment in waste water treatment facilities under the NDP.
- Plans will address the management of water and waste water sludge in a progressive and environmentally sustainable way.

We will ensure that the water quality threats posed by phosphates and nitrates are tackled.

- Measures are being actively pursued in the context of ongoing substantial investment in waste water treatment facilities, implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the development of proposals to strengthen the application of good farming practice for environmental protection.

We will fully implement the Water Framework Directive.

- Implementation is being actively pursued across a wide range of activities.
- Two major projects on river basin management (South-East region and Shannon) have commenced and other projects are being developed.
- A joint North-South consultation paper on implementation of the Directive was issued in March 2003.
- The Government's Water Services Pricing Policy Framework reflects the requirements of Article 9 of the Directive on recovery of costs for water services. The policy framework, adopted by the Government in Autumn 1998, requires:
 - the recovery of average operational and marginal capital costs of water services from all non-domestic users;
 - the completion of the metering of all such users by 2006;
 - the maintenance of the status quo on not charging for domestic water services, and
 - provision and the meeting of these costs through the Local Government Fund in the case of operational costs and through the Department of Environment and Local Government's capital programme in the case of infrastructural costs.
- Comprehensive guidance on implementation of the water services pricing policy was circulated to local authorities in 2002.
- Tenders have been invited for a major pilot-metering demonstration project on a Design Build and Operate basis in the context of meeting the water services pricing policy objective for the universal metering of non-domestic users by 2006.
- Development is progressing on a Complete Information System (CiS) to provide comprehensive management information on the delivery of water services.

We will significantly increase the number of blue flags and bring designated bathing places up to required EU standards.

- Ongoing substantial investment in wastewater treatment facilities will secure improved water quality in coastal areas.
- A specific project is being pursued to identify options to promote improved performance under the Blue Flag Scheme.

We will ensure that group water schemes meet the quality requirements of the EU Drinking Water Directive.

- Installation of water treatment and disinfection facilities is required in some 500 privately sourced group water schemes in order to achieve compliance with the Drinking Water Regulations.
- The annual allocations to local authorities for 2003 under the Rural Water Programme provide for the advancement this year of projects to improve the water supplies to 38,000 of the 50,000 householders affected.
- The requirements of the remaining 12,000 households will be accommodated as early as possible under future rounds of the Programme.

We will introduce a new Water Services Bill to modernise the outdated legislation in this area.

- The Water Services Bill is now at an advanced stage of preparation and publication is anticipated in 2003.
- Preparation of the Bill represents a major legislative exercise including consolidation and modernisation of the existing diverse body of water services legislation (extending over some 18 Acts and as far back as the 19th Century); introduction of a licensing system for group water schemes in the particular context of the serious water quality problems in this sector; and improvement of national water services infrastructure management generally in the context of major infrastructural investment now being made under NDP.

Waste

We will ensure that local authority waste management plans, guided by the waste hierarchy of prevention, minimisation, reuse, recycle, recovery and safe disposal, are fully and speedily implemented.

- All local authorities have adopted local and regional waste management plans.

- To assist with implementation of the plans, a waste management grants scheme was launched in 2002 in order to provide funding for the provision of waste recycling and recovery infrastructure.
- We are working with the South-East Region in carrying out a feasibility study into how to provide an integrated waste management solution as a PPP, in order to meet the requirements of their regional waste management plan.
- The Dublin Biological Waste Management Facilities project is also progressing.
- The four Dublin local authorities are working jointly to progress, as PPPs, other initiatives contained within the Dublin plan, as outlined below.

We will intensify our waste prevention efforts through an ambitious and well-resourced National Waste Prevention Programme.

- Funding for the establishment of a National Waste Programme has been identified and steps are now being taken to put the programme in place.

We believe that Mass Burn Incineration of unsegregated waste, with no energy recovery, is not an acceptable practice today.

- Our policy is set out in the policy documents “Changing Our Ways” and “Delivering Change — Preventing and Recycling Waste”.
- All local and regional waste management plans comply with Government policy which recognises the waste hierarchy of Prevention, Minimisation, Re-use/Recycling and Energy Recovery.
- Landfill disposal is the least favoured option.
- The plans cater for the provision of segregated collection services in urban areas and the provision of modern integrated waste facilities reflecting the waste hierarchy.
- Dublin City Waste-to-Energy project (Poolbeg) is being developed as a DBOF concession contract.
- With a capital value estimated at between €125 million and €250 million, it will thermally treat residual waste, and recover energy generated both as electricity and heat.
- It is envisaged that invitations to tender will issue in 2003, with the award of contract taking place by end-2003 or early 2004.

Thermal treatment, using best available technology, must be based on prior extraction from the waste stream of recyclables and problematic materials (e.g. metals, batteries) to the maximum extent possible, and on ensuring the highest regulatory standards through the EPA licensing system.

- Draft Regulations have been prepared to transpose the EU Directives on Incineration into national law, principally through existing licensing functions of the EPA and in some instances by the local authorities.
- The Regulations will be enacted shortly.
- The recently published *Protection of the Environment Bill* provides for a change in the technical basis of EPA licencing from BATNEEC (Best Available Technology Not Entailing Excessive Cost) to BAT (Best Available Techniques).

In terms of recycling, we will progressively extend door-to-door collections of recyclables to most remaining urban centres. The recycling effort will be assisted by the in-built incentive of weight-based charging and the banning of certain types of waste from landfill. We will also make recycling easier by doubling the number of Civic Amenity Sites and by significantly improving the availability of “bring banks”, coupled with new standards to ensure that all bring banks are managed properly and operated clearly. We will support community recycling activities.

- The Waste Management (Packaging) Regulations 2003 — effective from 1st March 2003 — require all manufacturing and retail businesses participating in placing packaging on the market to segregate the packaging waste arising on their own premises into specified waste streams (i.e. waste aluminum, fiberboard, glass, paper, plastic sheeting, steel and wood) and to have it collected by authorised operators for recycling.
- The Regulations also provide that this “specified” waste may no longer be landfilled.
- Funding from the Environment Fund for community recycling initiatives is being considered.
- The local and regional waste management plans provide for the progressive introduction of segregated household collection of dry recyclables in urban areas.
- Segregated collection services — serving over 300,000 households — are already available throughout the Dublin region, as well as in areas of Galway, Kerry, Kildare, Limerick, Louth, Meath, Monaghan, Tipperary and

Waterford, and are being rolled out steadily throughout the country.

- In November 2002 an allocation of €15million in grant assistance was made towards the provision of waste recovery infrastructure. This will support the development of bring banks and civic amenity sites, and the expansion of existing material recovery facilities. These developments will enable increased collection and recovery of recyclable materials.
- A second round of grant allocations will be announced shortly along with additional financial measures to assist local authorities in operating recycling and recovery facilities.
- The Dublin Dry Recyclables Project is an Operation and Maintenance PPP contract, involving the segregation, collection, processing and disposal of household dry recyclable materials. It came on stream during 2002, following a pilot 2-year phased rollout. By end 2002, up to 250,000 households were serviced by the scheme and it is hoped to expand the range of materials collected. Dublin City Council is leading the project on behalf of all Dublin area authorities.

At industry level, we will extend the producer responsibility initiative in the area of packaging waste to the areas of construction and demolition waste, end-of-life vehicles, tyres, newsprint, electronic equipment and batteries. We will strive to ensure that these initiatives can be implemented on an agreed voluntary basis. However, failing agreement, we will regulate to achieve the desired recovery and recycling objectives.

- The two existing producer responsibility initiatives in respect of packaging waste and farm plastics waste were added to in June 2002 with the establishment of the National Construction and Demolition Waste Council (NCDWC).
- This council, involving representation from all sectors of the industry, is tasked with significantly increasing the recycling of construction and demolition waste.
- Further producer responsibility initiatives are being developed in respect of end-of-life vehicles, electrical and electronic equipment waste, newsprint, tyres and batteries.

In terms of dealing with residual waste, we will ensure that we dramatically cut the volumes of waste going into landfill.

- The waste grants scheme is providing funding for waste infrastructure to facilitate the achievement of targets of a

diversion of 50% of overall household waste away from landfill and a minimum 65% reduction in biodegradable wastes consigned to landfill over a 15 year timescale.

- New Packaging Regulations came into effect on 1st March 2003, placing a requirement on producers to segregate specified packaging waste arising on commercial premises for recycling.

We will develop further the concept of community gain in association with the delivery of major infrastructure proposals under the local authority waste management plans.

- This will be pursued in the context of further measures being considered to support implementation of local authority waste management plans.

We will establish a National Waste Management Advisory Board to co-ordinate, monitor, review and advise on all aspects of waste management policy. We will also establish a Recycling Forum as well as a Market Development Group to examine the issues around developing markets for recycled materials.

- Steps are being taken to put the Market Development Programme in place in 2003.
- Issues regarding the establishment of the other structures are under review.

Litter

We will fully implement the new National Litter Pollution Monitoring System and the wide range of measures in our Litter Action Plan.

- The National Litter Pollution Monitoring System has been developed; almost all local authorities have begun system implementation in their area.
- We are monitoring progress on the implementation of the wide range of actions in the Litter Action Plan.
- The *Protection of the Environment Bill 2003* contains enhanced anti-litter provisions as set out in the Litter Action Plan.

We will use resources from the newly-established Environment Fund to make further progress on raising litter awareness and increasing enforcement.

- The Litter Budget 2003 is being funded from the

Environment Fund; this will enable us to continue progress on our anti-litter programme.

We will ensure that all government and other state agencies fulfill their obligations under the Litter Pollution Act.

- All Government Departments and the main State agencies have been requested to outline their proposals to discharge their duties under the 1997 Act.

Climate Change

We will fully implement the National Climate Change Strategy and we will report on progress on an annual basis.

- The first progress report on implementation of the National Climate Change Strategy was published in May 2002, in conjunction with Ireland's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.
- A review of implementation of Strategy, due for publication in 2003, will incorporate a further progress report.
- The ESRI was appointed to carry out a National Survey of Housing Quality to assess condition of the national housing stock.
- The survey contains a strong focus on energy and energy conservation, and the final draft report is currently being considered.

We will implement our greenhouse gas taxation policies on a phased incremental basis and in a manner which takes account of national economic, social and environmental objectives.

- In Budget 2003, the Minister for Finance requested all relevant Government Departments to advance plans for a general carbon energy tax, with a view to introduction.
- Full consultation with interested parties will take place before the introduction of the carbon energy tax.
- Detailed work on the design and implementation of a carbon energy tax has already been undertaken.

We will implement a major communications programme to heighten awareness of the challenges we face in climate change, the measures we must implement and the benefits that will flow from them.

- Following recommendations received from Comhar on

communicating the National Climate Change Strategy, climate change awareness has been incorporated into our environmental information and awareness campaign 2002-2003.

Funding/Eco Taxes

In providing funding to local authorities, we will earmark specific funds which will be available to local authorities for the achievement of defined environmental targets.

- The bulk of the Environment Fund — up to €55million in 2003 — is provided to local authorities for investment in environmental protection projects.
- Since November 2002, €22million from the Fund has been allocated to 71 local authority recycling projects such as “bring banks”, civic amenity sites, transfer stations facilitating recovery activities, materials recovery facilities for dry recyclables, and biological treatment facilities for green and organic household waste.

We will consider the extension of the levy on plastic bags to other areas such as non-reusable packaging.

- The extension of the environmental levy on plastic bags to other materials which are problematic from a litter and waste perspective is currently being considered.

We will rebalance the VRT and motor tax regimes to favour vehicles with lower carbon dioxide emissions.

- As provided for in the National Climate Change Strategy, a rebalancing of the motor tax regime to favour vehicles with lower CO₂ emissions and greater fuel-efficiency is under active consideration.

We will improve the tax incentives for investment in renewable energy in order to reduce our dependence on CO₂-emitting fossil fuels.

- Budget 2003 was the first budget to contain a concrete commitment to full consideration of the introduction of carbon taxation.
- The introduction of a carbon energy tax in 2005, together with other initiatives to encourage renewable energy will provide for a cleaner environment.

Enforcement

We will establish a new Office of Environmental Enforcement to audit the performance of local authorities in discharging their environmental enforcement function, taking action against those lagging behind. The Office will also monitor compliance by public authorities with their environmental obligations. Where significant breaches of environmental legislation occur, the Office will be able to prosecute cases or assist local authorities in doing so.

- Work is underway on the development of detailed proposals in relation to the establishment of an Office of Environmental Enforcement, and will be completed as soon as possible.

We will ensure that penalties for breaches of environmental legislation should reflect the damage to the environment which has been caused. We will also explore the possibility of introducing the Supplemental Environment Project under which fines could be reduced in exchange for a binding commitment to carry out an environmentally beneficial project.

- Increased fines for offences under the *Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992* are proposed in the *Protection of the Environment Bill 2003*.
- The possible introduction of the Supplemental Environment Project is under consideration.

Partnership

We will continue to successfully operate Comhar — National Sustainable Development Partnership as a forum of excellence in terms of discussion and debate on key environmental issues. We will also develop the approach to direct funding for environmental NGOs.

- Comhar continues to participate in the discussion and debate on key environmental issues.
- Capacity building funding has been provided to an umbrella group of nationally-based environmental NGOs, for the development of secretariat and for distribution among member organisations.

Nuclear Safety

We regard the continued existence of Sellafield as

an unacceptable threat to Ireland and that it should be closed.

- Our position is made clear regularly through responses to public consultations on nuclear matters and regular contacts at all levels, and in correspondence with UK authorities.

We will use every diplomatic and legal route available to us to work towards the achievement of this objective.

- We are pursuing separate legal actions against the Sellafield MOX plant through the OSPAR Convention and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS); and through participation at EU and other international bodies where our position is stated at all times individually and with like-minded countries.
- An IAEA Transport Conference on the Safe Transport of Nuclear Materials in July 2004 will have before it three papers from Ireland and Ireland will have nominated a rapporteur.

We will continue to be a leading opponent in all international bodies of attempts to foist nuclear energy on developing countries.

- We joined other like-minded countries in a Declaration on this matter at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002 and will use other opportunities as they arise.

We will keep up-to-date nuclear emergency plans, including sufficient stocks of medical supplies, so as to minimise harm to public health from the effects of any possible exposure to radiation in Ireland.

- The Emergency Plan for Nuclear Accidents is under constant evaluation and updating.
- The Department of Health and Children has distributed iodine tablets to the population.

HOUSING

We will implement a multi-stranded approach to addressing housing needs right across the spectrum.

- This is our overarching commitment in relation to housing policy. Addressing the broad range of housing needs requires a multi-stranded approach, which includes:—
 - maintaining a high level of supply of housing,

through investment in servicing of land, and efficient use of that land through higher residential guidelines;

- bringing forward legislation to reform and modernise the private rented sector; and
 - funding a range of targeted measures to assist low income households and those with social housing or special housing needs.
- Since 1997, over 287,000 houses have been built nationally, and the Government remains committed to continuing the increase in housing supply and bringing moderation to the rate of house price increases.

We will extend the Serviced Land Initiative, make more efficient use of housing land and make further Special Development Zone designations as required.

- 2002 was a record year of housing supply.
- This growth in housing supply was, and is being, facilitated by the continuing investment in serviced land (about 181,000 sites are being provided for under the Serviced Land Initiative) the efficient use of this land as a result of residential density guidelines.
- Progress is being made on the existing Strategic Development Zones: in Hansfield in Fingal, Clonmagadden Valley in Meath, Adamstown in Dublin.

We will commit to a further expansion of the various social housing programmes.

- Output figures for the local authority housing programme in 2002 at 5,074 units was up on that provided in 2001.
- There has also been a significant increase in activity under the affordable housing schemes with 1,675 transactions completed, 3,700 approvals issued under the shared ownership scheme, 860 units completed and in excess of 1,800 units in progress under the Affordable Housing Scheme.
- Substantial progress was also made on the two mixed-housing PPP schemes being undertaken by Fingal County Council and Dublin City Council. Both of these developments were DBF (Design, Build and Finance) projects.

We will assist the voluntary housing sector so that the target of 4,000 accommodation units per annum envisaged under the National Development Plan can be reached.

- In 2002, some 1,360 housing units were provided under

the Capital Assistance Scheme and the Loan Subsidy Scheme.

- This was a record level of output and represented an increase of 8.5% on the 2001 figure.
- In addition, work was in progress on a further 2,500 units of accommodation at the end of 2002 and there were a further 7,000 units at various stages in the pipeline at local level throughout the country.
- Expenditure on the voluntary and co-operative housing programme amounted to €165million in 2002, an increase of almost 15% on 2001 when expenditure was €143.6million.

We will, in line with the National Poverty Strategy, set new housing targets in light of the completion of this year's detailed survey of housing needs.

- Following the publication of the results of the 2002 Assessment of Housing Needs consideration is being given to setting output targets for social housing provision.

We will implement a full package of reforms in the rented accommodation sector, arising from the report of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector.

- It is the objective to meet this target and every effort is being made to do so.
- Reforms relating to tax incentives were introduced in the Finance Acts 2001 and 2002.
- The drafting of the Residential Tenancies Bill to implement the bulk of the reforms is in progress.
- The Bill is a priority in the Government's current legislative programme and is expected to be published early in the Summer session.
- The Report of the Planning Group, established to review Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) rent assistance arrangements, is being finalised and should be brought to Government shortly.
- A key recommendation in the Report is the development of a supply-based approach to rental housing provision, whereby local authorities can direct rent assistance payments to landlords and developers to secure the provision of good standard accommodation for rent subsidy claimants on a long-term basis.
- Arrangements are underway to pilot this approach on a PPP basis in a number of local authorities.
- The pilot programme will incorporate a sectoral Policy Framework Study and local pilot schemes, involving the development and procurement of private rented

accommodation through PPP arrangements with the objective of securing long-term availability of an adequate supply of good standard rental accommodation at reasonable cost. It is intended that this scheme will be used to meet the long-term housing needs of SWA rent supplement claimants.

We will consider the introduction of legislation to regulate the establishment and operation of apartment complex management companies.

- As a first step in considering this issue, the National Housing Conference in May 2003 examined innovative approaches to delivering housing services and the issues arising from apartment living.

We will ensure that the comprehensive Homelessness Strategies now in place are implemented.

