

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 11 November 2011

Volume 68, No WA3

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to arrive not later than two weeks after publication of this report.

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 November 2011

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why there is a need for new legislation to deal with the inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse rather than using the Inquiries Act 2005.

(AQW 3145/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The Attorney General's office has advised that Section 30 of the Inquiries Act 2005 currently places restrictions upon the period of time which can be examined by an inquiry, that is the period of time from 1973 to 1999. Many of the victims who have come forward to the Taskforce were in institutions before 1973 and we would therefore need to implement legislation to enable us to look at issues from 1945 on, if we were intending on holding a full statutory inquiry.

As outlined, the inquiry and investigation will take the form of an inquiry with statutory powers to compel people and documents and will also include non-statutory elements, including: a forum for recounting experiences and a research and investigative team leading to, and informing, a final report from the Investigation and Inquiry Panel to the Executive.

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many planning applications have been processed by the Planning Appeals Commission in each of the last six years; and, of these, how many have been successful.

(AQW 3458/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its independent tribunal status, its Chief Commissioner has been asked to provide a response directly to you, and we understand that she has written to you in the following terms:

"I have been asked to provide you with information requested in the above Assembly Question.

In the following table I have set out, the number of appeals received against refusals by Planning Service, the number of decisions issued, the number of appeals that have been allowed and the percentage of appeals allowed. These figures relate to the last 6 financial years.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12 (to date)
Appeals Received	2765	1493	515	515	435	229
Appeals Decided	973	1065	1411	1305	681	179
Appeals Allowed	362 (37%)	334 (31%)	487 (35%)	516 (40%)	226 (33%)	46 (26%)

I would be happy to provide any further information you require arising out of this response or to meet with you to discuss the matter if that would be more suitable”.

Consultation on the Social Investment Fund

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) why the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister was not invited to the launch of the consultation on the Social Investment Fund; (ii) how invitees were selected to attend the launch; and (iii) how the members of the Social Investment Zone Area Steering Groups that will administer the fund will be appointed.

(AQW 3834/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: After agreeing the Social Investment Fund (SIF) consultation document, we wrote to the Chair of the OFMDFM Committee on 27 September providing a copy of the document and inviting comments as part of the consultation process.

We organised the sectoral consultation launch in order to publicise the start of the consultation period as we have also been dealing with a significant number of enquiries from the voluntary and community sector.

Our officials have since briefed the OFMDFM Committee in more detail on the SIF prior to the undertaking of consultation events. The Committee received a full schedule of the public consultation events and were advised of their commencement on 26 October 2011. Officials have also undertaken to update the Committee during the consultation process.

Invites to the sectoral consultation launch event were issued, on OFMDFM's behalf, by NICVA and were to be members of the Ministerial led Poverty and Social Inclusion Stakeholder Forum. Information about the launch had, however, been circulated wider than the Forum.

Proposals in respect of the Social Investment Zone Steering Groups can be found at para 3.02 of our public consultation document which can be viewed and downloaded at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/sif-consultation-wdoc.doc.

Social Investment Fund

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much of the £80 million Social Investment Fund will be allocated in advance of the January 2012 Monitoring Round.

(AQW 3845/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: £72 million of SIF is profiled in years 2, 3 and 4 of this CSR period and therefore cannot be spent in this financial year.

We are committed that the SIF will remain an £80 million fund. Therefore we have decided to re-profile at least £7 million of the spend available in year 1, into years 2, 3 and 4 to ensure more effective spend against area based plans.

Childcare Fund

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much of the £12 million Childcare Fund will be allocated in advance of the January 2012 Monitoring Round.

(AQW 3847/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Proposals from a number of departments are currently under consideration and Junior Ministers will be briefing the OFMDFM Committee shortly on the quantum of bids across government, and the improvements which these will bring.

The additional £3m funding in the current year provides all departments who have a role in childcare, with a unique opportunity to deliver substantial progress towards improving the affordability and accessibility of good quality childcare provision for all parents, and to progress key actions identified in the OFMDFM policy and economic appraisal.

We are committed to ensuring sound investment, not only of the additional £3m in the current year, but of the full £12m across the term of this administration.

We plan to put proposals on the development of the childcare strategy to the Executive later this year.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what are the ongoing annual costs of the Agricultural Wages Board.

(AQW 3692/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): The total cost of the Agricultural Wages Board in 2010-11 was £22,912.

InterTradelreland's Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment has provided her with a copy of InterTradelreland's 'Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report'; and for her assessment of this study.

(AQW 3730/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The InterTrade Irelands (ITI) Agri-Food study commenced in May 2009 and draft report was delivered to Steering group members in April 2010. My Department had representation on that Steering Board and as such responded to the draft report highlighting DARD's 'Focus on Food Strategy' commitments, resource implications, existing animal health collaboration and similarities between the 'Focus on Food' and ITI strategy documents.

ITI subsequently produced a revised report in June 2010 and met with the then DARD Minister in February 2011 to brief her on the report. Further comments on the revised report's content were forwarded to ITI officials following the Ministerial meeting and ITI officials also met with other key stakeholders at that time and incorporated comments into a further revision. DARD received a copy of the revised report in July 2011 for information only and were advised by ITI that the report was with their Sponsor Departments for comment and had not yet been signed off.

Since that time there has been no further correspondence from ITI or DETI regarding the report.

European Union Subsidy Payments

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to the reported £4m clawback of further European Union subsidy payments, (i) to explain how this situation arose; (ii) how much of the reclaimed amount is being contested by her Department; and (iii) what steps have been taken to avoid similar losses in the future.

(AQW 3749/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) This disallowance arose from issues concerning the allocation of Single Farm Payment (SFP) entitlements in 2005 and the impact of this on 2005 – 2007 scheme years.
- (ii) My Department is considering if there is merit in contesting this disallowance. However, there are likely to be significant practical difficulties in doing so as the onus will be on my Department to demonstrate that the Commission has either been manifestly unreasonable in its approach or has erred in its interpretation of EU legislation. This is much more difficult to demonstrate than that the Department's approach was satisfactory.
- (iii) The disallowance arises from concerns raised by the Commission concerning the establishment of entitlements in 2005. Given the nature of the issues raised, it is not possible to take corrective

action on these now. For example, the issue of who should be allocated entitlements in a concrete situation is complex as evidenced by the ongoing CAP reform debate on active farmers and it would not be feasible to revisit decisions made on that issue back in 2005.

My immediate concern is the need to significantly reduce or eliminate future disallowance. My Department has a Compliance Programme in place to address disallowance issues and ultimately demonstrate to the Commission that we can provide an adequate level of assurance that we are correctly paying SFP and other area based schemes.

European Union Subsidy Payments

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the current claims by the European Union for the repayment of earlier subsidy payments; and whether there has been any success in reducing the amounts in question.

(AQW 3750/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: This is a complex issue on which I propose to make a statement to the Assembly. The European Commission has, on 2 occasions, confirmed that it will recover money from the north of Ireland under the Clearance of Accounts procedure. In the first of these, on 15 July 2010, the Commission indicated that they would recover €33.7 million for the 2004 – 2006 scheme years in respect of area aids. The second, on 14 October 2011, confirmed a recovery of £754,144 for the 2005 scheme year and €3,806,563 for the 2006 and 2007 scheme years in relation to the allocation of SFP entitlements.

This money is not repaid to the European Commission. The Commission deduct the amounts from the money drawn down by the Member State to make payments under the various EU area aids schemes.

On 24 September 2010, the Department lodged a case with the European General Court. A notice of the case (t-453/10) was published in the Official Journal at the beginning of December 2010 and DARD is waiting for the Court to decide on this.

Assistance Towards Renewable Energy Projects

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farm owners in the North Down area have (i) applied for; and (ii) received assistance towards renewable energy projects on their land in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3829/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department has not received any applications or provided financial assistance towards renewable energy projects from farm owners in your constituency within the last 3 years.

No applications were made under the NI Rural Development Plan, Axis 3 measure 3.1 or the Biomass Processing Challenge Fund.

Fish Quota Allocations

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress was made during the discussions on fish quota allocations which took place in Brussels on 21 October 2011.

(AQW 3868/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: When I attended the October Agriculture and Fisheries Council, discussions focused on the Commission's proposals for fishing opportunities in Baltic Sea for 2012. After lengthy discussions and a compromise proposal from the Presidency, political agreement was reached on these by qualified majority. There were no discussions about stocks fished by the local fleet and these are scheduled to take place at Council on 15th and 16th December.

Flooding in the South Tyrone and Clogher Valley Areas

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she will take to minimise the impact of future flooding in the South Tyrone and Clogher Valley areas.

(AQW 3882/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Rivers Agency is undertaking initial investigations into the sources of flooding at all of the properties affected in the South Tyrone and Clogher Valley areas. Where the cause of the flooding is apparent, for example blockages in a watercourse, immediate action is being taken and blockages removed. The potential for works to provide additional flood protection to properties is obviously limited by the current budgetary constraints under which the Agency operates. My Rivers Agency has a full programme of works to utilise their budget allocation so lead times are currently very long and all projects are subject to cost/benefit assessment and prioritisation against other demands.

Flood Area 'Hot-Spots'

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she will provide information on known flood area 'hot-spots' to keyholders and residents whose property may be affected by heavy rainfall and subsequent flooding.

(AQW 3884/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Information captured on past flood events has been publically available on the strategic flood map since its launch in November 2008. This map also shows the area considered to be at flood risk from rivers and the sea and indicates the increased risk due to predicted climate change.

As a direct response to the recent flooding I have asked my Rivers Agency to update the historic information to ensure it provides as accurate a representation as possible of known flooded areas.

In addition to the data about rivers and the sea I have also asked that the recently developed surface water flood map is made available to the public. This map shows area that may be at risk from flooding due to intensive rainfall events and will provide valuable information to the public.

Farms in the Ards Peninsula Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of farms in the Ards Peninsula area.

(AQW 3926/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The June 2010 Agricultural Census found 624 farm businesses in the Ards District Council area.

Herd Register

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many successful cases have been brought against farmers for failing to keep a herd register in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3940/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

Convictions	Failure to keep a herd register
26/10/2006-25/10/2007	5
26/10/2007-25/10/2008	4
26/10/2008-25/10/2009	6
26/10/2009-25/10/2010	1
26/10/2010-25/10/2011	2

Strangford Lough Fishing Fleet

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consideration she has given to the interests of the Strangford Lough fishing fleet and the wider economic and tourism factors when deciding on the action plan for restoring mussels in the Lough.

(AQW 3944/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Fishing vessels are not restricted by my Department to operating in Strangford Lough and are able to move outside the lough as fishing opportunity presents. I am mindful however of the impact of this Department's conservation obligations on vessels operating within Strangford, initially with zoning of fishing methods under the Inshore Fishing Prohibition Regulations (NI) 1993, the later prohibition of mobile gear introduced in 2003, and the introduction of two non-fishing areas in 2011.

The horse mussel beds in Strangford Lough are a designated conservation feature under the Habitats Directive and are currently in serious decline. Competent authorities locally are obliged to protect and restore this important marine habitat, improving biodiversity including species of interest to commercial fishermen.