- The Cross Department Team on Homelessness has been reconvened to review overall progress.
- Updates of progress are submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion on a regular basis.

We will ensure the implementation of local authority Traveller Accommodation Plans.

- These programmes were adopted in 2000 and cover the period 2000 to 2004.
- During 2002 additional funding of some €4 million was provided over and above the initial allocation for the construction of Traveller specific accommodation.
- A total of 119 units of Traveller specific accommodation of all kinds were completed in 2002 and a further 91 units were refurbished to the best modern standards.
- At the end of 2002, 77 new units were under construction and 21 units were being refurbished. Travellers are also accommodated in standard local authority accommodation.
- In 2002, for the third consecutive year, the numbers of Traveller families on the roadside has been reduced.
- A total of €30 million has been provided for Traveller accommodation in 2003, a 30% increase over the initial allocation for 2002 and a 13% increase on the outturn for 2002.

We will take further steps to streamline the approval procedures for local authority house building projects.

- The existing guidelines to local authorities on procedures to apply to their housing construction programmes are being reviewed.

Through the local authority system, Housing Advice Services will be provided information on all the housing options and supports will be available to the public.

- Work is ongoing on proposals to enhance the Advice Services provided by local authorities; the development of a new computer system should improve the citizens interactions with local authorities.

We will finalise the compilation of a National Public Property Register to identify properties in state control suitable for housing projects.

- This register is currently being compiled by the Office of Public Works.
- As part of the introduction of a new accrual accounting system, local authorities are in the process of identifying their recently acquired and historical assets, which would include land.

We will review procedures for dealing with insubstantial planning appeals.

- Discussions are ongoing with An Bord Pleanála in relation to the Comptroller & Auditor General's report on the operation of the appeals system and quality of customer service provided by the Board.

We will review the operation of the Planning and Development Act to ensure that it is meeting the objectives for which it was enacted with particular reference to social and affordable housing.

- The review was undertaken last year and culminated in the introduction of the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002*.
- The 2002 Act, inter alia, amended Part V of the *Planning and Development Act 2000* and is designed to ensure that the Part V objectives set in relation to the provision of social and affordable housing are met.
- The provisions of the 2002 Act will, inter alia, enable approved voluntary housing bodies, as well as local authorities, to provide such housing more efficiently and effectively.

In order to minimise the disruption to supply we will ensure that where planning applications

become necessary because of the 2 year withering requirement, set maximum application and appeals timings will apply.

- The two year withering requirement was abolished in the *Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2002*, subject to the payment of a levy on any house completed after the planning permission would have expired.

We will implement a new approach to urban renewal based on the combined use of Compulsory Purchase Orders and Public Private Partnerships.

- We have issued a circular to local authorities with a view to advancing a number of pilot projects — with the aim of developing the PPP approach in achieving urban regeneration objectives under the current Urban and Town Renewal Schemes.
- Grant assistance under the Local Authority PPP Fund will be made available to assist local authorities in developing suitable PPP proposals for projects located in integrated area/town renewal plan areas.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

We believe that a strong agriculture sector is a vital part of a strong Irish economy and the cornerstone of a vibrant rural community. Our aim is the continued enhancement of agriculture and our vision is for rural communities where young people have a choice between attractive options. We are also firmly committed to radically developing the social and physical infrastructure of rural Ireland.

We will maintain the Government and diplomatic offensive to improve world access and the opening of markets.

- We are spearheading a top level campaign to improve and expand world market access. As part of this campaign, we established a high-level group with representatives of IBEC, IMA, Bord Bia, Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Agriculture and Food.
- A sign of the recovery in the post BSE beef market is the large increase in the live export trade which has to date greatly exceeded 2002 levels and is an important barometer of the quality of Irish beef animals.

We will broaden the scope of agricultural education, anticipating that in some cases, farming may be combined with other occupations

and,

We will ensure that courses are delivered in a flexible manner suited to potential participants involving increased use of approaches such as night courses and distance learning.

- Distance learning programmes have been operated by Teagasc on a pilot basis during the past year and a pilot e-learning programme is now being undertaken.
- Improved IT has facilitated the provision of 3rd level courses to the Agricultural Colleges.

We will provide through Teagasc a dedicated service which will help part-time and transitional farmers use their capabilities and time to better advantage and efficiency and, where necessary, to diversify their income through appropriate training through an Opportunities Programme.

- Teagasc are now running night and week-end courses to facilitate work patterns of part-time farmers.

We will implement the recommendations of the Advisory Group on the role of Women in Agriculture.

- Significant progress has been made in the implementation of these recommendations.

We will work to protect the fundamental principles of the CAP in the EU enlargement negotiations. As necessary, we will also support measures such as adequate EU finances, in order to ensure the smooth integration of the agriculture of the application countries of Central and Eastern Europe joining the European Union, while preparing to take advantage of new market opportunities.

- Budgetary provision for the CAP is now in place until 2013 following the decisions of the European Council in October 2002. The European Council in December finalised the negotiations on enlargement and arrangements for the integration of 10 new Member States in May 2004 are well under way.
- The CAP also faces challenges in the Mid-term Review of Agenda 2000 and in the negotiations on the new WTO round. The Government's objective in these negotiations

will be to preserve the benefits to Irish agriculture and rural communities which were achieved under the Agenda 2000 Agreement.

We will continue to promote the highest standards of food safety and foster a culture of innovation, quality and excellence in the food industry.

- We continue to effect Food Safety controls and promote food safety.
- We established a Food Labelling Group to address consumers concerns on labeling and origin of foodstuffs. Implementation of its recommendations is underway.
- Targeted marketing and promotion programmes managed by An Bord Bia have been of proven success to food exporters, manufacturers of new, convenience and value-added foods and small specialist producers. A new emphasis on building competencies is encouraging firms to think strategically about their development.
- Two guides were prepared in 2002 by the Food Agency Co-operation Council (FACC) which represents the state agencies dealing with the food sector. A Food Incident Management Plan was launched on 18 December 2002 and a guide to bringing innovative and new food products to market "Market Led New Product Development for the Food and Drinks Industry" was launched in 2003.
- We commissioned a strategic development plan which was recently published for the Dairy Industry. A series of actions has begun aimed at advancing the implementation of the recommendations. An Bord Bia and An Bord Glas are being merged.
- We have placed increased emphasis on the necessity for a more competitive agri-food sector. In this regard, we commissioned a number of studies on the competitiveness of Irish agriculture, one of which has been published and the others are being undertaken in T.C.D. and Teagasc.

We will continue to pursue actions through the EU to ensure that the same high standards apply to imported foods as to domestic products.

- The recommendations of the Food Labelling Group will be prudently implemented.

We will seek to improve the level of information available to consumers about the origins of the food on sale in this country through initiatives such as the introduction of a distinct green label for Irish food.

- The continuing use of quality assured schemes will be

pursued by Bord Bia. The Food Labelling Group's recommendations on origin will be implemented.

We will encourage the food industry to build long-term relationships in premium export markets with a strong emphasis on growth in value-added products.

And,

we will encourage the Irish beef industry, in particular, to make the development of sustainable EU markets its over-riding priority with the twin objectives of gaining greater stability and closing the gap between Irish and European prices. The key to making this happen is the building of an integrated supply chain through partnership arrangements between producers, processors and retailers, underpinned by the National Beef Assurance Scheme and industry quality schemes in product promotions.

- An Bord Bia is spearheading a drive to achieve increased penetration of the higher value added EU markets on a longer term basis.

We will promote the preservation of the environment through good farming practice supported by grants and special tax incentives to assist on-farm investment and careful waste management. We will seek to ensure that supports are available to all farmers.

- Major liberalisation of income and investment ceilings for waste management schemes have been set in the Partnership Agreement.

We will foster a clean and attractive countryside with a high quality of life that can be enjoyed and appreciated by all. As part of this policy we will seek to make the REPS scheme more attractive.

- Major rate increases for REPs have been agreed and set in the Partnership Agreement to encourage greater participation by farmers in the Scheme.

We will enhance cooperation with the Northern Ireland authorities on keeping the island of Ireland disease-free.

- There are on-going meetings at Ministerial and official level to advance this matter and to utilise the valuable experience gained during the foot and mouth crisis.

We will enhance the contribution of horticulture, by supporting the production of product in an environmentally friendly manner and marketed to uniformly high standards.

- The amalgamation of An Bord Bia and An Bord Glas will greatly facilitate this aim.

We will further develop the organic sector through an increase at production level and the development of a single national label to take advantage both of 'clean green' image of Irish agriculture and the added appeal of organic food.

- We have set up a National Steering Group for the sector to oversee the development of the organic market and to address the question of a national label.

We will set the quality of service, including the efficient and timely delivery of payments, as an integral part of all operational priorities.

- Ireland has the best record in the EU on the timely delivery of payments.

We will give urgent consideration to the potential for tax incentives for long-term leasing of land as a means of increasing the supply of land available to young farmers.

- Commitment to examine this proposal has been given in the Partnership Agreement to further the leasing policies already in place.

We will agree a series of proposals with farming organisations designed to tackle red-tape and argue strongly for their adoption at EU level.

- Much progress has been made in this area and greater use of IT will further this aim.

We will examine, in conjunction with the Commission, the possibility of extending the disadvantaged areas classification to the whole BMW Region.

- This matter is being raised with the EU Commission.

Rural Development

We will give a clear priority to the protection and development of rural communities.

- Building on the White Paper on Rural Development and taking account of changes likely in the context of likely EU reforms, our strategy is

- to advance policies which support and enhance rural communities;
 - to develop appropriate policies and measures which reflect the National Spatial Strategy objectives, while paying particular attention to the needs of those areas particularly affected by population decline and peripherality;
 - to develop responses in a number of key areas such as rural enterprise, roads provision, rural tourism, the use of broadband technology, transport and access to services which take account of the specific needs of rural areas.
- A range of practical actions is being taken to give effect to these policy objectives, including the establishment of the Rural Tourism Group and the Rural Development Forum.
- The ongoing implementation of the Leader, Peace II and INTERREG programmes also continues to contribute to the achievement of this overall objective.

We will continue the CLÁR programme, ensuring annual funding and publishing annual reports on progress. When the relevant results of the Census are available we will review the data and consider additional areas for inclusion.

- The CLÁR programme is continuing to operate successfully.
- The promised review of the programme has been completed and the revised CLÁR areas were announced on 17 January 2003.

We will establish a Rural Social Economy Programme which will provide secure, community-related, employment opportunities for persons in families eligible for the Farm Assist scheme.

- This issue is to be addressed by a high-level group which is reviewing a number of community-related programmes.

We will ensure the implementation of the County Development Strategies in a coordinated way by all agencies, especially in respect to the encouragement of small rural enterprises.

- The County/City Development Boards (CDBs) are now implementing their Strategies via their member agencies.
- The CDBs' social inclusion co-ordinating working groups (representative of relevant public and local development bodies) are pursuing better co-ordination of social inclusion activity locally.
- The County/City Strategies contain a focus on enterprise,

including micro-enterprise, the latter being largely the responsibility of County/City Enterprise Boards as members of the CDBs.

- Across a number of Departments, we are working to improve local and community development structures and programmes to bring about the more co-ordinated delivery of public and local development services at local level, taking account of the role of the CDBs.

We will examine the planning guidelines for small rural enterprises and complete the review within twelve months.

- Meetings have taken place with organisations, agencies and Departments who work with small food producers to discuss the difficulties faced by them.

We will seek to develop the agriculture colleges as wider rural development resources.

- Teagasc are now running night and week-end courses to facilitate work patterns of part-time farmers.

We will support rural post offices and seek to develop commercial services in rural areas with specific investment being made in developing the Government Services Agency approach to provide additional services.

- During 2002, the installation of kiosks in 10 rural Post Offices to provide on-line access to Government information was co-funded under the CLÁR programme

PROMOTING TOURISM

We believe that the Tourism industry will continue to be a vital industry and that it requires sustained support and investment in the coming years.

- We have initiated a major strategic review of Tourism with a view to charting a new direction for Irish Tourism in the 21st century.

We will broaden our source markets so that we are not over-reliant on any one market and, in particular, seek to increase our share of the Continental European market.

- Ministerial launch of detailed 2003 Marketing Plans by Tourism Ireland Ltd/Bord Fáilte in December last, with targeted growth of 5% in visitor numbers and 10% in overseas revenue.

- These targets were developed prior to the Gulf War and the SARS outbreak.
- Re-prioritisation of tourism budget to release more funds for frontline marketing activities (€5million extra for 2003).
- New strategy by Tourism Ireland Ltd. for German market launched in March 2003, together with Holiday Ireland Promotional Roadshow taking in 9 German cities.
- Major promotion programmes in Britain, Continental Europe and U.S. in 2003, including focusing in particular on new air access routes.
- Marketing funding in 2003 will continue to be re-programmed as appropriate, in consultation with the industry, depending on impact of Iraq war and SARS on key markets.

We will foster expansion and competition on air and sea routes.

- Tourism Marketing Programmes for 2003 will support new route development and will be coordinated with the marketing activities of the air and sea carriers.
- Discussions have taken place with Ryanair and Aer Lingus to encourage new route development.
- Improved access from U.S. will become operational in 2003 (Baltimore/Washington and Philadelphia gateways).
- Plans being progressed to develop additional fast turnaround facilities at Dublin Airport and improved competition at Dublin, Shannon and Cork airports.
- The Tourism Policy Review Group, which was established in December, 2002 will consider tourism implications of access transport policy.

We will support and promote Tourism Ireland Limited in its work of promoting the whole island of Ireland as a tourist destination.

- Robust budgets were agreed in respect of Tourism Ireland Ltd. in 2003 with total budget of over €50 million.
- 2003 Marketing Plan launched in early December last.
- Programme of promotions agreed for 2003.
- New North South Ministerial Council arrangements introduced following suspension of N.I. Executive working well pending hopeful restoration of political institutions later this year.

We will complete the task of creating a new National Tourism Development Authority which will complement the work of Tourism Ireland.

- New legislation enacted in April, 2003.
- Interim board established in July, 2002 to progress preparatory arrangements.
- CEO designate appointed in November, 2002.
- We intend the new Body, Fáilte Ireland, to become operational in May, 2003 and new board to be appointed at that time.

We will ensure the construction of a state of the art National Conference Centre and promote Ireland as a venue for international conference business.

- A policy position paper on the development of a National Conference Centre has been prepared following consultation with relevant interest groups.
- Government agreement to be sought for development strategy for NCC by Summer 2003.
- General conference promotional activity by the Convention Bureau of Ireland will continue in 2003.

We will put the maintenance of standards and services at the top of the tourism agenda.

- The new National Tourism Development Authority, Fáilte Ireland, will have a particular remit to address quality, standards and service levels as part of its integration of Bord Fáilte/CERT activities.
- Updated Bord Fáilte regulations sanctioned for the registration of hotels and guesthouses with effect from 1 May, 2003.
- The classification/grading system for tourism accommodation is currently being reviewed.

We will continue to support the B&B and small accommodation sector through specific marketing initiatives.

- A range of activities in support of the small and medium-sized tourism accommodation sector announced as part of Bord Fáilte's 2003 marketing plans.
- Programmes include new cooperative marketing activities and education programmes for B&Bs, establishment of a representative national forum for guesthouses, working with marketing groups representing 1 star and 2 star hotels, and support for other accommodation sectors (e.g. Irish Caravan and Camping Council, hostels and self-catering).
- A new marketing manual will be produced by Bord Fáilte for SMEs in 2003.

We will encourage year-round activity-based and special interest tourism.

- Bord Fáilte's marketing budget for 2003 includes €3.4 million for the marketing of Regional Festivals and Cultural Events, €2.5 million for regionality/seasonality initiatives and €6.3 million for the Sports Tourism Programme. In allocating support for events, account is taken of the seasonal profile with a view to spreading business throughout the year.
- The domestic tourism marketing programme operated by Bord Fáilte with a budget of €2.5 million in 2003 is especially targeted to generate business in the off-season through short breaks.

We will ensure that local authorities take account of the needs of the tourist industry in its provision of infrastructure.

- The tourism priorities for the provision of roads and other local infrastructure have been specifically referred to in the National Development Plan and are being pursued at local level by the Regional Tourism Authorities.
- The Tourism Policy Review Group we established will be looking at possible mechanisms to ensure that tourism priorities are taken into account when key decisions are being taken about the provision of infrastructure.

We will promote sensitive development of tourist areas and encourage environmental best practice among tourism providers.

- Environmental considerations are an important element to be taken into account in the Tourism Product Development Scheme under the Regional Operational Programmes of the NDP.
- CERT have recently commissioned a report on the Green Agenda to identify the likely future shape of environmental management policy within the EU as it relates to tourism and to analyse the implications of developments on the industry.
- This work is likely to be followed up by the National Tourism Development Agency when established.

MARINE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

We believe strongly in the need to support, protect and develop our marine and natural resources.

We will press for fundamental reform of the Common Fisheries Policy, with the aim of

sustainable development, better Governance, stakeholder involvement, conservation, stock building and maximising Ireland's access to fisheries.

- The new CFP Framework Regulation is being implemented through a series of detailed proposals being brought forward by the EU Commission for consideration and adoption during the year. Our priorities here include sustainable development, recovery programmes for key fish stocks and maximising Ireland's access to fisheries.
- The reformed CFP provides for the establishment of Regional Advisory Committees. These will lead to increased stakeholder involvement and better governance in this area.

We will introduce a new Fleet Licensing Policy to ensure equity, transparency and an independent appeals process.

- A Review of Fleet Licensing Policy is underway.
- The Expert Review Group was established in late 2002 with an extensive remit and has already made interim conservation related recommendations.
- A non-statutory Appeals Officer who can make recommendations in relation to proposed licensing decisions has been appointed.
- A statutory Appeals Officer will be appointed once the Fisheries (Amendment) Bill is enacted.

We will set out long-term strategy for the sustainable development of our fishing industry.

- The new CFP Framework Regulation agreed last December is now being implemented through a series of detailed proposals being brought forward by the Commission for consideration and adoption during this year.
- When these are adopted in final form they will set the legal framework for our Sea Fishing industry for the next decade. Once that Framework is in place a strategy for the sustainable development of the industry, within the framework, will be set out.
- In the interim a new licencing scheme to regularise the position of previously unregistered inshore vessels is being implemented, following agreement in principle with the Commission earlier this year.
- This licencing process forms the first step in developing a new sustainable development fisheries management strategy for our inshore fisheries.