The 2011QUB report after the three year Modiolus project records further decline and makes recommendations for greater protection including a non-disturbance zone below the 10 metre contour across a wide area of the lough, with clear implications for fishing. However following an assessment of the impacts of pot fishing under Article 6 of the Habitats Directive, and industry agreement to abide by a code of practice in the lough it is not my intention to introduce further restrictions at this stage, but Departments will closely monitor biological changes inside the closed area to determine their effectiveness. Officials in my Department work closely with fishermen's representatives on Strangford issues and I have asked them to examine mechanisms to assist the introduction of the code of practice.

Officials are currently drafting a revised Modiolus Restoration plan for agreement of Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, and we will present this to the Commission for their approval, but examining the report recommendations and recognising the backdrop of continued decline in biodiversity it is probable that we will face scrutiny of our existing management mechanisms and may be compelled to introduce greater protection. Thus I am sorry to say I cannot rule out future fishery restrictions.

Flooding that Damaged Premises in Tempo

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department has taken to ensure that there is no repeat of the flooding that damaged premises in Tempo on Monday 17 October 2011.

(AQW 3971/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My DARD Rivers Agency responded to the flood event in Tempo on Monday 17 October 2011 and has since removed a section of an undesignated culvert that appeared partially blocked with gravel. Officials are currently carrying out an inspection of the watercourse network in the area to establish the cause the flooding and identify any other potential blockages. This investigation will assist in determining any other works that could be carried out to reduce the risk of another flood.

Tree Diseases

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether his Department has any plans to deal with tree diseases, and if so, to detail the diseases involved.

(AQW 3979/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has a programme of ongoing surveillance for quarantine plant pests and diseases which could threaten our woodlands.

Currently statutory programmes are being implemented to control outbreaks of disease in woodlands caused by two pathogens here; *Phytophthora ramorum* infects larch particularly, but can also cause disease in a range of conifer and broadleaved species, and *Phytophthora lateralis* that infects Lawson cypress specifically.

From August 2010 to date there have been confirmed outbreaks of *Phytophthora ramorum* in larch trees at eighteen individual sites in the north. Measures to control the disease have included the felling of some 360 hectares of trees, biosecurity measures, and aerial and ground surveys.

Following surveys in the summer and autumn *Phytophthora lateralis* has been confirmed in Lawson cypress at five forests and a number of private properties. Measures focusing on biosecurity and particularly the prevention of infected soil movement have been implemented at the sites.

In addition the disease Fireblight which primarily affects ornamental shrub species but can also infect some broadleaved trees is subject to annual surveys and statutory controls here.

The Forest Service is also aware that a plantation of Corsican pine in Co Down has been infected with *Dothistroma septosporum*, or red-band needle blight, a fungal disease of pines. While this is not a notifiable disease in a plantation situation it can significantly affect timber production of pine species. Forest Service is currently evaluating the impact.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total cost to the public purse of the Agricultural Wages Board in each of the last five years.

(AQW 4148/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total cost of the Agricultural Wages Board in each of the last five years was in the region of:

2006-07	£22,640
2007-08	£21,420
2008-09	£24,810
2009-10	£24,560
2010-11	£22,910

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Directors and Staff in the Odyssey Trust Company

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 3065/11-15 and the assertion that the remuneration of the Odyssey Trust Company's (OTC) directors and staff 'is the sole responsibility of the OTC Trustees', (i) how this statement can be reconciled with the requirement in the Funding Agreement of 21 December 1998 that 'none of its Trustees, directors, employees or service providers are paid salaries, fees or emoluments which exceed reasonable and proper open market and arm's-length commercial rates'; (ii) how her Department satisfies itself that this obligation is being met; and (iii) for her assessment of whether the obligation is being met.

(AQW 3753/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): As stated in AQW 3065/11-15, 'OTC's Trustees are the non-executive Directors of the charity and do not receive any remuneration.' However, the OTC's Memorandum of Association also permits the Trustees to have 'reasonable out of pocket expenses'.

The extract from the Funding Agreement quoted in the question does not grant permission for the Trustees to receive remuneration, in breach of the Memorandum of Association (MOA).

Its emphasis and substance is on the obligation to ensure that anyone who is entitled to rightfully receive salaries, fees or emoluments should not be paid these in excess of proper open market and arm's-length commercial rates.

OTC's Trustees are clear on the requirements of both the MOA and the Funding Agreement. To ensure compliance with these the Trustees commissioned an independent report to consider this issue. Having carefully considered its findings they believe that the OTC's current salary levels are appropriate for an organisation of this size and complexity.

Libraries: Wireless Internet Service

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) whether any libraries currently offer a wireless internet service; (ii) what consideration has been given to providing this service in libraries; and (iii) for her assessment of the benefits of this service to library users.

(AQW 3873/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI have informed me that there is currently a wireless internet service in Bangor, Carrickfergus and Lisburn libraries. This service has been well received by customers and is beneficial for these users.

Libraries NI has commenced a procurement process for the replacement of their ICT systems and as part of this it is intended that the provision of wireless access will be extended.

Mobile Library Service

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, for each town or village in County Fermanagh where the mobile library visits, to detail (i) the number of registered users of the mobile library; (ii) the number of active users; and (iii) the number of books or other materials loaned out in each of the last four financial years.

(AQW 3875/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI do not record mobile library use on a stop by stop basis, therefore the following table shows the (i) total number of registered users; (ii) the total number of active users; and (iii) the total number of books or other materials loaned out in each of the last four financial years by the two mobile libraries serving Fermanagh.

Fermanagh Mobiles*	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Registered Borrowers	2,899	1,837	1,951	2,266
Active Borrowers	854	751	585	880
Issues	81,157	74,907	70,891	51,823

* Data relates to two mobile libraries which serve Fermanagh. Note that a small number of stops by these mobiles are in Tyrone.

Arts in the Strangford Constituency

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department has invested in the arts in the Strangford constituency in the last five years; and to detail where this funding was applied.

(AQW 4039/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department doesn't directly provide funding for the arts, as funding is disbursed through the Arts Council. For information on arts funding in the Strangford constituency, you should contact the Arts Council directly.

DCAL does allocate Community Festivals funding to the local councils, but does not hold information at constituency level.

If you require a breakdown of arts related Community Festivals Funding in the Strangford constituency, you should contact the relevant councils directly.

Sport Matters Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department intends to encourage and facilitate private sector investment in the delivery of sports coaching, which was recognised as a key requirement in the Sport Matters Strategy.

(AQW 4065/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport Matters recognises that the private sector, along with other sectors, already invests substantial financial and human resources in the delivery of sport generally in the north of Ireland. Sport Matters also recognises that the private sector has a significant role to play in terms of investing in and providing sports related services including coaching. It further acknowledges that Government has a role in facilitating even greater private sector involvement by encouraging increased demand for sports services.

In order to help increase demand, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), through Sport Matters, is establishing a world class sports system for all people in the north of Ireland. To achieve this, DCAL, with the support of Sport NI, is currently overseeing the implementation of a Sport Matters Action Plan. This Action Plan has been developed, and is being taken forward, with the assistance of a range of sports partners and stakeholders in the public, voluntary and business sectors. It is expected that the actions being taken forward under the Plan will facilitate the delivery of all Sport Matters requirements including those relating to greater private sector involvement and investment in sport.

Lottery Funding to the 2012 Olympics

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding has been lost to sport in Northern Ireland as a result of the diversion of Lottery funding to the 2012 Olympics.

(AQW 4132/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In common with the other Devolved Administrations, the North of Ireland has been required to contribute Lottery proceeds as a key part of the public funding package for the Olympics. Sports Lottery funding for the north of Ireland has been reduced by £4.192m over the period 2009/10 to 2012/13.

Community Festivals Fund

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the formula which determines the allocation of the Community Festivals Fund to District Councils.

(AQW 4147/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The allocations are determined on the basis of population distribution, with a 10% weighting applied for income deprivation.

The Noble Multiple Deprivation measure was previously used to calculate the 10% deprivation measure, but for 2011/2012 the Income Deprivation Domain MDM 2010 was used.

Department of Education

Parkhall Integrated College, Antrim

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 3037/11-15, to outline the strategic planning area exercise, including (i) when it will be carried out; (ii) by whom; and (iii) what guidelines will be followed.

(AQW 3600/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Area planning will be fundamentally based on the Sustainable Schools Policy; the primary objective of the policy is to ensure that all children and young people get a high quality education in strong and vibrant schools that are educationally and financially viable and sustainable in the longer term.

The focus of area planning will be to determine the future needs of an area across all sectors using robust and verifiable data. Then to compare what is needed with what already exists to identify gaps and over provision. Once the need is determined the school managing authorities will consider how best to meet that need. The emphasis must be on a network of sustainable schools and maximise the use of the existing estate.

The Terms of Reference for Area Planning are currently being discussed between the Department, the Boards and CCMS. The dates for completion of the area planning phases will be included in the final Terms of Reference.

As outlined in my answer to AQW 3037/11-15, I have commissioned the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs) working in close conjunction with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) and other sectors to co-ordinate this exercise.

As stated above the exercise will be based on the Sustainable Schools Policy and will be steered by guidance that will issue from my Department in due course.

Irish-Medium Education Report

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for an update on how recommendation 2 of the Irish-Medium Education Report is being implemented.

(AQW 3617/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In line with Recommendation 2 of the Review of Irish Medium Education the Department has revised its policy on the funding and development of Irish Medium pre-school provision. In considering requests for new statutory Irish Medium provision the Department only takes into account the overall level of existing Irish Medium provision in both the statutory and voluntary/private sectors when determining the need for additional Irish Medium places. The same consideration is applied by PEAGs when allocating funded places in the voluntary/private sector.

However, the Department's policy is not to displace good quality pre-school provision already in existence, with pre-school provision in an alternative setting. Therefore the Department may not, unless exceptional circumstances pertain, support a proposal to establish or increase provision in an area where there is a sufficient level of quality pre-school provision (irrespective of the provider).

Projected Capital Budget

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the projected capital budget for new builds for existing schools and new school builds in each of the next three years.

(AQW 3705/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In each of the next three financial years the total gross capital budget is £104.1m, £108.4m and £183.4m. A list of major capital projects currently on site with projected expenditure profiles over the next three financial years is detailed in the table below.

Project	2012/13 Total £000'S	2013/14 Total £000'S	2014/15 Total £000'S
Magherafelt H.S.	895	0	0
Carrick P.S.	752	0	0
Coranny & Cornagague P.S.	133	0	0
Dromintee P.S.	667	35	0

Project	2012/13 Total £000'S	2013/14 Total £000'S	2014/15 Total £000'S
Scoil Na Fuisseoige PS	640	0	0
St Columba's PS.	1,168	0	0
St Oliver Plunkett PS.	100	31	0
St Colman's PS.	1,037	47	0
St Joseph's PS.	13	0	0
Magherafelt PS & N.S	2,756	0	0
St Mary's PS.	1,287	46	0
Taughmonagh PS.	525	0	0
Bangor Grammar	8,287	285	0
Strathearn GS	3,554	5,165	1,282
	£21,814	£5,609	£1,282

New proposals for capital spend will be dependent on the outcome of the work I recently announced to develop a new process for capital investment and planning to ensure our schools' estate meets the needs of children and represents the most effective use of taxpayers' money.

Education Maintenance Allowance

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education what mechanisms are in place to verify that recipients of Education Maintenance Allowance are living at the home of a parent or guardian as stated in their application.

(AQW 3780/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme was introduced jointly, in September 2004, by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Education. While my Department holds a small budget to assist schools with their role in the administration of EMAs, DEL holds the main budget in respect of the scheme. The administration and payment of the allowance is carried out by the Student Loans Company through a Service Level Agreement with DEL.

I have been advised by DEL that a home address check is carried out on all applications by obtaining the relevant household Tax Credit Award Notification form and matching the stated address against the address supplied by the student in the Education Maintenance Allowance application form. If the Tax Credit Award Notification form is not available, a household utility bill issued within the last three months is obtained to make the verification check.

I understand that DEL also funds a non means-tested Education Maintenance Allowance which is paid to those young persons who are participating in the Training for Success programme. The Department of Education has no responsibility for this scheme.

Cost of Repairs to Primary Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the total cost of repairs to primary schools in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 3836/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education and Library Boards have provided details of maintenance spend, including delegated spend by primary schools, in the controlled and maintained sectors for the 2010/11

financial year and these are summarised in the table below. The expenditure information available does not distinguish between maintenance and repairs.

	BELB	NEELB	SEELB	SELB	WELB	Total
(£000s)	4,642	3,846	3,791	3,881	3,401	19,561

Source: Education and Library Boards

Grant-maintained integrated primary schools have responsibility from within their LMS budgets to maintain their premises, therefore, this expenditure is not readily available and is not included in the above table.

Sports Teaching Programme

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what assistance is provided to schools to promote and develop football through the Sports Teaching Programme.

(AQW 3852/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Curriculum Sports Programme is delivered on behalf of the Department of Education by the Irish Football Association and the Gaelic Athletic Association. The programme does not focus specifically on the skills associated with either football or Gaelic games but rather aims to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils through participation in enjoyable sports activities. The Department of Education has made £1.5 million available for the Curriculum Sports Programme in the current financial year and the programme is currently being delivered by 61 coaches to over 36,000 primary school children in 563 schools. I have no plans to introduce coaches from a rugby background.

Sports Teaching Programme

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what assistance is provided to schools to promote and develop rugby through the Sports Teaching Programme.

(AQW 3853/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Curriculum Sports Programme is delivered on behalf of the Department of Education by the Irish Football Association and the Gaelic Athletic Association. The programme does not focus specifically on the skills associated with either football or Gaelic games but rather aims to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils through participation in enjoyable sports activities. The Department of Education has made £1.5 million available for the Curriculum Sports Programme in the current financial year and the programme is currently being delivered by 61 coaches to over 36,000 primary school children in 563 schools. I have no plans to introduce coaches from a rugby background.

Sports Teaching Programme

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what assistance is provided to schools to promote and develop Gaelic sports through the Sports Teaching Programme.

(AQW 3854/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Curriculum Sports Programme is delivered on behalf of the Department of Education by the Irish Football Association and the Gaelic Athletic Association. The programme does not focus specifically on the skills associated with either football or Gaelic games but rather aims to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest pupils through participation in enjoyable sports activities. The Department of Education has made £1.5 million available for the Curriculum Sports Programme in the current financial year and the programme is currently being delivered by 61 coaches to over 36,000 primary school children in 563 schools. I have no plans to introduce coaches from a rugby background.

Priorities for Youth Document

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Education when the 'Priorities for Youth' document will be published; and to provide a timetable for its implementation.

(AQW 3889/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Officials are currently engaged in a process for developing 'Priorities for Youth' which should be available for my consideration before the end of this calendar year. When I have approved it, the document will then be passed to the Committee for Education for its consideration and comment, before being prepared and published for public consultation for a period of not less than 12 weeks.

Following public consultation, officials will revise and finalise the 'Priorities for Youth', taking into account the opinions expressed by consultees. Subject to my final approval, the document, including a timetable for its implementation, will then be published.

Budget

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what plans his Department has to recapitalise part of its budget to increase resources for new builds for schools.

(AQW 4004/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The resource and capital budget allocations for education across Budget 2011-15 have produced major challenges and it is clear that difficult choices will have to be made. With this in mind I have commissioned officials to carry out a review of resource budget allocations across years 2, 3 and 4 of the Budget period with a view to identifying further savings. Until this work has been completed I do not intend to seek Executive approval to reclassify resource funding to capital. However I do fully intend to work with my Executive colleagues in the months and years ahead to help alleviate pressures on both the resource and capital budget for education.

At this time, proposals for new school builds will be managed from the capital allocations agreed for Budget 2011-15.

Moving forward, proposals for new builds will, in the main, be determined by the outcome of the work on strategic area planning that I have commissioned with the Education and Library Boards, working in close conjunction with CCMS and other school sectors.

Bangor Central Integrated Primary School

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School.

(AQW 4005/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: You will be aware from my recent Statement to the Assembly that I have commissioned a strategic area planning exercise based on each Education & Library Board area to shape the future pattern of education delivery.

Previously identified projects, such as that for Bangor Central Integrated Primary School, will be critically assessed alongside all other potential projects as part of the area planning process to determine how they will contribute to the overall infrastructure needed and may re-emerge if identified as a priority to support the area plan. No school building project will be looked at in isolation but must be considered in the context of the wider area.

Department for Employment and Learning

Travel Costs

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the travel costs incurred by (i) the Minister; and (ii) departmental officials in the last 12 months.

(AQW 3606/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): In the period 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011 the travel costs incurred by the Minister and departmental officials were as follows:

(i) Minister:		
	1 October 2010 to 15 May 2011	£6,271.18
	16 May 2011 to 30 September 2011	£999.86
(ii) Department officials:		£732,098.99

US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how the US-Ireland Research and Development Partnership will promote renewable energy targets.

(AQW 3800/11-15)

Dr Farry: The aim of the US-Ireland R&D Partnership is to increase the level of collaborative R&D, across the United States, Ireland and Northern Ireland, that will generate valuable discoveries and innovations which are transferable to the marketplace, or will lead to enhancements in health promotions, disease prevention and healthcare.

Until now, the priority areas for research collaboration have been restricted to cystic fibrosis, diabetes, sensor technology and nanotechnology. However, the tri-national Steering Group, which oversees the work of the Partnership, has recently taken the strategic decision to add the further priority areas of telecommunications and energy/sustainability. It will be my Department's responsibility to provide the Northern Ireland contribution to the funding of successful projects in these new areas.

Critically, the decision to include energy/sustainability was influenced by the fact that Invest NI is proactively targeting the global opportunities in renewable energy to ensure that NI businesses are well positioned to exploit these opportunities rather than its potential to promote renewable energy targets. However, I firmly believe that the energy-related projects, which will come forward for support in the future, will have the potential to make a positive impact on these targets, especially given the dual focus of the Partnership on scientific excellence and societal relevance.

Step Ahead Programme

Mr McCartney asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether there are any plans to end the Step Ahead Programme, and if so, to detail the reasons.

(AQW 3960/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is with great reluctance that my Department has paused recruitment to the Step Ahead strand of the Steps to Work (StW) programme from November 2011. This decision is due to the continuing rising demand for all Steps to Work provision and the limited budget available this year.

When Step Ahead was initially introduced in September 2009 it was announced that it was a temporary initiative for a two year period so it was due for review at this time. As the employment position has not improved in the last two years I would like to continue with Step Ahead and, subject to available resources, I intend to recommence recruitment as soon as possible.

My Department is also seeking funds from the Social Protection Fund for a variant of Step Ahead which would aim to assist young unemployed, those affected by the re-assessment of Incapacity Benefit and lone parents affected by changes in benefit regulations.

Those currently participating on Step Ahead will, of course, be able to complete the programme.

Job Centres

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of job centres and their locations.

(AQW 3973/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are 8 JobCentres in Northern Ireland which are located in Ballynahinch, Bangor, Belfast North (Chichester Street), Cookstown, Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newtownards and Strabane. In addition, the Department has a network of 27 Jobs and Benefit Offices.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

NI Screen Productions

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much funding her Department has allocated to NI Screen productions in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 3048/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Northern Ireland Screen Commission (NI Screen) was established to accelerate the development of a dynamic and sustainable film and television industry in Northern Ireland by integrating industrial, educational and cultural policies and actions. It is the lead body in developing the film and television industry in Northern Ireland.

NI Screen is primarily funded by Invest Northern Ireland, the Department of Culture Arts & Leisure and the British Film Institute. It is delegated by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to administer lottery funding for film in Northern Ireland. It also administers the Irish Language Broadcast Fund and the Ulster Scots Broadcast Fund.

My Department through Invest NI is the largest single funder of NI Screen and over the past five years has committed £25.7m to the development of the screen industries in Northern Ireland; this includes funding of £6.3m for the current year 2011 – 2012.

The following table illustrates Invest NI funding that has been allocated by NI Screen to production activity over the past five years in Northern Ireland. The table also includes awards made to companies based in other locations but where production activity took place in Northern Ireland. For example, of the £10.8m that relates to London, it is estimated that £4.9m (45%) of this was spent in Northern Ireland.

Constituency/Location of production Company	Amount Awarded £
Belfast East	610,000
Belfast North	217,359
Belfast South	4,042,761
North Down	310,000
Foyle	580,384
Dublin	711,333
London	10,802,732

Small Businesses

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 2508/11-15, given InvestNI's focus on export businesses, (i) for her assessment of the level of support available for non-exporting indigenous businesses; and (ii) to provide an estimate of their contribution, in terms of the number of jobs and Gross Domestic Product, to the economy.

(AQW 3276/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) In line with the Executive's economic objectives, Invest NI's role is to grow the local economy and increase the productivity of Northern Ireland businesses. This is principally achieved by supporting new and existing businesses to compete internationally, and by attracting new investment to Northern Ireland. As such, Invest NI's support is primarily focused on those businesses that can make the greatest contribution to growing our economy - these tend to be companies which have ability to grow and drive productivity and are keen to export outside Northern Ireland.

However, those businesses which fall outside these categories can still benefit from many of Invest NI's programmes and services. This includes energy and environmental efficiency support, comprehensive business information services and information and communications technology support.

Invest NI's information website, nibusinessinfo.co.uk, also provides free access to key information, advice, funding and training. With over 5,000 pages of relevant information, the site is written by business people for business people and offers extensive knowledge in one online location.

Invest NI offers access to comprehensive databases, directories, specialised business and global market information and can help businesses find the specific market information they need to grow their business. It also maintains a state-of-the-art information centre that provides practical and independent advice on a range of information and communication technology, technical, energy and environmental issues.

- (ii) It is not possible to provide a complete estimate of the contribution of non-exporting indigenous businesses to the NI economy. However, the Northern Ireland Annual Business Inquiry, which covers most of the business economy, estimated that there were some 196,000 employees (41 percent of employees) in such businesses in 2009. Non-exporting indigenous businesses were also estimated to contribute approximately £5 billion of business Gross Value Added (29% of such activity) to the NI economy in that year.

Independent Retail Sector

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how much the independent retail sector contributes to the economy; (ii) how many independent retailers have closed in the last year, broken down by constituency; and (iii) what action her Department is taking to support independent retailers.

(AQW 3277/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The available data doesn't distinguish independent retailers from any other retailer, while the same data is not available by constituency. However, the vast majority of retailers are small (97.7% have less than 50 employees) and so information is provided, where possible, for the retail sector and by Local Government District.