We will establish efficient management structures and develop our fishery harbours, including electronic auctioning, new distribution networks and completion of investment programmes for harbours.

- Legislative proposals are being prepared for a new statutory basis for the fishery harbour centres (located at Howth, Dunmore East, Castletownbere, Rossaveel and Killybegs) which will provide for a more flexible approach in responding to specific local requirements and also encourage a commercial approach to meeting user needs on a market lead basis.
- It is proposed to have the Bill submitted to Government in the autumn.
- In 2003 we will spend €30 million on fishery harbour development.
- We have funded pilot projects in electronic fish auctioning and electronic distribution networks.

We will develop new devolved service structures to support the sustainable management, development and protection of the marine coastal zone and seafood resources.

- The Fisheries (Amendment) Bill once enacted, will devolve legal responsibility for the administration of the fishing vessel licencing system to the Registrar General of Fishing Vessels.
- A High Level Group has been established to report on the options and implementation of devolved services structures.
- It is intended to bring proposals to Government based on this report in 2003.

We will ensure that our ports are equipped for the demands of our growing economy, through investment and the development of seamless transport systems between road, rail and ports and best utilisation of property assets.

- In the past year we have approved grant aid of €18.7 million in respect of projects under the Seaports Measure of the National Development Plan.
- We have published and initiated public consultation on the High Level Review of the commercial State ports which will inform future policy directions in this area.

We will work to develop Ireland as a Centre of Excellence for Maritime Research.

- A state of the art Marine Institute headquarters and laboratory facilities (c. €30 million) has been approved by Government and is currently under development at Oranmore, Co. Galway.
- The research vessel Celtic Explorer (c. €30 million) has been delivered on schedule and on budget. This is a world-class 65 metre multi-purpose research vessel which will transform the scale of marine research activity which Ireland can undertake across all sectors of the marine economy and environment.
- Work has been completed on the upgrading of facilities at Newport Laboratory Complex which is a world-renowned centre of excellence in salmon and catchment management research.
- In 2002, the Government invested over €5 million in the Marine RTDI Fund. This was used for a range of research projects in food safety, fisheries, marine technology, aquaculture, marine environment, renewable energies and maritime law. This was the largest investment in marine research in one year in the history of the State.
- The completion of the capital infrastructure investment will see Ireland attain a world class status in terms of its national marine research and marks a major milestone in the Government's commitment to develop Ireland as a centre of excellence for marine research.
- Work is now underway at a new national maritime college in Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.

We will work to increase forest planting levels to 20,000 hectares per annum.

- We are spending €82.58m on forestry this year.
- In consultation with the forestry stakeholders it has been decided that the primary focus in 2003 should be on the maintenance of a viable planting programme.
- Planting levels are expected to reach a minimum of 12,000 hectares in 2003.

We will consolidate the Minerals Development Act.

- Consolidation will be affected through the Minerals Development Bill which is hoped to be put before the Oireachtas in 2004.

We will encourage further exploration for hydrocarbons and minerals while maximising the value added to the Irish economy.

- We launched the Porcupine Licensing Initiative in November to stimulate opportunities and interest for exploration in the Irish offshore.
- The Initiative comes out of a consultation process with the industry which was launched at the end of 2000, and re-opens the Porcupine Basin which had been closed since the Porcupine Round in 1999.
- The Initiative also provides for joint industry applied research over the entire Irish offshore.
- The Seven Heads petroleum lease was signed in December.
- We have approved a Plan of Development for the development of a 'greensands' portion of the Kinsale gas field.

We will increase the opportunities for offshore wind and wave energy generation.

- AER VI provided for 50 MW of offshore wind capacity.
- This is the first time offshore wind energy projects have been supported under AER.
- In July SEI launched a €16 million R&D programme for renewables. To date two wave energy developers have given expressions of interest.
- SEI & The Marine Institute published a public consultation document on Ocean Energy in October 2002. The purpose of this is to devise a national development strategy for which offshore wind and wave will be important components.

BUILDING A CARING SOCIETY

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

We are committed to the objective of achieving real and sustained social progress.

We will reduce consistent poverty to below 2%.

- This target is to be achieved over the period to 2007. A national survey will be carried out in 2003 to establish the current level of consistent poverty.

In particular, we recognise the tackling of child poverty as a core element of our work.

- Child poverty has been identified as one of the special initiatives under the new Partnership Agreement.
- A range of policy measures have been adopted including an enhanced schools meals programme.

We will implement a full range of policies aimed at supporting older people including delivering decent pensions and greatly improved care services.

- Old age pensioners received a €10 increase in Budget 2003 which was well ahead of expected inflation.
- In terms of care services, our policy is to provide the necessary community based supports to enable older people to live in dignity in their own community in accordance with their wishes for as long as possible.
- Research indicates that older people prefer to live at home for as long as possible and that long-stay residential care is only considered by an individual as the last resort.
- Accordingly we have sought to develop community based services and additional revenue funding allocated to Services for Older People from 1997 to 2002 significantly increased from £10m (€12.7m) in 1997 to an additional £69.154m (€87.807m) in 2002 (including Nursing Home Subvention Funding).
- This funding enabled over 800 additional staff to be employed in Services for Older People between 1997 and 2000. Between 1998 and 2001 over 550 additional beds were provided in new community nursing units and over 1,250 day places per week were developed in new day care centres.

- This policy was continued in 2003 when a total of €23.6 million in additional revenue funding was allocated to Services to Older People.
- This funding is being used for a variety of community support services which enable older people to live in dignity in their own community for as long as possible.

We will implement the revised National Anti-Poverty Strategy with its ambitious targets across a broad range of areas.

- The institutional structures to support the NAPS have been established including the Office for Social Inclusion and the Social Inclusion Forum (under the auspices of the NESF).
- The National Action Plans on Social Inclusion being prepared for submission to the EU in July 2003 will reflect the NAPS Review published in 2002 and developments since then.

We will bring the targeting of health inequalities to the fore in health policy.

- The targets to reduce health inequalities set in the Government's Review of the NAPS have been integrated into the National Health Strategy.
- Because of the wide range of factors which affect health status and health inequalities, both the National Health Strategy *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You* and the Report of the Working Group on NAPS and Health envisage these targets being met through a range of actions including greater focus on multi-sectoral work and health impact assessment.
- Health agencies have been asked in the Letter of Determination to prioritise actions to reduce health inequalities when framing their Services Plans.
- Recent Annual Reports of the Chief Medical Officer have addressed the theme of health inequalities. The most recent entitled *Better Health for Everyone* sets out how a population health approach led by a Population Health Division in the Department of Health and Children would enable the multi-sectoral nature of the determinants of health and health inequalities to be more effectively addressed.

- This issue is being considered in the context of the reorganisation of that Department.
- A key deliverable in relation to reducing health inequalities will be the putting in place of the indicator and data needed to monitor and evaluate the NAPS health targets and to review existing targets and set new targets.
- Discussions are in train with the Institute of Public Health in relation to progressing this issue.
- The NAPS and Health Working Group is being reconvened in a consultative capacity in relation to monitoring progress towards achievement of the targets. The Social Partners are represented on the Working Group.

We will ensure that homelessness and rough sleeping in particular is tackled in a coordinated manner in all parts of the country.

- Most homeless action plans are now completed and work is underway on implementing the measures in them.
- A wide range of accommodation for homeless persons, both emergency and longer-term, has been provided throughout the country.
- A wet hostel for street drinkers opened in Dublin in late 2002 and long-term supported housing for street drinkers is due to open later this year.
- A wet hostel is due to open shortly in Limerick City.

We recognise the need to work hard to include all communities in the benefits of recent progress and will, in particular, ensure that all state agencies prioritise integrated work in areas of significant disadvantage. This will be a priority under the next phase of public sector reform.

- Through programmes like the Local Development and RAPID Programmes, the Young Peoples Facilities and Services Fund and the work of the Local Drugs Task Forces, we are working to include all communities, particularly areas of significant disadvantage, in the benefits of recent progress.
- Through this work, every effort is made to ensure that State agencies operate in an integrated manner.

We will work to generate the resources to achieve our new benchmark level of €150 for social welfare payments.

- General social welfare payments received an increase of €6 in Budget 2003 in line with projected inflation.

- The general social welfare payment now stands at €124.80.
- The target of €150 (in 2002 terms) will be delivered over the period to 2007.

We will publish an annual report of progress towards the achievement of anti-poverty indicators.

- Work is being carried out to develop the necessary data for this report.

We will fund an ambitious programme of data gathering on social indicators to ensure that policies are developed on the basis of sound information.

- A comprehensive data strategy is being prepared under the auspices of the Office of Social Inclusion to monitor progress in implementing the NAPs targets and to advance research and policy in relation to poverty.

We will work to promote social capital in all parts of Irish life through a combination of research and ensuring that local public activity supports the development of social capital, particularly on a local community level.

- The NESF will be publishing shortly a report on Social Capital which will help inform policy development.

We will increase to support initiatives to expand corporate social responsibility.

- The intention is that, in progressing our agenda for community and local and rural development, we will progressively deal with promoting and piloting local corporate social responsibility initiatives, e.g., in relation to areas affected by drugs, and social and rural disadvantage.
- Initiatives in relation to combating drug misuse are being considered in this context but the matter is still at early stages of development.
- We will also continue, through the Community Development Support Programme, to promote positive change in society in favour of those who benefit least from economic development.

HEALTH

The development of a world-class public health service is a core objective for us. Based on the blueprint set out in the National Health Strategy, a

combination of greater investment and a reform of the system will provide a high quality and accessible health service for all. It will ensure a major expansion in the level and quality of services throughout the country. And it will encourage the end of the two-tier health system by ensuring that public patients will have access to timely and quality services in all parts of the system.

We will implement the National Health Strategy, through a coordinated multi-annual programme of service development.

- There have been significant areas of progress in the implementation of the Strategy in 2002.
- A detailed progress report on developments in 2002 was given at the reconvened National Consultative Forum in November 2002 and highlighted the fact that work had already begun on over 70% of the 121 actions as laid out in the Strategy.
- A progress report has also been made available to the Cabinet Committee on the Health Strategy.
- We will be publishing an annual report outlining progress achieved in implementation of the Strategy in the near future.

We believe that it is necessary to improve the transparency and effectiveness of the administration and funding of acute services as distinct from the other full range of areas funded by health boards. As part of a full examination of health bodies and structures, we will examine the separation of acute services from the core work of health boards and, at a minimum, ensure that the budget and service planning process are separated.

And,

we will seek the completion of the report on Health Agencies and Management Structures by the end of 2002 and will move forward on the principle of removing unnecessary overlap of functions and minimising delays in implementing service improvements.

- The Health Strategy — *Quality and Fairness, A Health System for You* identified an audit of organisational structures and functions in the health system as one of a number of actions aimed at achieving the required

improved co-ordination, integration and consistency of service delivery.

- Prospectus Strategy Consultants were awarded the contract for the audit. Specifically, the audit was to critically examine:
 - the number and configuration of existing health organisations;
 - their interactions with one another and with the Department of Health and Children;
 - the adequacy of governance arrangements; and
 - the scope for rationalisation.
- The consultants were also asked to assume the introduction of a Health Information and Quality Authority and a National Hospitals Agency (also committed to in the Health Strategy) in considering a new configuration for the system.
- The report has now been completed and submitted and is being assessed in conjunction with the report of the Commission on Financial Management and Control Systems in the Health Service.
- The two reports are currently being considered with a view to presenting the reports jointly to Government for publication and decisions on certain key recommendations. It is anticipated that they will be submitted to Government very shortly.

We will treat people within new national guidelines for maximum waiting times set out in the National Health Strategy.

And,

we will ensure that, in line with timings set out in the Strategy, all persons will be given an appointment for treatment within three months of referral with this being achieved through a combination of bed capacity, primary care, secondary care and targeted reform initiatives.

- The target set out in the National Health Strategy states that by the end of 2004 all public patients requiring admission to hospital will be scheduled to commence treatment within a maximum of three months of referral from an out-patient department.
- Intermediate targets have been set to achieve this aim to ensure that the focus is being turned towards those patients waiting longest for treatment.
- Considerable progress has been made in reducing waiting times for public patients in 2002.

- The total number of adults waiting more than 12 months for in-patient treatment in the nine target surgical specialties covered by the Waiting List Initiative has fallen by approximately 30% between June and December 2002.
- The total number of children waiting for more than 6 months for in-patient treatment has fallen by over 31% in the same period.
- While the Waiting List Initiative will continue to fund additional elective activity, the dedicated National Treatment Purchase Fund is being used to target those waiting longest for treatment.
- Funding of €43.8 million has been provided in 2003 for the Waiting List Initiative and a further €31 million has been provided for the National Treatment Purchase Fund.

We will expand public hospital beds in line with a programme to increase total capacity by 3,000 during the period of the Strategy.

- The first phase of the provision of additional acute beds in the acute hospital system will result in an additional 709 acute beds being provided in the period 2002/2003.
- A total of 520 of these new beds are in operation and the remainder will be brought into use shortly. The provision of 709 new acute beds equates to a 6% increase in overall acute bed capacity.
- We are currently addressing the national specialty and regional issues associated with the allocation of the remainder of the 3,000 acute beds.
- The Health Strategy envisaged that the proposed National Hospitals Agency (NHA) would have a key role in the organisation, development and future configuration of acute hospital services.
- The role and functions of the NHA were considered by Prospectus Management Consultants as part of the Audit of Structures and Functions of the Irish Healthcare System.
- It is expected that the report of the Audit will be brought to Government shortly.

We will seek to gain the maximum benefit for public patients from private hospital capacity through initiatives such as the Treatment Purchase Fund.

- The National Treatment Purchase Fund is now in a position to offer treatments to people who have been on hospital waiting lists for a number of years in a short space of time.
- The National Treatment Purchase Fund is initially concentrating on high volume/lower acuity procedures such as tonsils, cataracts, hernias, varicose veins, gall

bladders, hip replacements, cardiac surgery and prostate surgery.

- The first patients were referred for treatment at the end of June, 2002. A total of 1,920 patients were treated under the initiative up to the end of 2002 and a total of 3,340 to the end of March 2003.
- Circa 8,300 patients have been identified by hospitals and health boards as eligible for treatment under the initiative.
- It is hoped to clear Group One (i.e. the longest waiters) by Autumn, 2003. Most private hospitals in Ireland, the North West Independent Hospital Derry and 4 UK hospitals are participating in this initiative.
- There is capacity to treat 600 patients per month, 400 in Ireland and 200 in the UK. The Fund will also utilize spare capacity, where available, in the Public Hospital system for example, in the areas of Paediatrics and Orthopaedics.

We will explore the potential for long-term contractual arrangements between public health bodies and private, especially non-profit, providers.

- Meetings have taken place with individuals and groups interested in the development of private acute hospital facilities in the state particularly in the context of tax reliefs provided under the Finance Acts.
- Many of the meetings were of an exploratory nature and we will continue to be available to discuss proposed projects with the promoters as they arise.

We will reform the system of planning and funding our hospitals to ensure that the needs of people in all parts of the country are addressed, and that public funding is producing the highest possible level and quality of care.

- The Health Strategy envisaged that the proposed National Hospitals Agency (NHA) would have a key role in the organisation, development and future configuration of acute hospital services.
- The role and functions of the NHA were considered by Prospectus Management Consultants as part of the Audit of Structures and Functions of the Irish Healthcare System.
- It is expected that the report of the Audit will be brought to Government shortly.

We will improve the staffing of our hospitals by expanding the number of nurses working in key professional positions, hiring additional consultants and more health professionals, especially in

priority areas, including general practice and emergency facilities.

- In the year to end 2002 total Health Service employment increased by 5,500 (+6%).
- According to preliminary Health Service Personnel Census data the following increases were recorded:
 - Medical/ Dental +450 wte (whole time equivalent) (+7%)
 - of which Consultants +116 (+7%)
 - Nursing +2,000 (+6%)
 - Other Health & Social Care Professionals +1,300 (+11%)
- There has been an increase of in excess of 28,000 (+42%) in the approved employment ceiling for the health services since 1997 bringing the current authorised employment ceiling to 96,000. This figure excludes home helps.
- The increases for the health service since 1997 are as follows:
 - Medical/ Dental +1,700wte (+35%)
 - Nursing +7,800 (+30%)
- GPs participating in the GMS scheme are not directly employed, but rather, have a contractual arrangement with the health boards for the provision of services. The latest published figures, for 2001, shows 1,863 hold contracts. This compares to 1,798 in 2000.

We will develop acute hospital services on a balanced regional basis, with the particular objective of seeking to achieve the highest level of regional self-sufficiency consistent with maximising patient outcomes.

- The Health Strategy envisaged that the proposed National Hospitals Agency (NHA) would have a key role in the organisation, development and future configuration of acute hospital services.
- The role and functions of the NHA were considered by Prospectus Management Consultants as part of the Audit of Structures and Functions of the Irish Healthcare System.
- It is expected that the report of the Audit will be brought to Government shortly.

We recognise the particular need to ensure that people in all parts of the country have reasonable access to cancer services and will ensure that this objective is achieved.

- Since 1997, approximately €400 million has been invested in the development of cancer services, well in excess of

the £25million initially envisaged to implement the National Cancer Strategy launched in 1996. This includes a sum of €29 million which was allocated in 2003 for cancer services.