- (i): GVA for the retail and wholesale sector was £3,651m in 2008 – equivalent to 13% of GVA in that year.
- (ii): The latest available data from the Office for National Statistics, set out in Table 1 below, gives statistics on the number of retail enterprises, by District Council area, that closed during 2009.
- (iii): My department has made clear its commitment to support the economy. This will benefit business in all sectors. Invest NI works with businesses across the private sector, supporting to people to set up their own business, helping new and existing businesses grow and move into new markets home and abroad, while also being a vital source of advice to all business.

Across the Executive Departments there are many examples of support for retailers. For example, around 5,000 retail premises benefit by more than £2m via small business rate relief, with proposals afoot to extend this scheme and support an additional 4,000 small retail premises. In addition, DSD is leading in the regeneration of our towns and city centres with a range of initiatives to enhance investment, footfall and the attractiveness and vitality of these commercial hubs.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF ENTERPRISE CLOSURES BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREAS FOR THE RETAIL SECTOR, 2009

District Council	Business Closures
Antrim	25
Ards	35
Armagh	20
Ballymena	25
Ballymoney	5
Banbridge	15
Belfast	85
Carrickfergus	5
Castlereagh	20
Coleraine	20
Cookstown	10
Craigavon	25
Londonderry	25
Down	25
Dungannon	20
Fermanagh	25
Larne	15
Limavady	15
Lisburn	40
Magherafelt	20
Moyle	5
Newry and Mourne	35
Newtownabbey	30
North Down	20
Omagh	25
Strabane	15
Total	605

Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest 5 and thus may not add to totals.
Figures relate to business deaths

Invest NI: Jobs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 2786/11-15 and 2788/11-15, given that the information requested is not readily accessible, to detail (i) how her Department audits (a) the success of InvestNI in attracting sustainable jobs; (b) the number of jobs promoted which translate into actual jobs; (c) whether such jobs last; and (d) the cost of each created job; and (ii) if she will require such information to be collated and made readily available.

(AQW 3641/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Following a recommendation by the Independent Review of Economic Policy, DETI, as the funding department, is taking a leading role in reporting the strategic performance of Invest NI. As such, Invest NI works closely with DETI and statistical staff within DFP to ensure data availability and accuracy.

Unfortunately, system constraints mean that the provision of precise 'point in time' job creation data to answer Assembly Questions is only possible following an extensive exercise which would involve disproportionate cost. In addition, by its nature 'point in time' job creation information is complex and open to misinterpretation without an in-depth understanding of the job creation profile of the individual projects that have been supported during the time period in question.

Importantly not all grant offered by Invest NI is paid out to assisted businesses. Each project that is offered assistance by Invest NI is intensively monitored to ensure financial assistance is only paid out to companies based on actual jobs created within the control period specified in the Letter of Offer. In addition, if the original number of jobs promised by a project fail to be completely implemented, then Invest NI is free to consider its options with regards to seeking clawback of any assistance paid.

The important constraint to be borne in mind when analyzing job creation is the job creation profile of any given project, i.e. any supported project will have a lead time between the assistance being granted, to the project's full implementation and all jobs being created. For example, a project which is offered assistance in 2011 to create 300 jobs may not actually have created all of these jobs for up to five years depending on the company's implementation plan. This is further complicated by the fact that at present, Invest NI has some 1,500 employment related live Letters of Offer in process, each of which has its own implementation plan, job creation profile, delivery date and control period. This underlines the complexity of providing accurate and specific figures on actual jobs created at any given period in time.

With regards to job sustainability, a business in receipt of assistance from Invest NI is obliged to provide project monitoring information up to the end of the post-project evaluation. This is normally within a three-year period from project inception. Information relating to the sustainability of jobs would, therefore, not be available beyond this period. However, clawback options will also be considered by Invest NI if jobs created are subsequently lost within a project's specified control period.

Invest NI is currently developing systems in order to make such information more readily available in future. However, even when these systems are put in place, difficulties will remain with interpreting such data given the intricacies and complexities involved due to the breadth and scale of the Invest NI Job creation profile at any one point in time. Homecoming Year for Northern Ireland

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department, the NI Tourist Board and other relevant bodies have assessed the possible tourism benefits of a 'homecoming year' for Northern Ireland similar to 'The Gathering: An Irish Homecoming' in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 3712/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I recently launched ni2012; our time, our place. This exciting initiative will see a year long programme of major international and national events showcasing Northern Ireland on a world stage and providing significant economic benefits. Along with plans in 2013 for the World Police and Fire Games and Londonderry UK City of Culture, these two years are anticipated to bring an additional £140million into the economy.

The Gathering: An Irish Homecoming

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had any engagement with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport about the Irish Government's plans for "The Gathering: An Irish Homecoming" in 2013 and any plans to progress it on an all-island basis.
(AQW 3713/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I recently met with Minister Varadkar. We discussed a range of tourism issues including the UK City of Culture and The Gathering.

The Gathering: An Irish Homecoming

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had any engagement with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport about the Derry~Londonderry UK City of Culture celebrations in 2013 being an integral part of 'The Gathering: An Irish Homecoming'.
(AQW 3714/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I recently met with Minister Varadkar. We discussed a range of tourism issues including the UK City of Culture and The Gathering.

Strategic Energy Framework Implementation Plan

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that action number ten of the Strategic Energy Framework implementation plan is to support the development of a range of renewable technologies, why her Department has rejected the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment's recommendation in its renewable energy inquiry to set targets for electricity from sources other than wind.
(AQW 3720/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department's 40% target is a market led, technology and geographically neutral target.

It will be for the market to bring forward the most cost effective technologies and this is already being seen with on shore wind. In a time of financial constraint it is vital for us to focus on those technologies and projects which are capable of providing the most cost-effective and significant contribution to achievement of the 2020 target and this must be determined by the market. This is consistent with other areas of the UK, none of which have technology specific targets.

The UK Renewables Roadmap, which covers Northern Ireland, identifies the eight technologies which have either the greatest potential (more than 90%) to help meet the 2020 target in a cost effective and sustainable way, or offer the greatest potential for the decades that follow. These eight technologies are on shore wind, off shore wind, marine, biomass electricity, biomass heat, ground and air source heat pumps and renewable transport.

InterTradelreland's Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the total expenditure on InterTradelreland's 'Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report'.
(AQW 3729/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The total expenditure on the InterTradelreland Agri- Food Report has been £75,000 (excluding VAT).

InterTradelreland's Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has provided the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development with a copy of InterTradelreland's 'Agri-Food: A Study for Cross-Border Cooperation Report'; and if not, when she will provide her with a copy.
(AQW 3731/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradelreland officials presented a copy of the 'Agri-Food: A Study for Cross Border Cooperation Report' to the previous DARD Minister, Michelle Gildernew in February, 2011.

InterTradelreland Programmes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which InterTradelreland programmes are currently oversubscribed; and whether she will provide additional funding to address this issue and to ensure that businesses can continue to avail of these programmes.

(AQW 3732/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There continues to be healthy demand across all of InterTradelreland's trade and innovation programmes. The number of participants on these programmes are on target and within budget for the year to date.

The InterTradelreland Corporate Plan and Business Plan which contain the targets and budget for the year have been agreed by the sponsor Departments in accordance with joint planning and budgetary guidance.

Home Heating Oil Prices

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she will establish a regulator for home heating oil prices.

(AQW 3734/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have no plans to extend the powers of the independent regulator.

The Office of Fair Trading report published on 18 October 2011, on the competitiveness of the UK energy market for customers not connected to the gas grid, did not see any justification for price regulation in Great Britain or Northern Ireland on competition grounds.

Quinn Insurance in Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the discussions she has had with the relevant organisations regarding the security of jobs at Quinn Insurance in Enniskillen given the figures emanating from the company on the number of quotations and new customers.

(AQW 3746/11-15)

Mrs Foster: As Enterprise Minister, my top priority in any discussions has been to ensure every effort was being made to secure the jobs at Quinn Insurance in Enniskillen. I understand that the sale of Quinn Insurance to a Liberty Mutual led joint venture is at an advanced stage and that, if successful, this will ensure the continuance of the business and employment in Enniskillen. I welcome any resolution which will retain the vital investment and employment in Enniskillen and allow for the possibility of expansion in future years.

Applications for Petroleum Licences

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the applications for petroleum licences which are currently awaiting approval from her Department.

(AQW 3793/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are no applications for Petroleum Licences currently awaiting approval from my Department.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department will conduct and publish a life cycle analysis before any further hydraulic fracturing takes place.

(AQW 3795/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Companies wishing to carry out hydraulic fracturing operations require permission from several regulatory authorities including my Department and the Department of the Environment. Technical, environmental, safety and planning considerations will be taken into account when assessing any applications received. Life cycle analysis (LCA) is not currently one of the tools used in this type of assessment and my Department has no plans to conduct an LCA for this process.

InterTradelreland's Go-2-Tender Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the economic benefits of InterTradelreland's Go-2-Tender programme.

(AQW 3799/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The aim of the Go-2-Tender Programme is to give businesses the confidence, knowledge and skills to tender successfully for public sector procurement contracts, a market which is estimated to be worth £16 Billion. In the latest phase of Go-2-Tender, the programme has delivered 39 two-day workshops in venues across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. More than 630 company delegates have attended these workshops.

During 2010, Go-2-Tender workshops took place in both jurisdictions.

A total of 116 companies attended the events, with sectors as diverse as Tradeable Services, Engineering, Construction and ICT represented.

In 2010, companies who had participated on Go-2-Tender directly attributed total additional sales of £15.5 million to the skills and knowledge they had developed on the public procurement market through this programme.

InterTradelreland

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what work InterTradelreland is undertaking to benefit companies in the South Antrim area.

(AQW 3801/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradelreland's remit is such that the Body does not specifically target geographic areas. The Body's broad range of programmes can be accessed by companies throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

InterTradelreland has had participating companies from every county and every city in Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland, on its programmes.

InterTradelreland

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action InterTradelreland is taking to build relationships between small and medium-sized enterprises and universities.

(AQW 3802/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A number of the Body's programmes including the 'FUSION' programme encourages business linkages to drive innovation, including building relationships between SME's and third level institutions.

The Programme provides companies who have technology based needs, the opportunity to work in a three way partnership. This involves the company, a university, and a high calibre science/technology graduate with the objective of developing new products or processes.

From 2002 to date there have been 329 FUSION projects of which 105 have been Northern Ireland companies with 70% of participating companies in the latest phase of FUSION first-time innovators.

Local Anniversaries

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what local anniversaries the Tourist Board plans to market in 2012; and to outline the potential benefit to the local economy.

(AQW 3803/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I recently launched ni2012; Our Time, Our Place. This exciting initiative will see a year-long programme of major international and national events, showcasing Northern Ireland on a world stage and providing significant economic benefits.

In 2012 the key anniversary that will be promoted is the anniversary of the maiden voyage of Titanic. This will also showcase the new Titanic Belfast visitor attraction and the significant DETI funding that was invested in this project, as well as the wider Titanic and Maritime Belfast Signature Project.

Collectively, ni2012: Our Time Our Place, together with the plans in 2013 including the World Police and Fire Games and Londonderry UK City of Culture, will bring significant economic benefit to the local economy. Overall by 2015 it is anticipated that the programme will bring an additional £140 million into the economy and support over 3,500 new jobs.

Quinn Group

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the discussions she has had with the Anglo Irish Bank or the Irish Minister for Finance regarding the on-going uncertainty over jobs within the Quinn Group.

(AQW 3808/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I maintained close contact with the Irish Minister for Finance following the Quinn Group going into receivership in an effort to lessen the impact on employment within the Group.

In relation to the future stability of Quinn Group, my Department will continue to work to support investment and secure employment in light of the financial restructuring of the Group. To this end I have instructed my officials, from both DETI and Invest NI, to maintain close contact with the new CEO of Quinn Group, Paul O'Brien, to secure the best possible outcome for the employees of the Quinn Group and the economy.

I have not had any discussions with the Anglo Irish Bank.

Single Electricity Market

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how much electricity is currently being generated compared to each of the last five years; (ii) for her assessment of how much any reduction is a product of the Single Electricity Market; and (iii) what is the impact of any reduction on the postalised tariffs that are applicable to the gas transmission pipelines and subsequently gas prices.

(AQW 3815/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Electricity generated is linked to demand, and in each of the past 5 years (including 2011 to date) relevant information in GWh is as follows:

	Demand	Moyle (Import)	North/South (Export)	NI Generation
2007	9182.60	1727	-1316	8771.60
2008	9256.80	544.772	-593.644	9305.67
2009	8967.13	1976.871 -796.944	7787.20	

	Demand	Moyle (Import)	North/South (Export)	NI Generation
2010	9210.35	2297.249	-409.552	7322.65
2011 (to Sept 11)	6644.85	1769.39	-599.02	5474.48

Source: System Operator for Northern Ireland

It should be noted that the above electricity demand figures include generation in Northern Ireland, net imports from GB via the Moyle interconnector and net exports to the Republic of Ireland.

- (ii) In the first year of the Single Electricity Market's operation there was an increase in Northern Ireland generation. The subsequent reduction in Northern Ireland generation has been influenced by the import of electricity through the Moyle Interconnector and by a reduction in demand due to the economic downturn.
- (iii) It is not possible to determine the impact of the Single Electricity Market on gas transmission volumes as such volumes are impacted by many other factors including the weather, the level of economic activity, relative fuel prices and connections to the gas network.

Gas Passing Through the Transmission Pipelines

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much gas is currently passing through the transmission pipelines in comparison with each of the last five years; and what impact this is having on gas prices.

(AQW 3816/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Annual gas demand in Northern Ireland for each of the last 5 years, and the projected gas demand for the current year, is as follows (the gas year runs from 1 October to 30 September):

Annual Gas Demand (Actuals in GWhs)

Gas Year 2006/07	19,697
Gas Year 2007/08	17,913
Gas Year 2008/09	16,500
Gas Year 2009/10	15,746
Gas Year 2010/11	16,151

Forecast Gas Demand (in GWhs)

Gas Year 2011/12	16,583
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The postalised tariff for gas transmission in Northern Ireland accounts for between 6% and 8% of the final unit price of gas paid by domestic consumers in Northern Ireland and only 25% of the postalised tariff is in the form of a commodity based charge. Therefore, the overall impact of any year on year changes in gas transmission volumes is very small. By way of example, the Utility Regulator has advised that a 1% change in transmission volumes would lead to a 0.25% change in the level of transmission charges. For a domestic gas consumer, this would result in a 0.02% change in unit gas prices.

Smart Grid Technology

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any plans her Department has to explore the use of smart grid technology; and for her assessment of whether smart

electricity metering would help households and businesses save money on energy costs and reduce fuel poverty.

(AQW 3821/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has explored the use of smart grid technology with a wide range of stakeholders and at present is working with the Utility Regulator on the development of a cost benefit analysis for smart metering in Northern Ireland.

The EU Third Internal Energy Package (IME 3) requires a cost benefit analysis on intelligent metering to be completed by September 2012. At present we are on target to complete the cost benefit analysis at the beginning of 2012. Once I receive, and have considered, the completed cost benefit analysis I will announce my policy position on smart metering as early as possible in the New Year.

In the meantime however the Utility Regulator has two small smart meter trials in their early stages. These focus on technology and smart grid application, and, customer behaviour and education, with a specific focus on how smart meters could help customers vulnerable to fuel poverty.

MTV European Music Awards Aftershow Events

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the problems surrounding licensing and the opening hours for the MTV European Music Awards aftershow events, whether she has discussed with the Minister for Social Development ways in which to ensure that Northern Ireland is as competitive and attractive as other cities when competing to host such prestigious entertainment events.

(AQW 3825/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Officials from my Department and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) maintained close contact with counterparts in the Department for Social Development, and also Belfast City Council (BCC), in the run up to the MTV Europe Music Awards.

I am pleased to say that the Awards provided an excellent opportunity to showcase Belfast and Northern Ireland to more than 520 million homes worldwide. In terms of bidding for major music events, Belfast has a unique music offering, both in terms of its music, its talent and its venues. NITB, BCC and a range of other key stakeholders are pro-actively targeting and bidding for many major events and the MTV European Music Awards provides the perfect message that Belfast is a viable and attractive option.

InterTradelreland's Elevate Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many companies in each constituency currently avail of InterTradelreland's Elevate Programme.

(AQW 3863/11-15)

Mrs Foster: InterTradelrelands' Elevate Programme is in the process of being rolled out. Since mid-October 2011, two Northern Ireland companies have joined the Elevate Programme as participants.

The Assembly Constituency breakdown is as follows:

Belfast West	1
Newry and Armagh	1

InterTradelreland's Fusion Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many companies in each constituency currently avail of InterTradelreland's Fusion Programme.

(AQW 3864/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are currently 25 Northern Ireland companies participating on the Fusion programme.

The Constituency breakdown is as follows:

Belfast South	3
Mid Ulster	2
West Tyrone	1
Belfast East	3
Foyle	3
North Down	2
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	4
Belfast West	1
Upper Bann	2
Lagan Valley	1
Newry & Armagh	3

InterTradelreland's Acumen Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many companies in each constituency currently avail of InterTradelreland's Acumen Programme.

(AQW 3865/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are currently 27 Northern Ireland companies participating on the Acumen programme. The Constituency breakdown is as follows:

Belfast South	1
Belfast North	1
Mid Ulster	4
West Tyrone	2
Belfast East	3
South Antrim	2
North Antrim	1
East Londonderry	3
Foyle	2
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	5
Lagan Valley	1
Upper Bann	1
Newry & Armagh	1

InterTradelreland's All-island Innovation Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the benefits of InterTradelreland's All-island Innovation Programme.

(AQW 3866/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the first two years of the All-Island Innovation Programme, the programme attracted 2120 participants to its events with more than 850 participants coming from the business community. Feedback from participants about speakers and content has been extremely positive.

The All-Island Innovation Programme is meeting its objectives and is helping to underpin strategic efforts to improve competitive performance through the development of more effective innovation policies and practices.

InterTradelreland's Innova Programme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many companies in each constituency currently avail of InterTradelreland's Innova Programme.

(AQW 3867/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are currently ten Northern Ireland companies engaged in InterTradelreland's Innova partnerships.

The Assembly Constituency breakdown is as follows:

Belfast East	4
Belfast West	1
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	2
South Antrim	2
North Down	1

Electricity Grid

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the possibilities for harnessing wave power for the electricity grid.

(AQW 3870/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Northern Ireland's wave resource is low and not considered commercially attractive. Of much greater potential are the offshore wind and tidal resources around our coast. The Strategic Environment Assessment of the draft Offshore Renewable Energy Strategic Action Plan identified that up to 900MW of offshore wind and 300MW of tidal stream resource could be developed by 2020. The Crown Estate, as owners of the seabed, launched a Northern Ireland Offshore Leasing Round in March 2011 and it is planned to seek Expressions of Interest from developers shortly with a view to having development rights granted mid 2012.

Oil and Gas Wealth Fund

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in the event of oil and gas companies being granted permission to extract mineral wealth, whether she would consider establishing an oil and gas wealth fund to ensure that a notable share of profits made by these companies are retained within Northern Ireland and subsequently re-invested.

(AQW 3910/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Under the existing tax regime 62% of profits made by companies from oil and gas production in the United Kingdom is payable to HM Revenue & Customs. Corporation tax, ring-fenced for the petroleum-extraction operations, is set at 30%, and a supplementary tax is levied at 32%. It would be a matter for the Executive to decide whether it wished to negotiate with the Treasury for a repatriation of tax revenue arising from petroleum production in Northern Ireland.

A royalty of 7.5% on petroleum production is payable to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the former owners of the mineral rights may then claim compensation related to royalties payable.

Production of Energy from Off-Shore Wind

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the negotiations with the Government in the Republic of Ireland on establishing well-defined sea borders to pave the way for increasing production of energy from off-shore wind.

(AQW 3911/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The British and Irish Governments, as well as the Northern Ireland Executive, regard harnessing and exploiting offshore renewable energy as a top priority. Both the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government are moving ahead with the development of offshore renewable energy.

At EU level, in the framework of the British-Irish Council and bilaterally, discussions are continuing to facilitate and develop co-operation to this end. I am confident that DETI will be in a position to move forward on all relevant matters so as to enable the Northern Ireland leasing round to be successfully completed in the timelines announced earlier this year. It is therefore planned that Expressions of Interest will be sought shortly from developers.

Strategic Energy Framework 2010

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how she reconciles increasing reliance on gas instead of renewable energy, bearing in mind the need for greater energy security as outlined in the Strategic Energy Framework 2010, when research commissioned on behalf of the European Parliament forecasts that the gap between the demand and supply of gas in the European Union is set to increase, even with the development of shale gas.

(AQW 3912/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Strategic Energy Framework 2010 outlines my Department's support for the further extension of the natural gas network in Northern Ireland where it is economic to do so, to provide consumers with additional fuel choice and, as natural gas is the least polluting fossil fuel, to benefit the environment through reduction of harmful emissions.

My Department is fully aware of the importance of security of energy supply and is supportive of private sector interest in exploring the potential for gas storage projects in the East Antrim area, both on-shore and off-shore. I am also closely following efforts to identify the potential for development of shale gas in certain areas of Northern Ireland, which if successful could also enhance our security of supply.

You will be aware that my Department has recently consulted on both gas network extension and incentivisation of the renewable heat market. I look forward to exploring how both energy sources can be developed in a complementary way which can contribute towards the development of a more secure, sustainable and diverse heat market which is not overly reliant on one particular fuel and provides greater choice for consumers and businesses.

InvestNI

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what financial commitments are in place within InvestNI for projects over the remainder of the current financial year.

(AQW 3930/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The amount of Invest NI 2011/12 programme budget spent at 31 October 2011 is £46.5million. In addition, a total of £71million of programme budget is committed for spend during the remainder of 2011/12. The £71million does not include provision for cases currently under negotiation but not yet finalised.

Purchases from Suppliers

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's level of purchases from suppliers in each country in Europe, in each of the last five financial years.

(AQW 3931/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The information requested is not readily accessible and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Relocation of Departmental Subsets

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has undertaken a cost benefit analysis to determine potential savings from the relocation of departmental subsets to locations west of the Bann.

(AQW 3932/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The report by Professor Sir George Bain on Location of Public Sector Jobs did not identify any areas of the Department or its NDPBs for relocation.

Postalised Gas Transmission Tariffs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the increase in the postalised tariffs applicable to the gas and transmission pipelines in comparison with the last year and the forecasts at that time; and (ii) whether the forecasts proved to be inaccurate, and the reasons why.

(AQW 3954/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The postalised gas transmission tariff is split into two elements:

- (i) a capacity and a commodity charge which are calculated separately.