- This investment will ensure that this year we continue to address increasing demands in cancer services in such areas as oncology/haematology services, oncology drugs and symptomatic breast disease services.
- This substantial investment has enabled the funding of 80 additional Consultant posts, together with support staff in key areas such as medical oncology, radiology, palliative care, histopathology, and haematology.
- The benefit of this investment is reflected in the significant increase in activity which has occurred. For example, the number of new patients receiving radiotherapy treatment has increased from 2,402 in 1994 to 3,809 in 2000. This means that an additional 1,407 patients are accessing these services, representing an increase of 58% nationally.
- Breast Cancer is the individual site-specific cancer which has received the most investment in recent years and in-patient breast cancer procedures have increased from 1,336 in 1997 to 1,839 in 2001. This is an increase of 37% nationally. A cumulative figure of approximately €39 million in revenue funding has been allocated to BreastCheck since 1999.
- The National Breast Screening Programme commenced in February 2000 with phase one covering the Eastern Regional Health Authority, Midland Health Board and North Eastern Health Board areas. Screening is being offered free of charge to all women in those areas in the target age group (50 – 64). To end December 2002, the programme had invited 110,636 eligible women and had screened 83,000 an uptake rate of 75%.
- The extension of BreastCheck to a further three counties was announced in February 2003. Approximately, 19,000 women in the 50 – 64 age bracket in Counties Wexford, Kilkenny and Carlow will be invited for screening. Approximately 9,500 per annum will be invited once the programme is fully operational in these counties. It is expected that approximately 60 additional cancers will be diagnosed and treated annually.
- The complete national extension of BreastCheck was recently announced. Under the extension, two static units are proposed in host hospitals, one in Cork and the other in Galway, at which breast surgery will be performed for women in the South, West, Mid-West and North-West.
- The BreastCheck clinical unit in the Western area will be at University College Hospital Galway, with two associated mobile units. The area of coverage is Counties Galway, Sligo, Roscommon, Donegal, Mayo, Leitrim, Clare and Tipperary N.R. The BreastCheck clinical unit in the

Southern area will be located at South Infirmary/Victoria Hospital, with three associated mobile units. The area of coverage is Counties Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Waterford and Tipperary S.R.

- Under the extension, approximately 130,000 women in the target population 50 to 64 years of age will be eligible for screening. The programme expects to diagnose approximately 400 cancers per annum among this population.
- Phase One of the National Cervical Screening Programme commenced in the Mid-Western Health Board in October, 2000. Under the programme, in the region of 67,000 women in the 25 to 60 age group will be screened at five yearly intervals free of charge.
- Under the National Health Strategy, a commitment has been given to the full extension of this programme to the rest of the country. The process of planning and organising a national programme underpinned by quality assurance is a major undertaking with significant logistical and resource implications that requires careful planning.
- As part of an examination of the feasibility and implications of a roll out of the national programme, the CEOs of the health boards are making arrangements to have an external review of Phase One carried out during 2003.

We believe that taxation can play an important role in the work to limit tobacco consumption and in raising revenue for the health services. In order to make this possible, we will urgently seek the agreement of the social partners to the disregarding of the tobacco-related element of the Consumer Prices Index when using the Index as a basis for negotiations.

- In the 2002 budget the price of cigarettes was increased substantially and from a public health perspective this is welcomed.
- We believe price is an important deterrent in preventing young persons from initiating smoking and becoming addicted and in encouraging smokers to break their addiction. Recent figures published as part of the SLÁN National Health and Lifestyle Surveys show a significant drop in smoking prevalence in the population from 31% to 27% and price increases, among other things, have contributed to this.
- The question of removing tobacco products from the CPI has been raised with the social partners and at EU level and will continue to be addressed.
- Progress has also been made towards the introduction of a prohibition on smoking tobacco products in places of work and we have published draft regulations providing for this.

- Following a consultation period, we intend to introduce these regulations on January 1st 2004.

We will seek to expand the use of information and communication technologies in all aspects of the health service especially as a support to broadening access to expert care.

- Significant work was undertaken on the development of the ICT infrastructure during 2002 and this work is continuing in 2003.
- A sum of €29.663 million has been allocated for this purpose in the current year.
- Emphasis is being placed on national projects and conjoint working between health agencies.
- Major projects are in place in the areas of hospital information systems, resource management and financial systems.
- Initiatives in the current year will also include the continuation of preparatory work in the primary care area aimed at supporting the new structures envisaged in the primary care strategy.
- The National Health Information Strategy will be submitted to Government after the Prospectus and Brennan reports go to Government.
- Work has also commenced on the development of a more technically oriented ICT strategy to chart the technology solutions which will be required to implement the information strategy.

We will implement a full range of measures to improve Accident and Emergency Services by significantly reducing waiting times and having senior doctors available at all times.

- Improved and expanded Emergency Medicine Departments are being provided through NDP funding in many acute hospitals throughout the country.
- The establishment of minor injuries units and chest pain clinics will also improve the operation of Emergency Medicine Departments.
- An additional 29 Emergency Medicine Consultants are being recruited for A&E Departments throughout the country. A total of 19 are now in place and the other posts are being progressed by the health boards and ERHA.
- In recent years a total of 16 capital developments in A&E Departments have taken place and are being planned or in the process of construction in acute hospitals throughout the country.

We will give hospitals extra resources where they can specifically show how, as a result, they can treat more patients in a more efficient way.

- In discussions with health agencies we are continuing to explore the possibility of increasing the amount of elective activity that can be undertaken on a daily basis. Day case treatments now account for 50% of all elective surgery.
- Discussions will continue with health agencies as part of the Service Planning process to identify areas for improved efficiency.

We will implement a series of measures to significantly improve the level of orthodontic care available to public patients.

- The grade of Specialist in Orthodontics has been created in the health board orthodontic service. This year, with the health boards we are funding thirteen dentists from various health boards for Specialist in Orthodontics qualifications at training programmes in Ireland and at two separate universities in the United Kingdom.
- These thirteen trainees for the public orthodontic service are additional to the six dentists who commenced their training last year and one dentist whose Specialist training is nearing completion. Thus there is an aggregate of twenty public service dentists currently in training for Specialist in Orthodontics qualifications.
- These measures will complement the other structural changes being introduced into the orthodontic service, including the creation of an auxiliary grade of Orthodontic Therapist to work in the orthodontic area.
- In June 2002, we provided additional funding of €5 million from the Treatment Purchase fund to Health Boards specifically for the purchase of orthodontic treatment.
- This funding is enabling boards to provide both additional sessions for existing staff and purchase treatment from private specialist orthodontic practitioners.
- We have also funded the recruitment of a Professor in Orthodontics at Cork University Dental School to facilitate the development of an approved training programme leading to specialist qualification in orthodontics.
- Approval in principle has also been given to the Southern Health Board for the improvement of the Dental School to accommodate this development.
- At the end of December 2002, there were 20,151 patients receiving orthodontic treatment in the public orthodontic

service. This is an increase of approximately 2,856 when compared with the numbers in treatment at the end of December 2001.

We will ensure that independent and up to date data on activity within the health sector is provided by agencies and is regularly published.

- Improvements in timeliness of the dissemination of activity data from the health sector are being achieved through the utilisation of electronic media.
- In particular, the Internet is increasingly being used for publication of this data.
- The National Health Information Strategy will introduce further measures which will be instrumental in providing additional improvements in the regularity of the publication of health sector activity data.

A set of national quality protocols will also be developed which will require that all patients, irrespective of where they live, receive a high quality of care.

- A key policy aim under the National Health Strategy is to deliver high quality services that are based on evidence to support best practice. To promote this aim, we will establish a Health Information and Quality Authority.
- This Authority will:
 - develop and disseminate agreed standards and guidelines/models of best practice as templates for the development of local care protocols
 - introduce and oversee accreditation processes across the health system. This will include, in relation to the acute hospitals area, working closely with the Hospitals Accreditation Body
 - promote formal health impact assessment programmes
 - promote and advise national initiatives on patient safety
 - liaise with the proposed new Irish Clinical Negligence Claims Agency on risk management.

We will complete the programme of expansion of appropriate care places for people with disabilities, with, in particular, the ending of the inappropriate use of psychiatric hospitals for persons with intellectual disabilities.

- See Disability and Caring.

We will implement a major reform and development of primary care services. As a starting point 24-hour GP cover will be extended throughout the country by implementing a new co-operative and out-of-hours service.

- There is now a general practice out of hours co-operative operating in every health board area and the ERHA.
- In 2003, we announced a further significant increase in co-op funding. This increase in funding has allowed provision to be made for the full year costs of the new co-ops started throughout 2002 in the Midland, Western and Mid Western Health Board Areas as well as the continuation of the co-ops in all other board areas.
- It has also allowed for the commencement of new co-ops in Wexford, Limerick City & County, Sligo, Leitrim, Westmeath, Longford and Cork City as well as the expansion of co-ops in Galway and the Eastern Region.
- The additional funding secured for general practice out of hours co-operatives brings the Government's investment in this initiative to some €50 million since they began in 2000.
- This significant funding has brought us to a point where co-ops are approaching true regional status in a number of health board areas. We are committed to continuing to provide the funding necessary to ensure that this important initiative continues to expand to cover the whole country in line with the target set out in the Primary Care Strategy.
- We have also received two separate independent evaluations into the co-ops. The findings of these evaluations will inform everyone involved in shaping the future development of the co-ops and assist in the move towards the ultimate objective of the co-ops becoming focal points for a diverse range of primary and community healthcare services.

We will develop a network of primary care centres where general practitioners, community health nurses, physiotherapists and other professionals will work together to improve care available to all groups.

- The Primary Care Task Force was established in the Department of Health and Children last year to drive forward the implementation of the Primary Care Strategy, *Primary Care: A New Direction*.
- A number of essential implementation steps have been taken.
- The National Primary Care Steering Group, which is composed of representatives of the many key stakeholders involved in the delivery of primary care, including

consumer and community interests, was established in June 2002.

- Its remit is to give national leadership and guidance in relation to several key elements of the implementation plan.
- In October 2002, we approved the establishment of an initial group of ten primary care implementation projects — one in each health board area.
- These projects will build on the services and resources already in place, so as to develop a primary care team, in accordance with local needs, in line with the inter-disciplinary model as described in the Strategy.
- Including once-off capital funding, a total of €8.4 million has been committed to these projects over 2002 and 2003. Work is now under way in each of the ten locations, with the objective of bringing each team into operation during 2003.
- We are working in partnership with the health boards and other interests to support this process. This includes the funding of a programme of appropriate supports commissioned from the Office for Health Management.
- Other areas which have been progressed include the following:
 - A high-level primary care needs assessment is being undertaken by each health board, a national group having been established by the health board CEOs to ensure a co-ordinated approach.
 - A national conference on the Primary Care Strategy was held in Galway in October 2002. This was the first conference organised at a national level to discuss, in partnership with the key stakeholders and organisations, the implementation of the Strategy.
 - In November 2002, funding of €360,000 over three years was provided for the establishment of three research fellowships in Primary Care, in the University Departments of General Practice.
 - Funding of €250,000 per annum for a three-year period is being provided to the University Departments of General Practice, to support specific activity in support of the implementation of the Primary Care Strategy.

We will extend medical card eligibility in line with the recommendations of the National Health Strategy and further review cases for the extension of both the medical card and long-term illness schemes.

- The Health Strategy includes a commitment that significant improvements will be made in the medical card income guidelines in order to increase the number of persons on low income who are eligible for a medical card and to give priority to families with children and particularly children with a disability.
- Due to the prevailing budgetary situation it is not possible to meet this commitment this year but the Government remains committed to the introduction of the necessary changes within the lifetime of this Government.
- A whole series of initiatives have been developed to clarify and expand the existing arrangements for eligibility for health services, including recommendations arising from the Review of the Medical Card Scheme carried out by the Health Board CEOs under the PPF.

We will encourage the entry of additional insurers into the private health insurance market.

- The Health Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2003, was signed into law by the President on 16th April, 2003.
- It retains the three year exemption from risk equalisation provided for under the Health Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2001, while ensuring that the exemption, which has as its objective the encouragement of competition, can be availed of only by genuine new entrants to the market.
- It contains provisions aimed at securing a clearer indication of the commitment and serious business intent to actually follow through on entry to the market, on the part of insurers who decide to serve a notice of exemption in the future.
- It requires insurers to be registered with the Health Insurance Authority before serving a notice of exemption and that they commence business not later than three months after the date of the notice.
- A draft risk equalisation scheme has been prepared. Its provisions will aim to achieve a balance between safeguarding the stability of community rating and facilitating competition in the provision of health insurance.

We will develop community facilities for the elderly, including community nursing units, in such a way as to actively promote independence.

- The National Health Strategy proposed the provision of an extra 800 extended care/community nursing unit places per year over a 7-year period which will include provision for people with dementia.
- Public Private Partnerships (PPP) are currently being piloted in the health sector. Initially, the focus will be mainly

in the area of Community Nursing Units (CNUs) for Older People.

- It is anticipated that 17 new CNUs will be created when the initial Pilot Programmes are complete, providing up to a maximum of 850 new beds in Dublin and Cork.
- If the PPP pilot demonstrates success it is the intention to use it as a means of providing additional Community Nursing Units in other locations throughout the country.
- Business advisers have been appointed for the projects and are in the process of preparing an outline business case.

EDUCATION

We are committed to improve the level and quality of participation and achievement at every level of education.

To ensure that early-education services deliver the maximum benefit for all children, we will introduce a national early-education, training, support and certification system and expand state-funded early-education places. Priority will be given to a new national system of funded early-education for children with intellectual disabilities and children in areas of concentrated disadvantage.

- A Centre for Early Childhood Education has been established.
- The functions of this centre are to develop a national quality framework for the sector and promotion of enhanced access for children at risk.
- The publication of an OECD review of early childhood care and education provision in Ireland will inform the work on this project.
- A range of targeted interventions will be piloted and developed for disadvantaged children, building on the results of Early Start and other initiatives.
- Provision for children with special needs will be co-ordinated and enhanced through the National Council for Special Education.

We will continue to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio in our schools. Over the next five years, we will progressively introduce maximum class size guidelines which will ensure that the average class size of classes for children under 9 will be below international best-practice guideline of 20:1.

- At Primary Level, pupil/ teacher ratio has fallen from 22.2 to

1 in 1996/97 school year to 19 to 1 in the 2001/02 school year. The projected ratio for the current school year is 18.4 to 1.

- Urban schools in the Giving Children an Even Break Programme with the highest concentration of at risk pupils are being supported where necessary through staff allocations to implement a maximum class size of 20:1 in junior classes and 27:1 in senior classes.
- At Secondary Level, the actual pupil/teacher ratio has declined from 16:1 in 1996/97 school year to 13.6:1 in the school year 2002/03.
- It is intended to make further improvements on a targeted basis as resources permit.

We will continue the expansion in teacher training, introduce reforms of teacher training courses as recommended by an expert review and ensure improved teacher supply.

- There are approximately 4,000 students in the teacher training colleges in the current academic year — 3,000 on the Bachelor of Education programme and the remainder on two Graduate Diploma programmes.
- Some 1,460 primary teachers will graduate in 2003. This compares with 500 in 1999.
- A review of the supply and demand for primary teachers is currently being undertaken to plan for future needs. The issue of reforms to teacher training is being considered in that context.

We will implement changes to retention and support policies which will assist schools in areas of significant disadvantage to recruit and retain teachers.

- The report of the Educational Disadvantage Committee reviewing teacher supply and staffing in disadvantaged areas was submitted in early 2003.
- The report is being considered with a view to informing future action.

Every school will receive support for the purchase of appropriate and age-related literacy tests to assist teachers in their work.

- Priority has been given to putting in place “Reading Recovery” intensive remediation models in 17 Monaghan (rural) and 13 Dublin North Inner City (urban) primary schools.
- Additional learning support in-service using a whole school

approach is being delivered to designated disadvantaged schools in the 2003 school year.

- Reading surveys in designated disadvantaged schools are being undertaken to provide baseline data on literacy levels of 1st, 3rd and 6th class pupils.

We will further expand adult literacy services.

- Increase in funding to €17.9 million in 2003, enabling expansion of numbers of students in adult literacy services run by VECs and funded by the Department of Education and Science from 23,973 in June, 2002 to 28,363 in 2003.

We will continue our policy of implementing significant increases in direct school funding.

- At Primary Level, the standard capitation grant increased from €101 for the 2001/02 school year to €111 in 2002/2003.
- Ancillary Services grant increased from €102 per pupil in 2001/02 to €127 in 2002/2003.
- At Secondary Level, the per capita grant was increased from €224 in 1997 to €266.49 in September 2002.
- Under the school services support initiative there has been a significant increase in the support grant from €25.40 per pupil in the year 2000 to €99 per pupil with effect from 1 January 2003.
- Funding for voluntary secondary schools enhanced by the introduction of a range of equalisation measures. Support services grants in such schools increased by €28 per pupil from September 2002, bringing the overall support services grant to €127 per pupil from January 2003.
- This increase is in addition to the range of equalisation grants of up to €15,554 per school (€44.44 per pupil) per annum that was approved for voluntary secondary schools in December 2001.
- Additional direct funding measures will be considered as resources permit.

We will ensure that every pupil participates in a programme designed to increase understanding of the value and role of enterprise.

- A Board of Studies for Business was convened by the NCCA to examine the role and position of Business subjects in the post-primary school curriculum.
- The publication by the NCCA of the consultative paper ‘Developing Senior Cycle Education — Issues and Options’ includes for discussion extending current vocational modules, which include enterprise through the senior cycle programme.

- The NCCA Board of Studies for Business will examine the options for ensuring that all second level students participate in an enterprise programme either at Junior or Senior Cycle.

We will ensure that reducing absenteeism and early-school leaving is a core priority over the next five years. The National Education Welfare Board will begin its work this year and will, in the first instance, prioritise areas with high levels of disadvantage, especially areas contained within the RAPID programme.

- The School Completion Programme is designed to deal with issues of both concentrated and regionally dispersed disadvantage and is a key component of our strategy to discriminate positively in favour of children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving.
- Eligible schools were selected on the basis of their retention rates. Schools are grouped into 82 clusters of one or more second-level schools and their major feeder primary schools (400 schools).
- The National Education Welfare Board is finalising staffing arrangements. Thirty-seven former School Attendance Officers, employed by Local Authorities under the previous legislation were transferred to the Education Welfare Board. Twenty-five of these Officers have accepted in full the terms and conditions of Education Welfare Officer.
- The remaining SAOs are continuing to carry out the duties, which they performed under the previous legislation.
- A budget of €5.4 million has been allocated to the new service for 2003.

We will establish a new targeted scheme of school meals for disadvantaged pupils which will combine existing schemes and integrate them within other initiatives.

- An enhanced school meals programme was launched in March 2003 with additional funding of €2 million.

We will ensure that every school building attains set modern standards. This will be achieved through a multi-annual programme, to be called the Schools Modernisation Fund which will be financed through the National Development Finance Agency.

- School Building Programme for 2003 has been published.
- The value of the programme amounts to €343million. It will

deliver **146** large-scale projects at primary and post-primary level. **26** of these projects are new starts in the current year, the balance are carry forwards from previous years.

- In addition, approximately **433** schools will benefit in some way from the capital programme and all primary schools will benefit directly from the devolved grants scheme for minor works.

The NDFA will ensure that the maximum appropriate use of PPPs in schools is achieved. To assist this programme, a national assessment and inventory of the condition of school buildings will be completed and regularly updated. Changes will be introduced to the method of delivering building projects in such a way as maximises the level of devolved activity at local level.

- Meetings have taken place with NDFA regarding existing PPPs and any future programme of PPPs.
- A review of the accounting procedures currently applied by Eurostat is underway.
- A devolved building initiative was introduced in the Capital Programme for 2003 for small rural primary schools. Twenty school communities will benefit from this pilot initiative.
- A detailed assessment of the pilot phase of the inventory is being undertaken to determine the exact nature and extent of the nationwide survey.

There will also continue to be a separate education capital programme as part of the annual Public Capital Programme.

- Capital programme for 2003 published.

We will establish a national expert advice, oversight and provision service for special needs education by end-2002.

- Arrangements for the establishment of the National Council for Special Education are at an advanced stage.
- The Council, which will have a local area presence, will play a key role in the development and delivery of services for persons with special educational needs.
- A Chief Executive has been appointed and it is intended that the body will be vested in mid-2003.
- An Order establishing the Council was approved by government in April 2003.
- Publication of the Education for Persons with a Disability Bill 2003 is being progressed.

We will develop on a North-South basis a Centre of Excellence for study, research and training on special needs and the development and dissemination of best practice models.

- A Centre for Excellence for children with autistic spectrum disorders to be established in Co. Armagh. Its functions will include: a Diagnostic Support and Educational Assessment Service; a Training and Advisory Service for parents, teachers and other professionals; and, an Autism Research, Dissemination and Information Service.
- The facility is to be operated on a joint North/South basis to serve the needs of persons with autism in both jurisdictions. The costs involved will be shared on a 50/50 basis.
- A joint Steering Group comprising health and education authorities north and south has been established to advance the project.
- The Steering Group has invited the views of statutory bodies involved in education, health and social services north and south regarding the development of the Centre.

Over the next five years, we will progressively develop adult education services to a stage where we will offer a “Second Chance Guarantee”. Under the guarantee, every person who left school without completing the junior cycle at second level will be offered the chance to participate on an adult education course.

- We have initiated, with 6,000 places, a Back to Education Initiative part-time measure, involving the use of provision of PLC, pre-Leaving Cert/Junior Cert and VTOS programmes on a part-time basis.
- An objective of the programme is to address the needs of those with minimal or no educational qualifications.

We will continue to support advanced research in third-level institutions and the physical renewal of our third-level campuses.

- New research funding to 15 third level institutions in total, including 6 Institutes of Technology.
- 9 Research Centres completed in 2002.
- 62 new and expanded research programmes established.
- 40 new inter-institutional programmes/initiatives established.
- Over 2,000 peer reviewed publications to date arising from PRTL (Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions) funded programmes (over 2.5 years) representing a 250% increase in output in those funded areas compared to the previous period.

- In 2003, some €7million in funding has been made available under the Technological Sector Research Initiative.
- The commitment to individual researchers has also been strengthened through increased financial support to the two research councils — Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences and Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology.
- In terms of physical renewal of third-level campuses, in 2002 funding of €218 million, including €33.8 million from Scientific and Technological (Investment) Fund was invested on the Third Level Capital Programme, of which €24.3 million was invested on Research and Development projects.
- A four year (2004-2007) multi-annual programme for Third Level Capital has been compiled.
- During 2003, there are 16 major projects and over 25 smaller projects under construction in the Third Level Sector. The allocation for 2003 is €124 million.

We support efforts to protect and improve the quality of academic teaching and learning at undergraduate level. We will establish a small expert review group to examine the role of funding in supporting excellence in undergraduate programmes and to consider procedures whereby outstanding performance by departments, faculties and institutions can be rewarded.

- The appointment of a chair and the terms of reference for the expert group have recently been finalised.

We will seek to address the distortion of the points system which comes about through certain high points courses and, in particular, support the move towards a common science degree as the principal means of entry onto medical, veterinary and other related degree course.

- A preliminary paper examining possible approaches to the development of the proposed programme and identifying relevant associated issues is at an advanced stage of preparation by the HEA.
- Initial discussions have been held in the context of a proposed review of undergraduate medical education.

We will increase the eligibility thresholds for maintenance grants for families with a number of students attending qualifying courses at the same time.

- The 2002 Maintenance Grant Schemes (applicable for the 02/03 academic year) provided for an increase of 15% in

the thresholds (for each dependant) where two or more children are in further or higher education.

We will introduce the payment of maintenance grants through a unified and flexible grant payment scheme.

- This issue is being considered in the context of current review of tuition fees and student supports.

We will ensure that the number of mature students, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds, expands significantly.

- Approval for the establishment of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education within the HEA, whose remit will include the promotion of equity of access by mature 'second chance' students and disadvantaged students.
- Arising from improvements in the criteria for the special rates of maintenance grants (top up grants) for 2002/03, greater numbers of the target groups are qualifying for the grants.

We will create Donagh O'Malley Scholarships for students from areas of significant disadvantage and in doing so, bring together a number of diverse funding initiatives.

- The remit of the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education will include the overseeing of the implementation of a co-ordinated framework of measures (a National Programme) to increase participation in higher education by the target groups, including disadvantaged students.

We will implement a series of coordinated initiatives to tackle alcohol abuse by young people.

- The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Programme will be delivered in all second-level schools by September 2003.
- The programme contains a module on drug education awareness, and also includes information on alcohol.

CRIME

We stand for a society where all people can feel safe in their communities, business and homes.

We will complete the current expansion of the Garda Síochána and increase recruitment so that the numbers will increase by a further 2,000.

- The current actual strength of the Force stands at approximately 11,900, up from 10,800 in 1997.
- We will make the greatest possible use of the existing capacity of the Garda Training facility in Templemore to bring the strength of the Force to 12,200, its current authorised strength.
- Our objective to increase the strength of the Force to 14,000 remains and will be implemented as and when economic and financial circumstances permit.

These additional Gardaí will be targeted at those areas of greatest need, especially areas experiencing a significant drugs problem and a large number of public order offences.

- The enforcement of the law relating to drugs and public order are key elements in the Government Policing Priorities and Garda Síochána Strategic Goals in the Policing Plan for 2003.

We will examine the potential of the Community Warden Service to enforce existing and new functions so ensuring that more trained police officers are released to operational duties tackling crime and defending our citizens.

- The Pilot Community Warden Service deals only with local authority matters.
- The pilot service will run from February 2002 to end of 2004 in Galway, Leitrim and Wexford County Councils, Galway City Council and Naas Town Council.
- A full evaluation of the service will be undertaken towards the end of the pilot period in 2004.

We will extend the use of CCTV cameras and also grant aid local communities to provide them.

- Four systems are currently in place in Cork, Dublin (North Central), Dublin (South Central) and Tralee.
- Contracts have been placed in respect of six other areas Bray, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Finglas, Limerick and Galway. Work is currently ongoing in each of these locations and it is expected that these systems will be up and running shortly.
- A detailed request for tender and technical specification documents for CCTV systems in Athlone, Clondalkin, Tallaght and Waterford will issue shortly.
- Planning for the installation of a CCTV system in Ballyfermot, Carlow, Castlebar, Clonmel, Ennis, Kilkenny and Sligo is scheduled to commence later this year.

- A significant number of expressions of interest (in excess of 150) in the Community-Based CCTV Scheme have been received.
- A prospectus has been prepared and a Code of Practice, drawn up in co-operation with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, and detailed Technical Specifications, drawn up by An Garda Síochána, are almost complete.
- Upon completion of the above, we will issue copies of same to all communities who expressed an interest in the Community-Based CCTV Scheme and any applications subsequently received will be evaluated and processed.

We will review the management structure of the Garda Síochána and we will establish an independent Garda Inspectorate, which will have the power to investigate complaints, and will have the powers of an ombudsman.

- Consultancy review of Garda Síochána organisation structures and operating systems completed.
- Consultations with Garda associations in this regard completed.
- Final SMI Steering Group report will be presented to Government in the coming months.
- Government has approved publication of the review of Performance and Accountability of An Garda Síochána.
- Publication of Garda Inspection and Complaints Bill expected later in 2003.

We will deploy the full weight of the State, including the post-Omagh legislation, against any organisation that seeks to continue the violence of the last 30 years.

- Continued action by the Garda Síochána against dissident republican groups.
- The Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Bill, 2002 will strengthen the law for this purpose.

We will target the assets of all persons involved in drug dealing and, in particular, middle-ranking criminals.

- A joint Garda National Drugs Unit/Criminal Assets Bureau initiative has been put in place in relation to targeting the assets of middle-ranking criminals involved in drug dealing.
- Existing mechanisms in relation to this action are currently under review by the Garda Authorities.

We will continue to target drug dealers at local level by making additional resources available to existing drugs units and for the establishment of similar units in areas of need.

- The Garda Specialist National Units, involved either directly or indirectly in tackling drug supply, now operate under the direct authority of an Assistant Commissioner, National Support Services.
- A joint Garda National Drugs Unit/Criminal Assets Bureau initiative is now in place which targets local dealers.
- Since the publication of the National Drugs Strategy, Garda resources generally in the fight against illicit drugs have increased, particularly with the creation of additional Divisional Drug Units.
- A Garda Working Group is examining drug prevalence levels and distribution networks. Based on its findings, this Working Group will submit proposals in September 2003 with regard to appropriate resource requirements.

We will establish a co-ordinating framework for drugs policy in each Garda District, to liaise with the community on drug-related matters and act as a source of information for parents and members of the public.

- A proposal is being examined by the Garda National Drug Strategy Implementation Team to develop further the participation of the Garda Síochána in such a framework.

We will ensure that each Garda District and Sub-District be required to produce a Drug Policing Plan to include multi-agency participation in targeting drug dealers.

- The Garda Síochána Policing Plan 2003 targets as a priority, action to significantly reduce the volume of illicit drugs available and reduce access to such drugs.
- Each Garda District and Sub-District's input is now built into their relevant Garda Divisional Policing Plan which includes that Division's Drug Policing element.

- A pilot Community Policing Forum initiative in Dublin's North Inner City has now been positively evaluated and will be mainstreamed during 2003 in accordance with procedures under the National Drug Strategy. Other such fora are being supported on a pilot basis.
- The National Crime Council is to set out its recommendations regarding the future development of partnership approaches in tackling the underlying causes of crime.

We will introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modeled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in public and private sectors.

- Consultations are underway with the Office of the Attorney General and the Criminal Assets Bureau.

We will complete our programme of modernising prisons and providing extra places, so as to avoid overcrowding and the reopening of the revolving door.

- Two previously contracted building projects are in train at present, in Limerick Prison (extension for women's wing) and Portlaoise Prison (provision of new Army accommodation facilities).
- A number of alternative ways of completing the process of modernising the prison estate are being explored.
- €38million has been provided for prison capital projects this year.

We will make full use of the probation service where appropriate as an alternative to custody.

- With regard to the implementation of the Children Act 2001, sanction was obtained for additional Probation & Welfare Officers. Interviews to recruit Probation & Welfare Officers are currently underway.
- Recruited officers will be deployed to implement relevant sections of the Children Act on a phased basis.
- The Enforcement of Fines Bill which will provide new procedures for the enforcement of fines focusing on alternatives to imprisonment for non-payment is currently under consideration.

We will tackle the high level of illiteracy and lack of educational accomplishment prevalent in many prisoners by supporting enhanced educational programmes within prisons.

- Participation in Prison Education continues to be greater than 50%.

- Prison Education Curriculum currently under review to ensure continuing relevance to prisoner needs.
- Study on illiteracy in adult prison population to be published later this year.
- Guidelines for Quality Literacy Work in Prisons have been developed and a team is in place to devise implementation.

We will provide skills-training courses to enhance employment prospects for prisoners on release.

- We are committed to maximising the take up of places in training and employment facilities and are working with the prison services to ensure that 50% of work training courses are pursued to recognised certification levels by the end of 2003.

We will provide for compulsory drugs testing of prisoners where appropriate.

- A National Substance Misuse Treatment Policy for the Irish Prison Service is currently under consideration.
- A pilot project is underway on alternative methods of drug testing.

We will require convicted drug dealers to register with the Gardaí after leaving prison.

- Work on the preparation of a Drug Offenders Bill which will address the registration of convicted drug dealers with the Gardaí is at a preliminary stage of examination.

We will fully enforce the measures in the licensing laws that ensure mandatory temporary closures of licensed premises — pubs, clubs and off-licenses — where there have been convictions for allowing underage drinking.

- The relevant law — the Intoxicating Liquor Act, 2000 — is being implemented by the Garda Síochána. The decision to impose closure of premises is one for the courts.
- We will bring proposals to Government in the near future to address the more urgent issues raised in the final report of the Liquor Licensing Commission, including measures to address underage drinking.

We will enact the Criminal Justice (Public Order Enforcement) Bill, 2002 as a priority.

- The Criminal Justice (Public Order) Bill, 2002 has been passed by Dáil Éireann and will be debated in Seanad Éireann shortly.

We will guarantee funding of Victim Support as a cornerstone of Government policy in victim care and review existing funding levels in the light of proposed reviews.

- Strategic review of Victim Support completed and we have met Victim Support to discuss outcome. Agreed to keep funding under review and, in this context,
- we will monitor implementation of recommendations aimed at enhancing Victim Support service levels.

We will ensure that any changes to Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme will involve consultation with Victim Support and we will examine the feasibility of recompensing crime victims for injuries and non-insured loss. An agency will be designated to recover fines for this purpose.

- A review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme had to be suspended because of a Court action pending in relation to Article 10 of the Scheme.
- In addition, the EU Commission has made a proposal for a Council Directive on compensation to crime victims, which is the subject of discussion amongst Member States at present.
- The outcomes to both the Court case and the EU discussions is awaited before consideration of the Scheme in its present format can be concluded.

As part of a general reform of the courts system, the existing criminal jurisdiction of the Circuit Criminal Court and the Central Criminal Court will be merged in one nation-wide indictable crimes court of which all Circuit Court judges and High Court judges will be members.

- We are awaiting report of the Working Group on the Jurisdiction of the Courts before proceeding further.

We will extend the power to the DPP to appeal against lenient sentences in serious cases before the District Court.

- This matter has been referred by the Attorney General to the Law Reform Commission for consideration as a matter of urgent public interest.

We will ensure all substantive criminal law will be codified into a single Crimes Act, dealing with homicide, violence, property offences, dishonesty, corruption, public order, arrest, criminal procedure and court jurisdiction, uniform sentencing

procedure and policies, defences such as insanity and incapacity.

- An Expert Group has been appointed to advise on codification.
- The Expert Group is expected to report at the end of the year.

We will publish this criminal code and ensure it is kept up to date by means of the Statute Law Restatement legislation now before the Oireachtas.

- See above.

We will introduce night courts and weekend courts in areas of greatest need.

- An Expert Working Group is examining issues and due to report shortly.

We will ensure annual funding for awareness programmes to tackle domestic violence and ensure that housing and shelter programmes fully address the needs of those who have experienced domestic violence.

- The National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women is currently identifying issues relating to domestic violence which will form the focus of future awareness campaigns.
- These campaigns will be funded from Subhead R of the Vote of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- Through the implementation of the homeless action plans, local authorities are continuing to address the needs of people fleeing domestic violence.

OLDER PEOPLE

One of our core objectives will be to help all older people to live in the dignity which their immense contribution to the development of our country deserves. Building on our record of unprecedented increases in pension payments and support services, we will implement a coordinated programme of measures so that the full range of issues of concern to older people are addressed. In order to reflect the breadth of this commitment, specific measures can be found as core elements of the different sections of this programme, and, in particular, in the sections dealing with pensions and health.

PENSIONS

We will increase the basic state pension to at least €200 by 2007.

- Old age pensioners received a €10 increase in Budget 2003.
- The basic state pension (Old Age Non-Contributory Pension) now stands at €144 and the maximum rate of the Old Age Contributory Pension now stands at €157.30.

We will introduce personal pension entitlement for pensioner spouses currently in receipt of the qualified adult allowance, set at the level of a full old age non-contributory pension.

- Progress towards this target will be made over the period to 2007. All new pensioner couples now have the option of having the Qualified Adult Allowance paid directly to the spouse.

We will implement improvements in the Widow's/Widower's Pension

- Contributory Widow(er)s over 66 received a special increase of €11 per week in Budget 2003.

We will remove the requirement whereby a person reaching 65 must first retire for a period before being able to work and retain a portion of their pension.

- The implications of the proposal are being considered in the context of the review of the qualifying conditions for contributory and retirement pensions which will be published later this year.

We will establish a group to report on options for lower income groups to ensure that they can have an earnings-related pension when they retire.

- This issue will be progressed in the light of the review of the effectiveness of the recently introduced PRSAs.

We will maintain the National Pension Reserve Fund and the payment of 1% of GNP per annum into the Fund.

- This commitment is being delivered.

CHILDREN AND CHILDCARE

We believe there is much still to be done in order to help all children to develop to their full potential.

We are committed to moving forward on the basis of implementing our highly ambitious Children's Strategy.

- In late 2002, the National Children's Office prepared the first comprehensive progress report since the launch of the National Children's Strategy for the Cabinet Committee on Children.
- The report outlined the progress made under all 135 actions in the Strategy and it was based on information received from the relevant Government Departments.
- Work is now underway or good progress has been made on 91% of all the actions in the Strategy.

We will work to ensure that the number of children living in consistent poverty is reduced in the line with the National Anti-Poverty Strategy.

- This target is to be achieved over the period to 2007. A national survey will be carried out in 2003 to establish the current level of consistent poverty.

We will complete our announced programme of multi-annual increases in child benefit and ensure that the combined value of child support is increased in line with our commitment under the NAPS.

- This commitment is to be achieved over the coming two Budgets following an increase of €8/10 per month in child benefit in Budget 2003.

We will develop a National Play and Recreation policy which will aim to ensure that all children have access to at least a minimum standard of play and recreation.