The difference between the forecast capacity and commodity charges for 2010/11 and the forecast capacity and commodity charges for 2011/12 is as outlined on the table below:

	2010/11 Forecast	2011/12 Forecast	Difference
Capacity charge (£ per Kwh/d booked)	0.31252	0.40648	30.06%
Commodity charge (£ per Kwh)	0.0005613	0.0006323	12.65 %

The capacity tariff has increased by 30.06%, largely due to a reduction in capacity bookings for Ballylumford power station, coupled with an increase in required revenues to cover operating and capital costs. Legacy capacity contracts have expired so Ballylumford power station is no longer required to book as much capacity as it used to do. The knock-on effect has been an increase in the unit cost of capacity.

The commodity tariff (for volumes) has increased by 12.65%. Although volumes are up, this increase is not enough to offset the increase in required revenues.

- (ii) The table above shows an increase between the forecast 2010/11 and 2011/12 tariffs for both the capacity and commodity charges. Forecasting by its very nature will always be inaccurate as it is not possible to predict the future with absolute certainty. The aim is always however to reduce the error as far as is possible and to provide industry with the most accurate forecasts possible. It is recognised that last year's forecasts were subject to a greater level of revision for 2011/12 than is normally the case. This was due to a number of one off events whose magnitude and impact combined to produce an unusually large forecast error.

Postalised Gas Transmission Tariffs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of (i) the impact, and the potential impact, of higher than anticipated postalised tariffs applicable to gas transmission pipelines; and (ii) the effect this will have on energy prices.

(AQW 3955/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The postalised gas transmission tariff currently accounts for between 6% and 8% of the retail price of gas for domestic customers. Where the postalised tariff accounts for some 8% of the final gas tariff, each 1% change in the level of the postalised gas transmission charge (commodity and capacity costs) will therefore result in a 0.08% change in the level of the retail tariff.
- (ii) The biggest influence on retail gas prices is the wholesale cost of gas which currently accounts for approximately 55% of the overall tariff. The impact of the postalised gas transmission tariff on the overall retail tariff is relatively small and will vary according to the level of wholesale gas prices.

Postalised Gas Transmission Tariffs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given that the Utility Regulator has indicated that the required revenues arising from the postalised tariff applicable to the gas transmission pipelines rose by £4.97 million in 2011/12 above the 2010/11 forecast, to detail (i) how this extra requirement has arisen; (ii) why last year's forecast was inaccurate; and (iii) how the additional £4.97 million will be spent.

(AQW 3956/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) The Utility Regulator has advised that the extra requirement of £4.97 million is due to a number of additional costs that the transmission companies (Mutual Energy and BGE(UK)) expect to incur during the coming gas year (October 2011 to September 2012).

Operating costs have increased for a number of reasons:

- A survey of the Scotland-Northern Ireland gas Pipeline (SNIP), which is carried out every two years, is due to be carried out during the 2011/12 gas year. This requires a Remotely Operated Vehicle to photograph and survey the undersea sections of the pipeline. It is a costly but necessary exercise to ensure the integrity of the pipeline;
- The operational costs for use of compressors connected to the SNIP have increased. The fuel used in the compressors is gas and operational costs have risen significantly due to increases in the wholesale price of gas;
- In order to ensure compliance with EU legislation, gas companies have to make changes to their IT systems and network codes, which will result in some unavoidable additional costs; and
- Additional engineering works are also planned for the coming year.

Capital costs have also increased due to completion of the new BGE(UK) Kernan to Derryhale transmission pipeline. This pipeline is required to support the supply of natural gas to Portadown and Armagh and accommodate any further rollout of the gas network on the western side of Lough Neagh. The capital costs of the pipeline will be recovered over 25 years.

- (ii) Forecasting by its very nature will always be inaccurate as it is not possible to predict the future with absolute certainty. The aim is always to reduce the error as far as is possible and to provide industry with the most accurate forecasts possible. The Utility Regulator recognises that the increase over the last year's forecasts was greater than is normally the case, and was due to a number of one off events.
- (iii) The additional £4.97 million is necessary to cover the additional costs outlined at (i).

Postalised Gas Transmission Tariffs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any reduction in the volume of gas passing through the transmission pipelines, which increases the cost for gas consumers through increased postalised tariffs, was anticipated at the time of the introduction of the Single Electricity Market.

(AQW 3957/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The volume of gas passing through the natural gas transmission pipelines in Northern Ireland has reduced due to a number of factors. These include the economic downturn reducing overall demand for electricity and gas, reduced net electricity exports to the Republic of Ireland, increased imports of electricity to Northern Ireland through the Moyle interconnector from Great Britain, and an increase in alternative generation including wind.

Fracking

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the fracking method for the extraction of natural gas reserves from impermeable rock.

(AQW 3989/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, is a well-established method of enhancing the natural permeability of rocks in order to improve the flow of gas or water through them. It is used extensively in shale gas operations which are now responsible for over 30% of US gas production. Fracking is not without its problems but such operations can be properly regulated, designed, managed and monitored to ensure that environmental and safety risks are minimised.

Gas Reservoirs in Shale Deposits off Blackpool

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in the light of recent finds of large gas reservoirs in shale deposits off Blackpool, whether any areas with a similar geological profile have been identified in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 3991/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Yes. Organic-rich Carboniferous shales, similar to those being drilled in Lancashire, occur in County Fermanagh although their shale gas potential has not been fully evaluated. Such rocks are also known from the Coalisland and Ballycastle coalfields where they are too shallow to be exploited for shale gas. Little is known about the distribution and nature of Carboniferous rocks which may be present in the deeper parts of the Rathlin, Larne and Lough Neagh sedimentary basins.

Fracking

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had any communication with her counterparts in the Republic of Ireland on the issue of fracking as a means of extraction of natural gas from impermeable deposits.

(AQW 3992/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Officials in my Department have been in touch with their counterparts in the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources with regard to the licensing of shale gas exploration involving the process of hydraulic fracturing.

Friends of the Earth 'Reckless Gamblers' Report

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the Friends of the Earth 'Reckless Gamblers' report and the recommendations within that report; and to what extent this report has influenced the policy direction of her Department.

(AQW 4021/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The main policy instrument in the energy arena is the Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland (SEF) 2010. The work to develop the SEF was taken forward over the period 2008-2010 with publication in September 2010. The Friends of the Earth report was not published until December 2010, therefore could not have been considered.

Economy: Cross-border Transport

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact that the lack of a strategic overview of cross-border transport requirements might have on local businesses and Northern Ireland's ability to attract investment.

(AQO 682/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Given our location, Northern Ireland is heavily reliant on having suitable connectivity to key markets such as the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and mainland Europe. Appropriate transport infrastructure is vital for business contacts, development of our export capability and also forms an important part of the sales message to potential inward investors.

How best to ensure that transport requirements are met within Northern Ireland is a matter for the Department of Regional Development.

Agrifood: InterTradelreland Report

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the reasons for her decision to refuse to publish InterTradelreland's all-Ireland agrifood report.

(AQO 681/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I am not responsible for the publication of any report, including the agri-food report, produced by Inter Tradelreland.

Invest NI: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the number of funding allocations and the total funding awarded by InvestNI in the last financial year to small and medium-sized enterprises compared to foreign direct investors.

(AQO 683/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the 2010-11 financial year, Invest NI offered assistance of over £29 million to 2,820 projects by small and medium-sized enterprises. In comparison, during the same period almost £47 million was offered to 239 projects by inward investors.

Wind Turbines

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment if she can give an assurance that the current incentive, which allows new wind turbines of up to 250kW to claim four Renewable Obligation Certificates for every 1000kWh of electricity generated, will continue until at least 2017, to give the sector security and certainty in the face of difficulties in accessing finance and with planning delays.

(AQO 684/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Last week my Department published a consultation on proposed changes to Renewables Obligation Certificate levels for the period 2013 to 2017. It is not proposed to change the current four ROCs for wind turbines up to 250kW installed capacity.

However, ROC levels may be reviewed in the future in the wider context of the Coalition Government's Electricity Market Reform initiative and any significant decrease in technology costs.

Also, it is very important that while our support for renewable electricity encourages investment, that, at all times, it represents value for money for consumers.

Industry: Automatic Assisted Area Status

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the likely impact of the proposed removal of the Automatic Assisted Area Status as outlined in the consultation document published by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills.

(AQO 685/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Given the positive impact Regional Aid has had in attracting company investment into and within Northern Ireland, it is important that we do all we can to ensure that we retain our automatic assisted area status post 2013.

In undertaking our assessment of the importance of Regional Aid, we are clear on the need to have every available policy lever necessary to rebalance and rebuild the economy. Indeed, I and my Executive colleagues have already responded robustly to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation highlighting our concern with the proposal to remove Northern Ireland's automatic assisted area status.

Jobs Fund

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the reasons for the renaming of the Short Term Employment Scheme.

(AQO 686/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The decision to rename the Short Term Employment Scheme as 'The Jobs Fund' was taken in order to provide greater clarity around the exact purpose of the scheme and to address some areas of confusion with the use of 'short term'. Some people were wrongly concluding that this meant that the jobs supported were short term in nature. This is not the case. The new name - "The Jobs Fund" will more clearly communicate the primary purpose of the scheme – a ring-fenced £19m budget to support business owners to create new, sustainable jobs that will tackle our current levels of unemployment.

Broadband: South Antrim

Ms Lewis asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps her Department is taking to ensure greater access to broadband for people living in rural areas, particularly in the South Antrim constituency area.

(AQO 687/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Over the last three years, building on its previous, significant investments, my Department has taken forward a number of initiatives that are either entirely or substantially aimed at improving broadband access for consumers located in rural areas. This includes the £51million Next Generation Broadband Project which has facilitated the roll-out of the highest level of fibre-to-the-cabinet technology in the UK, the £1.9million Northern Ireland Broadband Fund which has seen significant deployment of fixed-wireless broadband services, and the £1.2million Remote Broadband Services contract through which subsidised satellite broadband services have been made available region-wide. The South Antrim constituency in particular has already benefited and will continue to benefit from these initiatives.

Looking forward, my Department has secured £4.4million under the UK Coalition Government's Broadband Delivery UK initiative which, together with its Budget 2010 allocations, will be used to extend the delivery of higher speed services into those areas of Northern Ireland where a minimum download speed of 2 megabits per second cannot currently be attained. Work on scoping the projects that will deliver this aim is underway.

Strategic Energy Framework

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the implementation of the Strategic Energy Framework.

(AQO 688/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Strategic Energy Framework sets out our energy policy for the next ten years.

One year on from publication, I am pleased with the scale and breadth of progress made across the range of actions in the Framework. This includes progress on implementing EU Directives and other legislation, scoping of projects such as a Renewable Heat Incentive and gas extension, competition and security of supply, and emergency planning.

Business Loans

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on any proposed business loan schemes.

(AQO 689/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Growth Loan Fund is at an advanced stage and I hope to make an announcement over the coming weeks.

Advice4DebtNI

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many people, on average, are contacting the Advice4DebtNI helpline each week.

(AQO 690/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Advice4debtNI dealt with an average of 31 new clients per week during the period 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Department of the Environment

Rivers: Pollution

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the cases taken against the polluters of the SixMileWater and Ballymartin rivers.

(AQO 672/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has a robust enforcement policy for water pollution. Since 2006, NIEA has completed 14 prosecution cases for water pollution offences within the Sixmilewater and Ballymartin River catchments: resulting in the courts imposing fines on polluters, ranging from £350 to £6,000, and totalling £13,900.

In addition, NIEA has issued 21 formal warning letters and 6 legally binding enforcement notices requiring the polluter to take immediate pollution prevention action.

Two further enforcement cases are pending, in relation to a significant fish kill which occurred downstream of Ballyclare and a suspected farm pollution incident which occurred near Ballyclare. Once investigations have been completed, if appropriate, files will be prepared for consideration by the Public Prosecution Service.

Tourism: Built Heritage

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the potential to promote Northern Ireland's built heritage assets to support tourism and, in particular, the Tourist Board's signature projects.

(AQO 669/11-15)

Mr Attwood: People are sometimes surprised to learn that, already, over 18,500 known or suspected archaeological sites and monuments have been recorded in Northern Ireland, along with over 13,000 historic buildings. This is in addition to many thousands of industrial heritage sites, hundreds of historic designed landscapes, and the many Conservation Areas and Areas of Townscape Character that have been identified across the North. These assets are fundamentally important to the whole of society, particularly in the context of our tourism economy. They are unique, authentic elements of the past that help make Northern Ireland a better place to work, live and invest in. They contribute enormously to the character of our cities, villages and countryside. Many of these are destinations for tourists already, but others have yet to realise their full heritage and economic potential.

Following the launch of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's Key Signature Projects, I have been advised that officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency have worked closely with their

colleagues in the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to develop, and strengthen, the quality of the built and archaeological heritage offering in each of those projects. All of the Key Signature Projects involve some of Northern Ireland's most important heritage assets.

In many instances, the key built heritage assets are already managed by the Department of the Environment, such as the historic Walls of Derry, Dunluce and Carrickfergus Castles, as well as many lesser-known sites such as Narrow Water Castle and Legananny Dolmen (in the Mourne). Three of the 15 'Tier 1' attractions on the St Patrick's Trail are managed by the Department. All six buildings identified in the Walled City Built Heritage Project are listed. For Titanic and Maritime Belfast, most of the surviving infrastructure of the shipyards has been protected as historic monuments, including the slipways and docks where Titanic and its sister ships were built, while the Harland and Wolff drawing office is a Listed Building. This is in addition to the more recent, but no less iconic, yellow cranes - Samson and Goliath - that dominate Belfast's skyline.

However, there is still huge potential for the built and archaeological heritage to support tourism even more, particularly the Key Signature Projects such as St Patrick and Christian Heritage. I would welcome continued close working relationships with other bodies, particularly the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, as well as all of the departments in this Assembly which also have a role to play in delivering these projects.

Beaches

Mr Doherty asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the guidance he is providing to Councils on the cleansing of beaches.

(AQO 663/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department's current guidance to councils on the cleansing of beaches is set out in the statutory Code of Practice on Litter that issued under the Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994. The guidance states that "District councils should identify those beaches in their ownership or control which might reasonably be described as 'amenity beaches'. Any assessment should take into account the level of use of the beach for recreational purposes. As a minimum standard, all beaches identified by the district council as amenity beaches should be generally clear of all types of litter between 1 May and 30 September inclusive. This applies to items or material originating from discharges directly to the marine environment as well as litter left by beach users. The same standards should apply to inland beaches where substantial numbers of bathers or other beach users may congregate".

The Department has recently consulted on a revised draft Code of Practice to take account of the stronger new powers being given to councils to tackle litter under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act.

The revised draft Code of Practice, which will be laid before the Assembly, is currently being finalised taking account of the responses to the consultation exercise. It will enhance the guidance to councils on the cleansing of beaches, both within and outside of the traditional bathing season of 1 May to 30 September to take account of changing holiday and climatic patterns, and beach usage.

Single-use Carrier Bags

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment for an overview of the responses to the consultation on the proposals to introduce a charge on single use carrier bags.

(AQO 666/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department's consultation on proposals for a carrier bag levy commenced on 20 July 2011 and closed on 12 October 2011. Departmental officials worked closely with the relevant representative bodies to ensure that the consultation paper was widely circulated.

The consultation paper invited comments on a range of issues related to the Department's policy proposals, including the type of bags to be covered by the new arrangements, the amount of the charge and arrangements for administration, collection and enforcement. The outcome of the consultation will assist in determining a detailed framework for the introduction of the levy.

The Department received 63 responses to the consultation; officials are currently analysing the comments received, and will produce a detailed synopsis. At this stage I can confirm that, as one would expect, the majority of responses came from the retail sector. Other responses included those from local government, bag and packaging manufacturers, environmental bodies, consumer groups and individuals.

I will publish the synopsis on the Department's website as soon as possible and will, of course, keep the Executive and the Environment Committee informed of key policy developments.

Better Regulation

Mr Newton asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the better regulation agenda and how it is benefiting businesses.

(AQO 667/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department places great importance on Better Regulation, recognising that more streamlined services deliver a greater protection for our environment and reduce the burden on responsible businesses. Our progress in delivering our Better Regulation Programme has been warmly received by industry partners, particularly the members of our Better Regulation Board.

Businesses are benefiting already by:

- free, straightforward advice is available for their sector through NetRegs;
- applying and paying online for environmental permits;
- applying protocols which allow companies to make use of materials rather than waste them;
- the greater certainty our clear 3 year Charging Policy gives businesses on fees;
- reducing the inspection footfall on farms through a joined up approach with DARD;
- environmental workshops which have been delivered in partnership with industry and Business in the Community's ARENA Network.
- a written agreement between the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Construction Industry Group on archaeological matters which is helping to ensure that we can have development AND secure our heritage.

That is why, in addition to the practical better regulation initiatives already under way within the NIEA, the Department is the first to publish proposals for fundamental regulatory reform through the Environmental Better Regulation White Paper. The response has been very positive and I will be developing specific policy and legislation to deliver simpler, clearer, more effective and flexible environmental legislation. We want our economy and our environment to prosper.

Local Government: Members of the Legislative Assembly

Mr Cree asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will introduce legislation to exclude Members of the Legislative Assembly from holding elected offices in local government.

(AQO 668/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am considering legislation in this regard as part of the RPA.

I have, also, recently launched a consultation which seeks views on whether certain allowances which are payable to councillors should be reduced by two-thirds for councillors who are also MPs, MLAs or members of the House of Lords.

This consultation will close on 16 December 2011.

Northern Ireland Environment Agency: Farm Inspections

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment how many farm inspections have been carried out by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency since 15 October 2011.

(AQO 670/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) carried out 33 scheduled Cross Compliance farm inspections between the 16 October and the 26 October 2011.

In addition, 7 reactive farm inspections were carried out in response to public complaint. Only 1 of these was directly related to slurry spreading.

EU Water Framework Directive

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

(AQO 671/11-15)

Mr Attwood: River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) were published in December 2009 to meet one of the key requirements of the Water Framework Directive.

The Plans, which cover all of NI, identify where the water environment needs to be protected or improved, the timeframe to make these improvements and how that can be achieved.

The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has the lead responsibility for coordination of the implementation of the Directive. The Agency continues to work with officials in DARD, DCAL and DRD and their agencies to take forward the implementation of the actions set out in the Plans. A progress report is currently being prepared and will be reported to the European Commission by December 2012, as required under the Directive.

The implementation of the RBMPs is being taken forward through the development and implementation of 26 Local Management Area (LMA) action plans over a three year rolling programme from 2010/11 to 2012/13.

The first 9 of the 26 local action plans were produced in March 2011 and these are currently being implemented. The next set of nine are due to be completed by March 2012. Implementation actions include additional targeted biological monitoring, awareness raising, targeted river walks to identify individual pollution hotspots and inspections of premises with the potential to cause water pollution.

In addition NIEA has continued with its WFD monitoring and assessment programme to classify the status of rivers, lakes and marine waters across Northern Ireland. The results of this monitoring are published annually in the NI Environmental Statistics Report.

Litter

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration he has given to increasing the levels of fines imposed on people convicted of littering offences.

(AQO 673/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I do not have any plans to increase the maximum level of fine, currently £2,500, for people convicted of littering offences in a court of summary jurisdiction.

Through the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, which comes into operation next April, I have strengthened the powers available to councils to address the problem of litter. This includes giving Councils the opportunity to set the level of fixed penalty fine locally, up to a maximum of £110 depending on the offence.

Planning: Wind Farms

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications for wind farms have been considered by District Planning Offices in each of the last three years and, of these, how many have been approved.

(AQO 674/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Area Planning Offices have general responsibility for planning matters within the Council districts. However planning applications for wind farms are processed through the Renewable Energy Team based at Millennium House in Belfast.

Within the last three years a total of 24 wind farm applications have been considered and, of these, 22 have been approved.

These break down by year in the following way. In 2009, 7 applications were considered and 6 were approved. In 2010, 10 applications were considered and all 10 were approved. In 2011 to date, 7 applications have been considered and 6 of these have been approved.

Local Government: Review of Public Administration

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the implementation of the Review of Public Administration will have on staff employed by Councils.

(AQO 675/11-15)

Mr Attwood: So far as the local government part of RPA reform is concerned the Executive decision to reduce the number of councils, will when finalised and implemented, eventually impact on staff employed by the 26 councils that exist currently.

Those impacts will be carefully thought through and negotiated with their representative organisations and employing authorities through the Local Government Reform Joint Forum which was set up for just this purpose.

The impacts will be underpinned by the commitment to act in the best interests of the affected staff enshrined in the Executive Guiding Principles for RPA overall.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Energy Efficiency and the Low Carbon Homes Schemes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how much savings were made from the closure of the Energy Efficiency and the Low Carbon Homes Schemes; and (ii) whether this funding will be transferred to the Green New Deal as originally intended.

(AQW 3590/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): In respect of the Energy Efficiency Homes scheme I would refer the member to my answer to AQW/1623/11-15.

There have been no savings to date for the low carbon home scheme given that slightly more has been paid out in 2010/11 in relief than last year. This is to be expected given that I decided to allow a year's grace for houses in the process of being built to the required high standards, in response to calls from the construction industry.

For both schemes savings, including the eventual administrative savings, will only be allocated to a Green New Deal (GND) solution following a positive assessment of a business case by DSD and DFP. In conjunction with the Green New Deal Coalition, DSD are preparing a business case to include the GND delivery proposal as part of a wider options appraisal.

Townland Addresses

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 2984/11-15, whether a feasibility study was carried out on the possibility of Fermanagh District Council introducing the Pointer System in conjunction with using townland addresses, so that those living in Co. Fermanagh could continue to use their townland as their principal address.

(AQW 3876/11-15)

Mr Wilson: No feasibility study has been carried out by my Department on the possibility of Fermanagh District Council introducing the Pointer System in conjunction with using townland addresses.

The Pointer system is available to all Government Departments and local authorities, including Fermanagh District Council, through the Northern Ireland Mapping Agreement.

Whilst all Departments and Councils have access to the Pointer system it is not the role of my Department to carry out individual feasibility studies as to how Pointer is deployed within those organisations. However, Land & Property Services, which has responsibility for the Pointer system, would be pleased to assist the Council should it wish to carry out such a study.

2014-2020 Cohesion Policy

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline their Department's plans to maximise the benefits from the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy.