- The play policy is aimed principally at children up to and including primary school age. However, the general principles relating to play are relevant to all children up to 18, and the policy should be read in that context.
- The national play policy will be multi-faceted, addressing a wide range of issues for which local authorities have responsibility, including green space provision, housing estate design, safe walkways and cycleways. In this regard, there will be a strong focus in the new policies on the issue of play facilities, particularly in relation to equipped playgrounds.
- A national forum brought together 57 of the key stakeholders to identify their roles and responsibilities in relation to play and play policies. The issues raised at that

forum have formed the basis for the objectives of the draft policy.

- The National Play Policy is now at an advanced stage and will be published in 2003.

We will establish the Office of the Children's Ombudsman and have the office fully operational during 2002.

- The Ombudsman for Children Act, 2002 has been promulgated into law.
- The Act provides for the establishment of an independent office which will be accountable to the Oireachtas and which will seek to vindicate the rights of children as required under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Work is ongoing on various aspects of the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children, including the pay and superannuation of the Ombudsman, the method of recruitment of the Ombudsman and the staffing of the Office.
- It is expected that we will be in a position to commence the recruitment process for the Ombudsman post shortly.

We will publish independent evaluations of all child welfare services.

- The Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) will in the future monitor all personal social services operated by the Health Boards, but initially it is concentrating on the child care area and in particular on the inspection of health board operated residential child care facilities.
- Legislation and standards are in place against which inspections are made.
- The SSI publish an annual report which reports to the Minister on the findings from inspections and informs Health Boards, other bodies involved in the provision of services for children and young people and the public of the standard of care in children's residential centres.

We will fully implement the Children First guidelines for the prevention, identification, reporting, assessment, treatment and management of child abuse in all its forms.

- The Children First guidelines are now policy in all health boards and are continuing to be implemented.
- 126 *Children First* staff are now in place.
- Health Board multi-disciplinary training has been given to core staff in health boards and further training is ongoing.

- Joint Garda/Health Board training is ongoing, following joint Train the Trainers training.
- Health Board staff have co-ordinated with the Department of Education and Science regarding information sessions/training of Primary School Designated Officers.
- Information and Advice Officers have commenced their work with the voluntary sector.
- Guidelines for the voluntary sector — *Duty to Care (April 2002)* — have been developed to provide easily accessible material for organisations who want to develop their own procedures. These guidelines form the basis of the work being done by Information and Advice Officers in the Health Boards.
- In co-operation with us, guidelines for the Youth Work sector, for primary schools and for sporting organisations have been developed and are being implemented by the relevant bodies with involvement of the health boards as necessary. The development of Secondary level guidelines and procedures is also ongoing with Health Board support.
- It is our intention to hold an independent review in 2004 to evaluate the process of implementation of the guidelines and to ensure that they are being implemented consistently across the boards.

We will ensure that the National Study of Children is fully established and that the information generated will be widely disseminated.

- We approved the National Longitudinal Study of Children on the basis of a design brief prepared by the Consortium of Researchers in Ireland.
- The cost of the study over a 7-year period is estimated at €20 million or approximately €2.8 million per annum.
- Work is progressing towards the commencement of the study and a Steering Group has been established with representatives from the National Children's Office, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Social Services Inspectorate and the Combat Poverty Agency.

We will strengthen the parental leave scheme in line with the recommendations of the social partners.

- We are committed under *Sustaining Progress* to strengthening the Parental Leave Scheme in line with the agreed recommendations of the social partners arising from the Working Group on Parental Leave.
- The Working Group's recommendations are currently being examined in detail with a view to bringing concrete proposals to Government as soon as possible.

We will ensure that every county implements a Childcare Strategy by the end of 2002, providing the planning and funding basis to significantly increase childcare provision.

- County/City Childcare Committees have developed a co-ordinated strategic plan for the development of childcare provision within their local area over the period 2000 — 2006.
- The strategic plans are implemented through annual action plans agreed with and funded by us under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 — 2006.

We will seek to significantly expand the number of new childcare places supported by state funding.

- The NDP/CSF supported Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000-2006 is the key instrument to develop childcare in Ireland. The Programme is making available €436.7 million through capital grants, supports towards staffing costs for childcare facilities targeting disadvantage and supports to enhance quality of childcare places throughout Ireland.
- The grant programme to childcare providers (total funding available €350 million) will lead to an increase of 50 per cent in the number of childcare places available nationally.
- Funding already committed (€154 million) will, when fully drawn down, lead to the establishment of about 21,000 new childcare places. The balance of funding yet to be committed will lead to a further significant increase in childcare places.

We will significantly increase capital grants for community and private childcare facilities.

- Funding of €155 million is available to community and private childcare providers.

We will seek to streamline the application process for childcare capital grants and increase the grant limits for all providers, subject to overall compliance with EU State Aids rules.

- Work is being undertaken in relation to the streamlining of the applications process.
- In relation to the funding of projects and the amounts awarded, this issue is being assessed in terms of the Mid-term Review of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.
- Once this Review has been completed, the Childcare Directorate of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform will make a recommendation.

We will ensure that there is a network of supports in place for child minders.

- County/City Childcare Committees have received funding to initiate actions to establish training, networking and information for childminders.
- We are currently reviewing the various policy options for the further advancement of the childminding sector with a view to implementing a country wide development initiative from mid-2003.

We will introduce a special working visa scheme for child minders.

- The timing and modalities of such a visa being introduced are being advanced interdepartmentally and in the context of the overall labour market situation.

We will keep under review and seek to streamline regulations concerning the establishment and running of crèches and childcare facilities, including planning requirements, consistent with health and safety requirements.

- In 2001, we established a review group to examine the Child Care (Pre-school Services) Regulations, 1996 and (Amendment) Regulations, 1997. The work of this group is continuing.

We will expand support for the provision of out-of-hours childcare programmes based in schools.

- Last year, we placed an advertisement in the local and national press inviting applications for capital and staffing grant assistance for the development of school age childcare services. This scheme is targeted at community/not-for-profit groups, including school managing authorities and parent groups.
- The Working Group on School Age Childcare is due to report in 2003. The Group's recommendations will inform the further development of the school age sector.

DISABILITY AND CARING

We are committed to building service provision and legislative frameworks which enable people with disabilities to fulfil their potential and make full contribution to the economic and social life of our country.

We will complete the programme of expansion of appropriate care places for people with disabilities,

with, in particular, the ending of the inappropriate use of psychiatric hospitals for persons with intellectual disabilities.

- The number of persons with an intellectual disability accommodated in psychiatric hospitals in October 2002 was 452, down from 490 in April 2002. The figure in 1996 was 970.
- The target for this service is that by 2006 patients with a disability will be transferred from psychiatric hospitals.
- Examples of recent developments include the transfer of over 60 persons in the Mid Western Health Board from St Joseph's Hospital, Limerick and Our Lady's Ennis, 29 persons from St Finan's, Killarney, 21 persons from St Canice's, Kilkenny and 30 persons from St Joseph's Service, St Ita's, Portrane.
- Other centres, apart from psychiatric hospitals, which have received revenue and capital funding include St Raphael's, Youghal, St John of God House, Enniscorthy, Alvernia Centre, Portlaoise, St Peter's Castlepollard, Lough Sheever, Mullingar, Sean O'Hare Unit, Stranorlar, Cloonamahon, Sligo and Aras Attracta, Swinford.
- This programme encompasses not only a capital investment in new or re-furbished facilities, but also aims to enhance the staff numbers and skill mix working with this group and the quality of services available to them.

We will complete consultations on the Disabilities Bill and will bring the amended Bill through the Oireachtas and include provisions for rights of assessment, appeals, provision and enforcement.

- Consultation process is completed and the new Bill will be published as soon as possible.

We will following further consultations, enact the Education (People with Disabilities) Bill and establish as a matter of priority a new dedicated Special Needs Education Council with independent assessment, appeals and redress mechanisms.

- Publication of the Education for Persons with a Disability Bill 2003 being progressed.
- Arrangements for the establishment of the National Council for Special Education are at an advanced stage.
- The Council, which will have a local area presence, will play a key role in the development and delivery of services for persons with special educational needs.
- A Chief Executive has been appointed and it is intended that the body will be vested in mid-2003.

- An Order establishing the Council was approved by Government in April 2003.

We will ensure the regular publication of national data on employment for people with disabilities.

- In light of the commitment in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness and in order to establish how to improve adherence to the target, that the Department of Finance, in partnership with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and the Civil Service and Local Appointments Commission, commissioned a study on the career progression of people with a disability in the Irish Civil Service. The research is completed and will be published shortly.
- The research maps out the current arrangements in respect of career progression for people with disabilities, highlights the challenges they face when seeking to progress their careers and makes recommendations for a model of best practice in this area for the future.

We will increase funding for the full range of open and supported training and employment schemes for people with disabilities.

- Our aim is to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency in the delivery of programmes and services for people with disabilities.
- In 2002, we commissioned a review of vocational training provision for people with disabilities, which is expected to be completed this year.
- The review will assess FÁS' role in supporting, managing and monitoring training provided by specialist providers; examine the nature and extent of supports used by the various service providers to assist people with disabilities to progress to employment and examine the potential for increased training of people with disabilities in a more integrated way.
- It will also identify areas where improvements can be made in operational procedures.
- Expenditure on employability training for people with disabilities is expected to increase in 2003 by nearly €800,000 to €40 million.
- Furthermore, expenditure on employability schemes is also expected to increase by €1.184 million to €11.63 million, while the allocation for integration supports is also expected to rise from actual expenditure in 2002 of €416,000 to €2.1 million in 2003.

We will establish a National Centre for Universal Design to serve as a leader in promoting universal access.

- This will be provided for in the Disability Bill.
- The consultation process for this Bill has now been completed.

We will complete the development of the National Centre for the Visually Impaired.

- The current position is that the interim master plan was received from consultants in December, 2002.
- Further discussions are taking place on the consultants conclusions, the PPP issue and other issues surrounding how the matter might best be progressed having regard to the likely costs involved and any movement in pupils numbers in the schools for the blind since the project was originally proposed.

We will complete the work of the group examining the introduction of a costs of disability payment.

- The Working Group on the feasibility of introducing a Cost of Disability Payment, as established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, is currently operating under the aegis of the Department of Health and Children.
- At the request of the Working Group the National Disability Authority have commissioned a research project that, inter-alia is examining the issue of the additional costs associated with having a disability.
- The results of this project are expected in early June.

We will introduce a new Home Subvention scheme to maximise support to those needing full time care in the community.

- A review of the Nursing Home Subvention scheme has been completed and will be launched shortly.

We will expand the income limits for the carer's allowance so that all those on average incomes can qualify.

- In Budget 2003, the income disregards were increased by €19 per week for single people and €38 for couples bringing the disregards to €210/420 respectively.
- These income disregards will continue to be examined in the context of future budgets.

We will implement significant increases in the value of the respite grant for carers.

- In Budget 2003, the respite grant was increased by €100 to €735.

We will consult on other options for assisting families who may wish to make long-term provision for a person with a disability.

- We are in regular consultation with the representative bodies in the disability field and these consultations include consideration of the full range of health related support services required by people with disabilities.

We will legislate for the achievement of the employment quota for people with disabilities in the Civil and Public Service.

- This will be provided for in the Disability Bill.
- The consultation process for the Bill has now been completed.

SUPPORTING DIVERSITY AND TOLERANCE

We will work to support greater respect for the person and for the diversity, equality and cultural difference in Ireland.

We will uphold the entitlement of all people to equal treatment before the law.

- Government has approved the drafting of legislation to implement the Race Directive, the Framework Employment Directive and the Gender Equal Treatment Directive to supplement the existing Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000.

We will undertake an annual review of the Anti-Racism campaign in order to identify new avenues to combat racism.

- A report of progress on the Know Racism programme detailing activities over its first two years has been published.
- Research which will seek to determine the effectiveness of the programme and attitudes towards racism will be undertaken under the programme later this year.

We will complete a review of the laws on incitement to hatred and ensure that people who incite racial hatred have no place in Irish society.

- The review which is underway will be completed when an EU Draft Framework Decision on combating Racism and Xenophobia has been finalised.

We will enhance the excellent work which is currently underway in our schools, to educate for diversity and promote tolerance.

- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is nearing completion of intercultural guidelines for schools and these will be available for all primary and post-primary schools at the beginning of the next school year.
- These guidelines aim to address the curriculum needs of all students, whether from a minority or majority ethnic group, which arise in the context of growing cultural and ethnic diversity, and to support schools in creating an inclusive culture and environment.

We will appoint an expert group on managing cultural change to advise Government on strategic issues and integrated approach to this complex issue.

- The appointment of an expert group on managing cultural change will be considered in the context of the implementation of the National Anti-Racism Plan.

We will review campaigns designed to promote tolerance and understanding between the settled and travelling communities and maintain multi-annual funding for targeted programmes.

- Submissions received regarding a suitable and effective replacement for the Citizen Traveller Campaign are currently under consideration.

ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION

We recognise that asylum is a complex, long-term issue that requires action at national, European and international levels. Within these contexts, we will work in a balanced way.

We will seek to increase the rate of repatriation of failed asylum applicants, whose applications have been processed to finality, in order to maintain the integrity of asylum policy.

- The number of Deportation Orders issued increased from 946 in 2000 to 2,430 in 2002.
- The number of Deportation Orders effected increased from 187 in 2000 to 521 in 2002.
- Up to 21 March, 2003, 318 Deportation Orders issued of which 134 were effected.

We will ensure that the Reception & Integration Agency works effectively to fulfil its mandate.

- The Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) continues to develop and enhance its operations to ensure that the reception and accommodation needs of asylum seekers are met and that refugees are supported in integrating into Irish society.
- The RIA continues to promote and develop cross-Department/Agency supports for reception, accommodation and integration needs of asylum seekers and refugees.
- The RIA keeps its portfolio of accommodation for asylum seekers under review to ensure that high standards are maintained through regular accommodation inspections by the RIA and by independent consultants. Accommodation requirements continue to be met for all newly-arrived asylum seekers.
- The RIA has continued to coordinate the provision of services including health and welfare to ensure that changing needs are met (including the development of an outreach maternity service for asylum seekers in Dublin).
- As part of its brief on integration, RIA continues to provide comprehensive support services to individuals or groups who have been given leave to remain under Government decision.
- A core aspect of co-ordinating integration measures continues to focus on building effective relationships with all the other participants in the public and civil sector.
- In response to ongoing legislative and structural changes, the RIA continues to review and develop its integration strategy for all refugees and those given leave to remain.
- Based on its experience with the Kosovar programme, the RIA continues to improve its preparedness for the eventuality of large groups seeking temporary protection.

We will ensure that new asylum applicants are dealt with within six months and that other applications which are currently outstanding can be dealt with quickly.

- As a result of large scale investment by Government in this area, there has been considerable progress made in speeding up processing times. There has been a sharp increase in processing, which is up 26% in the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and up over 60% in the Refugee Appeals Tribunal.
- The number of asylum applications in Ireland in 2002 (11,634) showed a 13% increase when compared to 2001 (10,325).

- The number of applicants in the system for more than six months fell to 1,219 at the end of February 2003 and many of these are in the final stage of processing. This compares with 6,500 at the end of September 2001.

We will keep under review the number of applications from non-nationals to remain in the State on the basis of parentage of an Irish-born child and initiate all-party discussions on the issue of such constitutional or other measures which might be required.

- During 2002, the Cabinet Committee on Asylum and Immigration was kept informed of developments on this issue.
- In January 2003 the Supreme Court found in favour of the State in the cases of L&O, finding that the Minister was entitled to deport the parents of an Irish born child following a consideration of the circumstances in each case.
- In January the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform stopped considering cases and in February ceased accepting new applications.
- We will now bring forward a strategy for dealing with such cases, including the 11,000 currently on hand.

We will work with the International Office of Migration to devise a voluntary repatriation programme for illegal immigrants.

- During 2002 a pilot voluntary return programme was operated by the International Office of Migration which resulted in 114 persons returning voluntarily to their countries of origin.
- A review of that programme was carried out recently and a number of improvements are to be implemented.
- A further project aimed at the return and reintegration of nationals of the former CIS states is currently underway.
- A number of other possible projects are being discussed with the International Office of Migration.

We will prepare a new Immigration and Residence Bill which will consolidate legislation in the area and provide for future developments.

- Preparatory work in the development of the Immigration and Residence Bill undertaken in 2002 included the publication in August of the reports of the Public Consultation Process on Immigration Policy and of the International Consultancy on Immigration Legislation and Practice.

- An internal review of practices was also completed.
- Work continues on the specification of the policy requirements for the proposed legislation.

We will review processing arrangements for work visas, including greater integration of consular and commercial reviews to ensure both speedy processing and reasonable safeguards.

- Work related visa application determinations have already been delegated to the Department of Foreign Affairs for implementation through its network of consular posts abroad.
- We will shortly bring to Government wide ranging proposals for the development of the visa system.

We will ensure that effective monitoring of the working conditions of all persons with work visas.

- Monitoring of the working conditions of persons with work visas is carried out as part of the overall functions of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment's labour inspectorate which is responsible for monitoring working conditions generally.
- During 2002, the inspectorate carried out a total of 8,323 inspections/visits, a substantial increase on the 2001 figure of 6,474.
- The inspectorate collected arrears of monies underpaid to employees in respect of wages, overtime, holiday pay etc. amounting to €354,000.
- In carrying out its functions, the inspectorate is responding to the demands arising from the rapid increase in immigrant workers being recruited and employed across all sectors of the economy.

Through our Overseas Development Aid programme, we will work to support the development of countries experiencing large-scale economic migration.

- Through our country programmes in sub-Saharan Africa and other interventions in other parts of Africa, the Ireland Aid programme is being used to support the development of countries experiencing large-scale economic migration.
- In Nigeria, for example, Ireland Aid is working with NGOs and missionaries to deliver assistance in the areas of community development, micro-finance, agriculture, water and sanitation.

- The assistance we provide in our seven country programmes and in many other countries in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe is designed, inter alia, to promote political and economic stability in these countries, thereby reducing incentives for economic migration.
- Ireland Aid's humanitarian budget is used to help countries in crisis or coming out of crisis.
- At the multilateral level, Ireland is participating actively in the EU's High-Level Working Group on Asylum and Migration, working on readmission agreements with selected third countries.
- We are also involved in discussions under the auspices of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in relation to supplementary agreements to the UN Convention on Refugees.

EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM

We will publish regular reviews of the operation of equality legislation and ensure that the enforcement authorities are in a position to effectively carry out their duties.

- It is intended that EU Directives 2000/43/EC (Race Directive), 2000/78/EC (Framework Employment) and 2002/73/EC (Gender Equal Treatment) will be transposed during 2003.
- As a result, proposals for the amendment of the Employment Equality Act 1998 and the Equal Status Act 2000, for submission to Government, are currently being drafted.
- It is hoped to publish the Bill in the Summer with a view to its implementation at the earliest possible date.
- It is intended to make a number of other amendments to the Acts based on experience of the operation of the legislation to date.
- Funding for the Equality Authority (Grant-in-Aid) for 2003 is €5.16 million. Funding for the ODEI — the equality tribunal for 2003 is €0.823 million.

We will ensure that each public sector entity implements a structured programme to address imbalances in gender representation in management positions.

- A Civil Service gender equality policy has been agreed by the Government and is being actively implemented. There are indications of significant improvements of the number of women serving in senior civil service grades.

We will ensure that life-long learning policies are responsive to the needs of women and, in particular, ensure that qualifications authorities fulfill their mandates to develop appropriate mechanisms to recognizing alternative modes of progression.

- The National Qualifications Authority of Ireland has agreed on an outline framework for the development, recognition and award of qualifications. The outline framework will provide a mechanism to promote and facilitate access, transfer and progression in the context of lifelong learning.
- Statistics for the period 2000-2003 show an increase in female participation to 67% of total student numbers in 2003.

We will ensure that a minimum of 40% of state board nominations are from each gender.

- Drafting of first 6-monthly report to Government on State Boards has commenced and report will be ready for presentation to Government shortly and appointments will continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis to ensure the achievement of the 40% target.

We will seek to introduce a scheme of mandatory mediation for the purpose of improving the early settlement of claims and controlling legal and other costs. We include within this sanctions for unreasonable conduct by either side.

- A general scheme of a Bill covering commitments in the Government Programme in the area of personal injuries/civil liability is being prepared.

We will introduce measures to punish the presentation and making of false and exaggerated claims in personal injury cases. As part of this, we will create a power for the courts to deduct from damages costs relating to exaggerated claims.

- A general scheme of a Bill covering commitments in the Government Programme in the area of personal injuries/civil liability is being prepared.
- The intention is to provide that the plaintiff must swear an affidavit verifying the details of his/her claim and that, where any element of a claim is made in bad faith, the whole claim will fail.

We will, in the context of a statutory Press Council and improved privacy laws, move to implement

reforms of libel laws designed to bring them into line with those of other states.

- In the context of this commitment, a Legal Advisory Group on Defamation was established in September 2002 to address a number of defamation-related issues including the review of the Scheme of the Defamation Bill which had been agreed by Government in December 2001.
- The report of the Group is currently being considered.

New laws will be introduced to speed up civil litigation.

- A general scheme of a Bill covering commitments in the Programme for Government in the area of personal injuries/civil liability is in preparation.
- Also, the Committee on Court Practice and Procedure is examining all aspects of practice and procedure relating to personal injuries litigation. The latest information is that a report will be available by summer.

We will change the in camera rule in family law cases to allow for general reporting of overall trends while continuing to respect the privacy of all those involved.

- A provision on this matter is being prepared with a view to including it in the Courts (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.
- The aim is to circulate the general scheme of this Bill this year.

We will reorganise the High Court into specialist divisions.

- The President of the High Court is now in the process of reorganising the High Court into specialist divisions.

We will legislate to provide effective remedies for complaints about judicial misbehaviour, including lay participation in the investigation of complaints.

- We expect to be in a position to publish a Bill on this matter next year.

A comprehensive reform of the law relating to charities will be enacted to ensure accountability and to protect against abuse of charitable status and fraud.

- Preparations are being made for the publication of a consultation paper.
- Following conclusion of the public consultation process we

will ensure that the legislation required is brought forward as soon as possible, by prioritising preparation of the General Scheme of Bill, with a view to securing Government approval for legislative drafting of the Bill, leading to its publication by end 2004.

TACKLING DRUG ABUSE

The fight against drugs is one of the great challenges of the modern world and is one where we believe major progress can be achieved.

We will continue to prioritise heroin and cocaine for intervention, and will publish separate national targets for supply reduction for each major type of drug.

- The National Drugs Strategy 2001 — 2008 provides for objectives and key performance indicators in the area of drug supply reduction.
- A key indicator in the Strategy is to increase the volume of opiates and all other drugs seized by 25% by end of 2004 and by 50% by end 2008, using 2000 seizures as a base.

We will ensure that regional drugs task forces operate efficiently to ensure that prevention programmes are active in all areas of the country.

- The Regional Drugs Task Forces (RDTFs) are in the process of being established in each of the 10 Health Board regions throughout the country.
- The National Drugs Strategy Team has developed guidelines for their operation and it is expected that the RDTFs will have their first meetings prior to summer 2003.

We will ensure that an early-warning system, involving all key agencies, is in place to track the potential spread of heroin into new areas.

- The Early Warning Sub-Committee of the National Advisory Committee on Drugs is examining how best to put such a system in place.
- The Sub-Committee comprises a number of relevant Departments and agencies.

We will publish annual reports of activity and progress towards the achievement of specific prevention, supply reduction and treatment targets.

- An Annual Report, covering the period from the launch of the National Drugs Strategy in May 2001 to the end of

2002, is currently being drafted and is due for publication during the Summer.

- The Annual Report will look at the nature and extent of the drug problem in Ireland and the progress being made in achieving the objectives and targets set out in the National Drugs Strategy for the 4 pillars of supply reduction, prevention, treatment and research.

Additional Gardaí will be concentrated in the areas experiencing the greatest drugs problems and the activities of middle-ranking dealers will be targeted.

- The authorised maximum strength of the Garda Síochána was increased last year from 12,000 to 12,200, an all time record level of strength.
- It is the Government's intention to bring the strength of the Force to this level as a matter of priority.
- Additional resources will be deployed to meet operational demands, including demands in the area of drugs.

Treatment and rehabilitation, including residential programmes, will be expanded so that there is a place available for every person seeking the service.

- The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 contains 100 actions, a number of which relate to the development of treatment and rehabilitation services.
- Specifically, one action relates to health board services having immediate access for drug misusers to professional assessment and counselling, followed by commencement of treatment as deemed appropriate, not later than one month after assessment.
- Health boards are continuing to work on the implementation of this action.
- In addition, the target to increase the number of treatment places for opiate addiction to 6,500 by end of 2002 has been exceeded.

By end-2002 we will publish a plan to completely end all heroin use in Irish prisons. This will include the availability of treatment and rehabilitation for all who need them and the introduction of compulsory drug testing for prisoners where necessary.

- A National Substance Misuse Treatment Policy for the Irish Prison Service is currently being studied prior to approval. This incorporates measures for supply prevention.

- Measures have been taken to reduce supply (e.g. Introduction of new visitor procedures in Mountjoy).

Where a person has been found to be involved in the supply of drugs to a prisoner we will introduce a new stiffer penalty.

- Work on the preparation of a Drug Offenders Bill which will address this issue, is at a preliminary stage of examination.

As part of the new regional education management structures, local supports will be provided and new guidelines will be issued to all schools on the implementation of a drugs policy.

- We are currently establishing a network of ten Regional Offices throughout the country. These offices will enable us to be represented on City and County Development Boards, local and regional drugs task forces and on other bodies promoting social inclusion where an education input is required.
- Guidelines on the development of a substance use policy for primary and post primary schools were issued to all schools at the beginning of this current school year.
- Training seminars on these Guidelines have taken place for teachers in primary and post primary Schools in the Local Drugs Task Force areas (as these were prioritised as areas of disadvantage).
- Support is available to all other schools, at primary level through the PCSP (Primary Curriculum Support Programme) SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) Support Service and at post primary level through the Post Primary SPHE support service.

REGENERATING DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

We will develop the RAPID initiative in our most disadvantaged communities as a priority programme. When the small areas data is made available from the latest census we will review the areas covered and consider additional areas for inclusion.

- We are continuing to promote the RAPID initiative as a priority programme.
- The RAPID Programme currently targets 45 areas of disadvantage throughout the country and the operation of the Programme continues to be kept under review.
- In addition, the Community Development Support Programme is proactively targeting the most

disadvantaged communities for the establishment of new projects.

We will continue the Young People's Facilities and Services Fund (YPFSF) and complete a comprehensive survey of the availability of recreation facilities in disadvantaged areas.

- The total commitment to the YPFSF for 2003 is almost €16 million.
- The National Assessment Committee are still considering a number of options in relation to the future operation of the YPFSF.

We will ensure that the remedial works scheme is focused on bringing older elements of the local authority housing stock set up to modern standards.

- We are continuing to promote remedial works projects which have a focus on older local authority estates.

We will ensure local authority developments of over 75 units have a dedicated childcare facility.

- Where local authorities propose to include childcare facilities in their housing schemes, the cost of such facilities is normally regarded as part of the overall cost of the development.

The Education Welfare Board will publish an action plan on school attendance and early school-leaving for each area covered by the RAPID Programme.

- The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) aims to phase-in the new service on a national basis as quickly as possible.
- During its initial development phase in 2003, the service will prioritise areas of most disadvantage.
- Educational Welfare Officers will be assigned to the most needy areas of the State as designated under Government programmes, including the RAPID programme.

Each relevant Government Department will allocate specific staff whose principal duty will be to ensure that the Department is effectively engaged with the RAPID communities along the

lines of the final report of the Integrated Services Process.

- The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs held discussions with all relevant Departments in late 2002 regarding progress being made under the RAPID Programme.
- From these discussions, we are confident that the necessary staff are in place.

We will ensure that the strategic plans of the City and County Development Boards are, where appropriate, effectively targeting the areas of greatest need.

- The County/City Development Boards (CDBs) are now implementing their Strategies via their member agencies.
- The Strategies contain a strong emphasis on social inclusion.
- The CDBs' social inclusion co-ordinating working groups (representative of relevant public and local development bodies) are pursuing better co-ordination of social inclusion activity locally, including in relation to the RAPID programme.

Each Department will publish, as part of its annual report, a statement of the work undertaken to support Integrated Services work in these areas.

- The Department of Community Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is liaising with other Departments in relation to this commitment.

We will ensure democratic legitimacy on local boards appointed to implement development programmes.

- Strengthening the democratic accountability of agencies and service providers in this area is one of the key principles underlying a package of initiatives agreed recently by Ministers.
- Consistent with this principle and in order to support greater coherence at local level, the Ministers have decided that various local agencies and boards should submit their business plans to City/County Development Boards for endorsement.
- This arrangement will apply to Area Partnerships, Community Development Support Groups, RAPID Groups, Child Care Committees and LEADER Groups.

SUPPORTING CIVIC LIFE

GOOD GOVERNMENT

We believe that it is a core part of the work of all elements of the public sector to ensure that it works in the public interest effectively and informed by the highest personal standards.

Integrity in Public Life

We will vigorously implement and improve where necessary the full range of ethics legislation.

- In July 2002 we approved a framework for the application of the Ethics Acts to positions of employment and directorships in all appropriate public bodies.
- We are in the process of implementing that decision and are in contact with all Departments/Offices with a view to prescribing by regulation under the Ethics Acts all appropriate public bodies under their aegis and to designating all appropriate positions of employment and directorships. We are also updating information in respect of bodies already prescribed and it is expected that the facilitating regulation will be made in the next 3-4 months.
- A comprehensive new ethics framework for local authority members and staff is set out in the Local Government Act, 2001 and came into operation on 1 January this year.
- It requires an annual declaration of interests; a public register of such interests as well as disclosure of an interest in a matter which comes before the authority. Failure to comply with such requirements is an offence.
- This framework will be backed up by statutory codes of conduct one for staff and another for councillors. These are currently being prepared and drafts should be available later this year.

We will introduce a Proceeds of Corruption Act modeled on the Proceeds of Crime legislation, to further target white collar crime and corruption in public and private sectors.

- Consultations are underway with the Office of the Attorney General and the Criminal Assets Bureau.

Delivering Value for Money

We will build a greater culture of review of public spending by publishing regular evaluations of key spending programmes. As part of this, each Department will publish key indicators for each major programme against which progress will be assessed.

- At the beginning of this year, the monthly spending profiles for all Departments were published and can be used to transparently evaluate the levels of actual versus projected expenditure across all Departments.

The National Development Finance Agency will ensure that public projects are developed to maximise value for money.

- The National Development Finance Agency has now been established on a statutory basis and its board appointed.
- The board recently appointed the Agency's first chief executive.
- The Agency will play an important part in the Government's resolve to address the country's infrastructural deficit in a cost efficient manner.

e-Government

We will put in place a programme to implement a major expansion in the range and quality of online Government services.

- Considerable progress continues to be made in the delivery of e-Government with Departments and Agencies engaged in a wide range of initiatives to put their services online.
- *New Connections*, the Government's Information Society Action Plan, identifies strategic policies and priorities and includes the Government objective of "having all public services that are capable of electronic delivery available online, through a single point of contact, by 2005."
- The Information Society agenda is delivered via a number of mechanisms including the Cabinet Committee on the Information Society, the e-Strategy Group of Secretaries General, the Information Society Commission, and the Assistant Secretaries Implementation Group.

- The Assistant Secretaries Implementation Group is currently prioritising services for e-enablement, placing particular priority on projects which (a) give a good return on investment (b) reflect the level of demand for a particular service or (c) are pivotal in progressing the wider Information Society agenda.
- Departments and Agencies are engaged with the Information Society Policy Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to consider how best this prioritisation can be given effect.

We will ensure that all public services capable of electronic delivery are available through a single point of contact.

- We are committed to the objective of having all public services that are capable of electronic delivery available online, through a single point of contact in the context of the criteria set out above. This objective is now a central focus for all Departments and Agencies through their Statements of Strategy under the Public Services Management Act, resulting in the e-Government agenda being clearly integrated with mainstream business strategy and objectives.
- We are committed to ensuring that access to integrated services will be progressed through the framework of the Public Services Broker and continues to place a high priority upon its completion.
- It is envisaged the Broker will deliver the facilities to:
 - Provide citizen and business oriented information on public services.
 - Register as an authenticated *personal* user of online public services.
 - Make applications for and avail of public services online.
 - Accept payments for services online using debit and credit cards.
- A procurement process is ongoing for the delivery of the Public Services Broker. This is being progressed by the Reach Agency under the aegis of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Proven Partnership

We will seek to negotiate a new partnership agreement to follow the PPF and ensure that it recognises that partnership must embrace organisational change, agree ways of improving

the delivery of public services and provide for the modernisation of our workplaces.

- The negotiations on the successor Agreement to the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) concluded in February and each of the four Social Partner Pillars have now formally ratified the new Agreement *Sustaining Progress*.
- The new Agreement covers the period 2003-2005 in respect of the wider policy framework and provides for an interim pay agreement of 18 months duration.
- It has been accepted by the parties to the Agreement that the rapid pace of change in the business environment demands ongoing adaptation and the parties are committed to full co-operation with normal ongoing change and the need for continued adaptation and flexibility to maintain and improve competitiveness and to increase productivity and employment.

We will review models of participation in the social partnership process and in particular examine ways of maximising both the efficiency of the process and the potential contribution of the diverse and vibrant community and voluntary sectors. This will include greater participation of pensioners through groups such as the Senior Citizens Parliament.

- In the context of the review, a number of organisations applied for inclusion in the social partnership process.
- Following this review, we decided to invite seven organisations, including the Irish Senior Citizen's Parliament to join social partnership.
- This is the first time there has been such a substantial change to the composition of an individual Pillar. The new organisations that have been included in the Community and Voluntary Pillar represent a wide spectrum of interests which will no doubt strengthen the diversity of the Pillar.

Semi-State Sector

We are committed to ensuring that the commercial semi-State sector provides services of world-class quality at a competitive price to the consumer.

- We have set out clear policy directives and shareholder mandates in Departmental Strategy Statements which allows the sector operate in a competitive environment where the delivery of world-class services at competitive prices is necessary.

We will seek to secure a viable long-term future for State companies without ideological preconceptions.

- The commercial State companies, as the drivers of sustainable economic growth across many sectors, have a key contribution to make in positioning Ireland for long term success in terms of prosperity, competitiveness and social cohesion.
- The Programme for Government must be seen as continuing and building on the commitments in “Action Programme for the Millennium” (June 1997) in which we undertook to adopt a pragmatic approach towards the commercial State companies. Six years later it can be seen that this approach has borne fruit.
- In that period the commercial State companies have successfully weathered many challenges. The opening of their traditionally closed markets, in which they functioned as monopoly providers, has invigorated them and has even provided the stimulus for expansion while ensuring that the customer has benefited from competition.
- In tandem with the opening of markets we have ensured that the interests of the consumer are protected through the establishment of independent sectoral Regulators.
- We have ensured that the corporate governance of the commercial State companies conforms to internationally accepted best practice through the implementation of the “Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies”.

We will approach the issue of the most appropriate form of ownership or structure for State companies on a case-by-case basis.

- The capital needs of State companies in the new competitive environment can no longer be satisfied by recourse to public funds. EU competition policy lays down that the provision of capital by the State has to be on strictly commercial grounds. Therefore we have set up a framework whereby new sources of investment for development or expansion can be accessed.
- Strategic Alliances, Public/Private Partnerships, Employees shareholding and flotations open up the possibility of both sourcing capital and entering new markets.
- Where possible, partnerships between public and private investors have been encouraged while, however, acknowledging the importance of examining proposed partnerships to ensure that the terms of any such agreements are more cost effective than traditional direct funding approaches. Public/Private Partnerships now form a substantial part of the public capital infrastructure programme.

We will ensure that the public enterprise is managed in the spirit of social partnership, with a new view to achieving optimum service delivery and value for the public.

- In the new Agreement *Sustaining Progress* the Government has committed to ensuring that the commercial semi-State sector provides services of world-class quality at competitive prices to the consumer.
- In progressing this commitment, we are committed to active engagement with the social partners.

We will support the maximum commercial freedom of semi-State companies, subject to the fulfilment of national strategic and balanced regional policy objectives.

- Our policy has been based on enabling the commercial State Bodies to be competitive and cost-effective as providers of vital public services to the benefit of the consumer.
- This is set firmly in the national policy context which sees social and economic objectives as mutually reinforcing.
- We have given each of the State companies clear policy directives and shareholder mandates as expressed in the Statement of Strategy, within which they can then operate in a manner that does not detract from their commercial freedom nor disadvantage them in the competitive environment to which they are now exposed.

Dáil and Local Government Reform

We will implement our proposals for Dáil reform.

- Electronic voting and procedural changes are resulting in more efficient use of Dáil time.

We will continue the process of local government reform.

- The Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) system is currently being reviewed with the objective of identification and transfer of best practice.
- Better co-ordination of delivery of public and local development services at local level is being pursued by County and City Development Boards (CDBs).
- The Boards have published their strategies for economic, social and cultural development, and implementation is underway.
- A new local authority financial management system (FMS) with full accruals accounting and a management information system will be fully rolled out to all local authorities by mid-2003.

- A new management structure with Directors of Service responsible for the main functions (Housing, Planning Etc.) is now in place.
- Increasing emphasis by local authorities on customer service; including customer action plans, service indicators and an initiatives fund.
- Roll out of new Information and Communications Technology systems due for completion by mid-2004.
- A new statutory ethical framework for local authorities — councillors and staff — came into operation on 1 January 2003. New codes of conduct also in preparation.
- The *Local Government Act 2001*, introduced a range of reforms to enhance the fundamental democratic nature of local government and underpins the programme of local government renewal.
- The Act is being brought into operation on a phased basis with over 80% of its provisions commenced to date.
- The Local Government Bill 2003 provides for the elimination of the dual mandate as a further measure to strengthen local government.
- A major independent review of local government funding will be underway by mid 2003.

Electoral Participation

We will examine ways of engaging the electorate in the democratic process with a view towards increasing participation and turnout.

- We will continue to examine and address legislative and administrative barriers to voter registration and voting, building on new provisions of the *Electoral (Amendment) Act 2001* and *Referendum Act 2001*, which were used for the first time in 2002.
- Electronic voting and counting will be introduced on a country wide basis for the June 2004 European and local elections.
- We will undertake extensive publicity and education campaigns to promote the electronic voting system in advance of the 2004 polls. National promotion will be supported by local campaigns.
- A drive to encourage voter registration for the 2004 polls will be undertaken.

BETTER FACILITIES FOR SPORT AND RECREATION

We believe that sport and leisure can play a major role in personal, community and general

development and are committed to seeking to develop it all levels.

We will continue to invest in sports facilities around the country through the National Lottery and Exchequer funding, particularly at local level where clubs of all codes, run by volunteers, remain the backbone of Irish sport.

- Current level of commitment under the Sports Capital Programme is €125 million. In the period 1999-2002 grants to the value of €205 million have been awarded to over 2,500 projects.
- Applications under the 2003 Sport Capital Programme have been received and it is intended to make allocations by mid July.

We will complete a national audit of local sports facilities and put in place a long-term strategic plan to ensure the development of such necessary facilities throughout the country.

- The first step in meeting this commitment has commenced with a review of the Department's sports capital programme under an Expenditure Review programme; this review is due for completion by mid-2003.
- Following the Expenditure Review, an inter-agency steering group will be established to oversee the preparation of a long-term strategy for the development of sporting facilities.
- It is intended that this steering group will also oversee the commencement of the proposed national audit of local sports facilities.

We will start work on the construction of a world-class national stadium.

- **We will build facilities, both locally and nationally, which will serve the needs of the sporting bodies both nationally and locally.**
- **The Minister for Sport, in conjunction with CSID, the national sporting bodies and the Office of Public Works will bring forward the plans and implementation proposals of these policies in the most cost effective way as soon as possible.**
- Following the Government's decision, in September 2002, not to provide Exchequer funding for a national stadium, expressions of interest were sought from private sector investors for the development of a privately-financed stadium at Abbotstown. Twenty three submissions were received and have been evaluated.

- The IRFU and the FAI were invited to assess and delineate their needs for new stadium facilities and report back with their proposals for meeting these needs.
- A report has been received. In considering how to meet the stadium requirements of the major field sport organisations the government will evaluate the proposals received from the IRFU and the FAI and the outcome of the evaluation of the expressions of interests.
- The National Aquatic Centre, Abbotstown, which was part of the Campus Stadium Ireland project, has been completed and is now operational.
- The swimming events of the 2003 Special Olympics World Summer Games will be hosted there in June with the European Short Course Championships being held there in December 2003.

We will work with local authorities to provide at municipal level a range of public facilities such as swimming pools, gymnasias and synthetic, floodlit playing pitches.

- The Sports Capital programme provides an opportunity for sporting organisations and Local Authorities to submit an application for funding in respect of the provision of sporting facilities.
- Applications from local authorities for support for such projects will be considered under 2003 Sports Capital Programme.
- Under the Local Authority Swimming Programme 45 swimming pool projects are being managed.
- An expenditure review of the Programme is due to be commenced towards mid year.

We will continue to support the implementation of the High Performance Strategy and in particular, its short-term aim of improving Ireland's team performance at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens.

- The Irish Sports Council is working with the University of Limerick and the National Coaching and Training Centre to provide strategic input and support to assist athletes in preparing for Athens.
- The outcomes and recommendations of the Sydney Review are being implemented in consultation with the National Governing Bodies of Sport and to the Olympic Council of Ireland.
- Over €500,000 has been allocated by the Irish Sports Council to the Olympic Council of Ireland for its preparations for Athens 2004.

- €4 million approximately has been earmarked by the Irish Sports Council for the implementation of the High Performance Strategy in 2003.

Following a review of the operation of the existing Local Sports Partnerships, we will support their establishment throughout the country as quickly as possible.

- An interim review of the operation of the existing partnerships has been commissioned by the Irish Sports Council and is currently under consideration.
- Following completion of this consideration, we will discuss the question of extending the programme with the Irish Sports Council.

We will continue to encourage voluntarism in Irish Sport and we will recognize, on a national platform the contribution of individual local volunteers by setting up National Volunteer Awards on the lines of the Gaisce Awards.

- We are in consultation with the Irish Sports Council as to the manner by which this commitment can be best put into effect.

We will create, under the Local Government Fund, a new Community Facilities Fund which will support the development of community facilities not covered by existing schemes.

- Work has commenced on drawing up a new long-term strategic plan for the provision of sports facilities throughout the country.
- As part of this process, a national audit of local sports facilities will be carried out.
- The question of a new Community Facilities Fund will be progressed in the context of the review, the subsequent audit and in consultation with the Department of Environment and Local Government.

ARTS CULTURE AND HERITAGE

Our aim is to ensure that cultural activity is available and accessible to all.

We will develop and sustain the increased level of activity in the arts around the country, through the Arts Council, and otherwise in accordance with statutory provisions.

- The allocation for the Arts Council in 2003 is €44 million.

- See below also.

We will support the implementation of the Third Arts Plan. As part of this we will work to ensure that the Council has the appropriate professional staffing structures.

- The new Arts Plan envisages funding of some €314 million over a period of 5 years.
- Implementation of the Arts Plan will have to proceed in line with available resources.
- We have enabled The Arts Council to implement its new staffing structure.
- New posts have already been filled and others are in the process of being recruited.
- A New Arts Council is to be appointed later in the year.

We will enact a new Arts Act, the first in over fifty years, to provide a more inclusive definition of the Arts and map out, on a statutory basis, a new relationship between artists, the Council and the Minister.

- Committee Stage debate on the Arts Bill 2002 has concluded.
- Substantial changes to Section 21 of the Arts Bill have been approved by Government and will be introduced at Report Stage.

We will implement the National Heritage Plan.

- The National Heritage Plan was published in April 2002 and contains 163 actions to be implemented across all Government Departments over a period of five years. Progress has already been achieved on many of these actions.
- Following a major review of the organisation of heritage functions, responsibility for biodiversity/nature conservation and for policy and regulation in relation to the protection of the built heritage has now been assigned to the re-titled Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.
- Responsibility for operational management of the State built heritage properties, and associated visitor centres, has been assigned to the Office of Public Works.

We will develop measures, in partnership with local authorities, to protect and strengthen areas of Georgian built heritage that surround the core Georgian areas of Dublin and other centres.

- The provisions of Part IV of the Planning and Development Act 2000 are being examined in this regard and consultations are now commencing with the urban planning authorities concerned.

We will develop maximum North-South co-operation directly and through the relevant agencies, in recognition of common interests and a largely shared culture.

- Co-operation in relation to the arts has been achieved through the two Arts Councils on this island for the last 30 years and is an important reflection of our commitment to North-South co-operation.

We will help develop the music industry in Ireland through the Music Board.

- The strategic Plan of the interim Music Board has been launched.

We will ensure the early establishment of the Irish Academy for the Performing Arts under the aegis of the Department of Education and Science.

- The Government has transferred responsibility back to the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and this will be considered in the future in light of the available resources.

We will rebuild the Abbey, our National Theatre.

- Government has agreed that expressions of interest be sought by way of public invitation from the private sector in participating, on the basis of a Public-Private Partnership (PPP), in the capital redevelopment of the Abbey Theatre in and around the vicinity of the site of the existing theatre.

We will consider with urgency the recommendations that will be made by the recently established Forum on Broadcasting.

- The Government has acted on this commitment and has taken decisions.
- In December, a Memorandum to Government on this issue was adopted. The key proposals were:
 - RTÉ should continue to be the designated national public service broadcaster.
 - Establishment of a single independent content regulator to be known as the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland.

- Reconstitution of RTE as a commercial State company under the Companies Acts with a Board of Directors.
- Continued dual funding of RTE, with the public funding element being provided through the television licence fee.
- Up to 5% of the licence fee to be provided for a fund to be operated by the new Broadcasting Authority of Ireland and to be available for other broadcasters for innovative programmes deemed to be public service type broadcasting, including digital archiving.
- Public funding for RTÉ to be linked to rolling multi-annual business plans, including specific public service broadcasting outputs, to be agreed with the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.
- An Post to continue to act as agent of the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources in the collection of the television licence fee on the basis of a number of measures to be agreed by the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources to improve the efficiency of the collection system.
- Licence fee level should increase annually by up to the level of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the previous year if RTÉ have met the targets in the business plan including the target for public service broadcasting outputs.
- The level of public funding of RTÉ should be formally reviewed after 5 years.

We will continue to support the development of Irish language broadcasting. In line with legislation which we have already enacted, we will establish TG4 as a separate statutory body.

- Proposals to establish TG4 as a separate statutory body will shortly be brought to Government.
- A section on Irish language programming is being included in the draft RTE Charter.
- As part of our programme of reform of public service broadcasting RTE's Statement of Commitments commits RTE to increasing the amount of Irish and bilingual programming.
- We will shortly publish legislation aimed at providing 5% of the television licence fee for the provision of additional public service broadcasting, including Irish language broadcasting.

We will finalise the long-term strategic development of the National Concert Hall.

- OPW and the National Concert Hall have prepared a detailed and costed brief for its future development.
- The option of relocating the National Concert Hall to a site under the control of the Dublin Docklands Development Authority is being explored.

We will support the Irish film industry and the central role of the restructured Irish Film Board.

- We remain committed to the development of a strong and dynamic Irish film sector and, most importantly, to fostering strong indigenous production with the Irish Film Board having a strategic role in that context.
- This has been demonstrated by the restructuring of the Board. The financial resources available to the Board have increased from a total of €5.256million in 1997 to €10.768 million in 2003.
- The staffing complement of the Board has risen from four in 1997 to sixteen in 2003.
- The Section 481 tax relief is secure until December 2004.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE GAELTACHT

We will use the report of the Gaeltacht Commission – An Coimisiún faoin nGaeilge sa Ghaeltacht – as the basis for future policy.

An Advisory Committee has been established to put forward practical costed measures, drawing on the recommendations of the Commission, designed to strengthen Irish as the principal community language in the Gaeltacht.

Initiatives in hand at present include:

- the carrying out of a major linguistic study on the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht, as a basis for the linguistic development of the Gaeltacht and a review of its boundaries;
- a programme aimed at encouraging parents and prospective parents in the Gaeltacht to choose Irish as the principal language of the household.

A West Coast Digital Corridor will be developed to provide high-quality broadband telecommunications facilities for both Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht communities from Donegal to Cork. Údarás na Gaeltachta will be charged with facilitating the provision of similar facilities in any Gaeltacht areas not covered by the Corridor, where demand exists, including offshore islands.

- We are exploring a variety of options and are in discussion with a number of state and private sector entities.

We will enact the Official Languages Equality Bill.

- The Committee Stage of the Bill is now proceeding in the Seanad and it is hoped that the Bill can be enacted later this year.

Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge will be fully reviewed in the context of modern day needs, and ways of how to promote the Irish language among young people will be examined.

- The review of Scéim Labhairt na Gaeilge is currently underway and is expected to be completed before the start of the 2003/2004 school year.
- Issues regarding the promotion of Irish among young people are being examined by the Advisory Committee established to propose recommendations for action arising from the Report of the Gaeltacht Commission.

Youth and sports funding schemes will be reviewed in the context of their impact in the Gaeltacht and Islands.

- An analysis of Departmental Schemes relating to the Gaeltacht and the Islands is underway at present.

An Foras will be requested to develop materials specifically for families who wish to raise their children through the medium of Irish.

- It is understood that Foras na Gaeilge proposes to include an action in its 2003 Business Plan regarding the publication of a number of educational works together with a package of phrase-books and CDs for distribution to parents who wish to speak Irish to their children at home.

The major works programme for Gaeltacht infrastructure under the National Development Plan will be completed.

- This works programme, which includes strategic roads and piers in the Gaeltacht, is proceeding satisfactorily.
- A provision of €10.294 million has been made for the Gaeltacht Improvement schemes in 2003.

A comprehensive study of the current status of the language in the Irish media will be undertaken.

- See the commitment regarding TG4 in Culture and Heritage section of this document.
- As part of our reforms of Public Service Broadcasting, RTE's Statement of Commitments commits RTE to increasing the amount of Irish and bilingual programming.
- We will shortly publish legislation aimed at providing 5% of the television license fee for Public Service Broadcasting Fund to develop additional public service programming including Irish language programming.

The Language Assistant scheme in Gaeltacht schools will be strengthened and expanded to include co-operation with parents in the home.

- An independent review of this scheme is currently under way and is due to be completed in the near future.
- The question of possible expansion will be progressed following receipt of the completed review.

A comprehensive review of the needs of all Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools will be undertaken. As part of the work of the Department of Education & Science, the physical condition of all buildings used by these schools will be reviewed and a programme put in place to ensure that they meet required standards.

- This matter will be progressed in the context of an overall multi-annual programme of schools modernisation subsequent to the determination of the capital funding envelope for the education sector.
- The issue of reviewing the needs of Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht schools is also being examined by the Advisory Committee established to propose recommendations for action arising from the Report of the Gaeltacht Commission.

The development of the Gaeltacht infrastructure will continue through the schemes operated by the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

- The Departmental schemes for the development of infrastructure in the Gaeltacht are continuing, with €4.7million spent in 2002 on housing in the Gaeltacht and an additional €16.5million spent on other Gaeltacht infrastructure, including minor roads, marine works, community halls, Irish colleges and recreational facilities.
- A committee has also been established between the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Údarás na Gaeltachta to progress the recommendations

contained in an independent review of the infrastructure needs of the Gaeltacht carried out in 2001.

The improvements carried out under the strategic roads scheme will continue, to ensure that the road infrastructure in remoter areas of the Gaeltacht will be improved and that there is at least one good road into every Gaeltacht area.

- This scheme is continuing in partnership with the relevant local authorities.
- An amount of approximately €5m will be spent on Gaeltacht roads in 2003.

The relevant national schemes will be reviewed to ensure that appropriate supports are in place for the Irish language childcare sector throughout the country.

- This matter is being examined by the Advisory Committee established to propose recommendations for action arising from the Report of the Gaeltacht Commission, in the context of reviews being conducted by Foras na Gaeilge and Údarás na Gaeltachta.

A strategic review will be completed in relation to the employment support work of Údarás na Gaeltachta with a view to identifying new strands of employment creation in Gaeltacht areas.

- Following publication in December 2002 of the Report of the Working Group on Employment Creation in the Gaeltacht, an examination is underway by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Údarás na Gaeltachta regarding the most effective way of implementing the wide range of recommendations made in the Report.

We will support the development of Irish medium 3rd level education and research activities on campus and, where appropriate and sustainable, in Gaeltacht education centres.

- An inter agency working group is in place with representatives from Government Departments, HEA and Údarás na Gaeltachta to consider a strategy for the delivery of third level education through the medium of Irish and in Gaeltacht areas.

- An invitation for public submissions was issued to the third level institutes, VEC schools, all Irish schools and Foras na Gaeilge. A consultant has been appointed to assist the Group and a draft report, based on submissions received, is now being considered by the Group.

LEGISLATION

Bills Enacted (6 June 2002-6th May, 2003)

1. Electoral (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2002
2. Minister for the Environment and Local Government (Performance of Certain Functions) Act, 2002
3. European Union (Scrutiny) Act, 2002
4. Twenty-Sixth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 2002
5. British-Irish Agreement (Amendment) Act, 2002
6. European Communities (Amendment) Act, 2002
7. Appropriation Act, 2002
8. National Development Finance Agency Act, 2002
9. Social Welfare Act, 2002
10. Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act, 2002
11. Statute Law (Restatement) Act, 2002
12. Planning and Development (Amendment) Act, 2002
13. Capital Acquisitions Tax Consolidation Act, 2003
14. Unclaimed Life Assurance Policies Act, 2002
15. Finance Act, 2003
16. Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2003
17. Data Protection (Amendment) Act, 2003
18. Motor Vehicle (Duties and Licences) Act, 2003
19. Employment Permits Act, 2003
20. Local Government Act, 2003
21. Freedom of Information (Amendment) Act, 2003
22. National Tourism Development Authority Act, 2003
23. Health Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2003
24. Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland Act 2003
25. Broadcasting (Major Events Television Coverage) (Amendment) Act 2003.