(AQW 3950/11-15)

Mr Wilson: My Department is actively engaging with the relevant UK authorities to secure the best allocation of funding to Northern Ireland for the 2014-20 period.

Once the EU Budget and Regulations for that period are agreed, DFP will be working closely with other departments and stakeholders to identify a range of activities for possible inclusion in funding programmes, that will meet both the requirements of the Cohesion Policy regulations and the priorities agreed by the Executive. A range of options will be developed for Executive consideration in due course.

Cohesion Policy from 2014 will be closely focussed on the objectives and targets of Europe 2020 which is the EU's growth strategy for the current decade, which aims to make the EU a smarter, more sustainable and inclusive economy, delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. NI will use available funds in programmes to enhance our modern competitive base and to create sustainable employment for all sections of society.

Securing a fifth round of Cross Border Cooperation funding under the Cooperation Objective remains a particular priority of the Northern Ireland Executive. Additionally, Northern Ireland Ministers have strongly advised the UK Government of the Executive's desire for a further PEACE Programme, and the draft EU Structural Fund Regulations for 2014-2020 make provision for peace-building actions funded under the Cooperation objective. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

At Risk Register

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what checks are carried out to monitor the welfare of a child on the At Risk Register.

(AQW 2592/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The criteria used to assess whether a child should be placed on the At Risk Register are set out in the Department's guidance, Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2003) and in the Regional Child Protection Committee's Policy and Procedures Guidance. Social Workers are required to follow this guidance and will exercise their professional judgment when responding to the particular circumstances of individual children and their families. Following a comprehensive assessment of risk, which concludes that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, the child's name should be included on the Child Protection Register. When a child's name is included on the Child Protection Register, a Child Protection Plan is put in place

for the child which, among other things, sets out how identified risks will be managed and the welfare needs of the child met.

Public Consultation on a UK Plan for Rare Diseases

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when his Department intends to launch a public consultation on a UK plan for rare diseases.

(AQW 3292/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department will be launching a public consultation on the UK Plan for Rare Diseases in line with the timetable set by the Department of Health, London which is leading on development of the Plan. This is now likely to begin in November 2011.

Mental Health Act: Legislation

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) when new legislation will be introduced as a result of the review of the Mental Health Act; (ii) what steps are being taken to ensure that any new legislation is introduced as soon as possible; and (iii) why has it taken so long to introduce the legislation.

(AQW 3856/11-15)

Mr Poots: I recognise that it has taken some time to develop this legislation but bringing mental capacity and mental health provisions into a single Bill is a complex project that has not been attempted in any other jurisdiction. There is, therefore, no legislative model that can be usefully used. Provided outstanding policy and drafting issues are resolved, it is anticipated that the Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill could be introduced to the Assembly in Autumn 2012. My officials have been engaged in a structured and inclusive policy development process and are currently working closely with the Office of the Legislative Counsel to ensure timely progression. My Department's original intention had been to deliver legislative reform in the 2007-11 Assembly mandate (with the enactment of separate mental capacity and mental health legislation). However, following a public consultation in 2009, it became clear that there was strong support from key stakeholders for a single Bill approach. Stakeholders recognised that a single Bill would take longer to deliver but maintained that it was an important opportunity for the Department to get its legislative approach right.

Care Packages for Children in the Formal Care System

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to his Department of providing care packages for children in the formal care system (i) in total; and (ii) broken down by (a) Health and Social Care Trust area; and (b) constituency, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 3948/11-15)

Mr Poots:

(i) Costs in total

	2008/09 £m	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	Total £m
Total	69,313,201	76,020,084	75,867,149	221,200,434

(ii) Costs broken down by Trust

Board/Trust	2008/09 £m	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	Total £m
HSCB	5,647,498	5,731,892	5,978,438	17,357,828
Belfast	14,413,415	15,902,584	15,561,130	45,877,129

Board/Trust	2008/09 £m	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	Total £m
Northern	13,855,150	14,737,586	14,543,187	43,135,923
Southern	13,599,291	14,947,262	15,810,716	44,357,269
Western Trust**	10,857,147	11,435,502	11,082,654	33,375,303
South Eastern	10,940,700	13,265,258	12,891,024	37,096,982
Total	69,313,201	76,020,084	75,867,149	221,200,434

** Does not include costs associated with payments to voluntary bodies that receive funding for children in formal care settings and costs of children looked after in their own home where the child has a social worker, LAC reviews and support services

(b) Costs by constituency could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Health and Social Care Trust Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hours in each Health and Social Care Trust area where staff have 'acted-up' (a) with; and (b) without a commensurate increase in remuneration in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 3961/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Staffing Arrangements for the South West Acute Hospital

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the adequacy of staffing arrangements for the South West Acute Hospital.

(AQW 3962/11-15)

Mr Poots: The adequacy of staffing arrangements for the South West Acute Hospital is a matter primarily for the Western Health and Social Care Trust to address. The Trust will be responsible for securing the complement of appropriately trained and specialist hospital staff required to provide safe, effective and sustainable services.

The Trust has advised that it has reviewed staffing arrangements and has developed workforce plans to ensure that adequate staffing levels are in place for the new South West acute hospital for its opening in June 2012.

Fire & Rescue Services Budget

Ms Gildernew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he can offer an assurance that, despite significant cuts to the Fire & Rescue Services budget, there will be no reduction in the number of (i) fire engines in use by retained fire stations; (ii) retained fire stations; and (iii) retained firefighters.

(AQW 4016/11-15)

Mr Poots: The effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue service provision are reviewed regularly by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. It issued a draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for public consultation on 26 October setting out proposals for service delivery for the period 2012 – 2015.

Generic Drugs

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 2969/11-15, (i) for an estimate of the savings that could be made to the annual drugs budget if

generic prescribing levels were raised from 62 per cent to 70 per cent; and (ii) to detail the areas in which community pharmacies would play an integral role in delivering savings in the drugs budget.

(AQW 4017/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) It is generic dispensing rates, as opposed to generic prescribing rates which generate savings to the annual drugs budget. I have been advised by the Health and Social Care Board that estimated savings on the annual drugs budget of approximately £3million could be made if the generic dispensing rate in Northern Ireland was raised to the maximum level possible by dispensing generic versions of those medicines that are currently prescribed by a brand name. However, I would caution that it is difficult to predict actual savings within what is a volatile marketplace.
- (ii) Until the outcome of the Judicial Review, brought by Community Pharmacy NI against the Department and the Board, is known it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the possible contractual role that community pharmacies could play in delivering savings to the drug budget.

Child Order Statistics

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Child Order Statistics, how many biological fathers have abused their children in each of the last four years.
(AQW 4076/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Children Order Statistics to which you refer relates only to children presenting to Health and Social Care Trusts, and not to alleged abusers of children. For this reason, the figures you have requested are not detailed in any of the Children Order Statistical bulletins published annually by my Department.

Child Order Statistics

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the Child Order Statistics, how many biological mothers have abused their children in each of the last four years.
(AQW 4077/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Children Order Statistics to which you refer relates only to children presenting to Health and Social Care Trusts, and not to alleged abusers of children. For this reason, the figures you have requested are not detailed in any of the Children Order Statistical bulletins published annually by my Department.

Podiatry Care

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the criteria used to determine whether a patient with sight loss can be referred for routine podiatry care, free of charge under the Health Service.

(AQW 4124/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no specific access criterion which specifies that a person with sight loss should be referred for routine podiatry care. Referral to Podiatry is made on the basis that there is an underlying foot pathology, which would benefit from Podiatric assessment, advice and possible intervention. There is no cost to the patient for podiatry treatment.

Dementia Strategy

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the introduction of a dementia strategy.

(AQO 705/11-15)

Mr Poots: As you will be aware I made a statement to the Assembly earlier today on the publication of a regional strategy for improving dementia services in Northern Ireland. Dementia care is an important issue facing us all, and the expected increases in numbers of people with dementia will bring further pressures on our health and social care services. The aim of the Strategy is to provide a framework for the HSC Commissioners in the design of improved dementia services.

Alcohol Abuse

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans for tackling alcohol abuse.

(AQO 702/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department leads on the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs (NSD), which is a cross-sectoral strategy to reduce the harm related to substance misuse in Northern Ireland.

Approximately £8 million is allocated to its implementation each year, and additional funding is provided through the mental health budget for the provision of treatment and support services. The NSD seeks to direct action across five pillars: prevention and early intervention; harm reduction; treatment and support; law and criminal justice; and monitoring, evaluation and research.

It was agreed last year that the NSD would be refreshed, updated and extended for a further five years. The revised NSD issued for public consultation in March 2011. Responses have been analysed and are supportive of the approach being taken. The strategy is now being finalised in light of the consultation and it is anticipated that it will be published before the end of this year.

I am particularly concerned about how some alcohol is priced, promoted and marketed, and the NSD Phase 2 raises these issues. Therefore, my Department has been working closely with the Department for Social Development who led a joint consultation on the principle of introducing minimum unit pricing in Northern Ireland. Responses to the consultation are now being analysed with a view to the two Departments producing an options paper on the way forward for consideration by both the Social Development Minister and I.

Business Services Organisation

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many pharmacies have expressed an interest to the Business Services Organisation to reduce working hours to prevent closure.

(AQW 4177/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Board has advised that, to date, they have received a total of ten applications from community pharmacists requesting changes to their opening hours. Seven of these applications are to reduce opening hours and the remainder are requests to extend contracted opening hours. The requests received to reduce hours all relate to Saturday opening. There is no indication as to the reason for these requests.

Cedar Lodge School, Belfast: Occupational Therapist

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he intends to take, in conjunction with the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, to provide a full-time occupational therapist at Cedar Lodge School, Belfast.

(AQO 698/11-15)

Mr Poots: Occupational Therapy (OT) is currently provided at the school by a senior therapist one day per week. The therapist works mainly in an advisory/consultation and training role with teachers in order to maximise the effectiveness of the programmes provided for children, especially in the early years and early stages of development. The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has no plans to reduce this current level of service, but, in the current very challenging financial climate, the Trust is unable to increase the level of OT provision at Cedar Lodge.

Children can of course access core paediatric OT services in the community. However, the Public Health Agency has also undertaken to review how Allied Health Professionals, including occupational therapists, support children with special needs in special schools and mainstream education across NI. The focus of this Review will be on making best use of this skilled resource and improving services for as many children as possible.

NHS: Trade Unions

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the estimated annual cost to his Department and the wider Health Service resulting from the involvement of Health and Social Care staff in trade union activities.

(AQO 699/11-15)

Mr Poots: Employers in Northern Ireland are bound by legislation to make provisions for Trade Union activity in the workplace.

The estimated annual cost, calculated on a basic salary basis, to my Department and the wider Health Service resulting from the involvement of Health and Social Care staff in trade union activities for 2010/11 was just over £1.6m.

Hospitals: Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to ensure that people go to Accident and Emergency Departments when it is appropriate and use Out-of-Hours GP services or pharmacies if these will meet their needs in the first instance.

(AQO 700/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is essential that we ensure the usage of our health and social care services is appropriate – Accident and Emergency Departments should be dealing with just that, accidents and emergencies.

Primary and community care services have an important role in ensuring that only those who need to do so attend an Accident and Emergency Department. This includes having a focus on improving public health and prevention, ensuring appropriate access to services, and the effective management of chronic conditions.

There are currently initiatives underway to encourage people to use Out-of-Hours GP services or pharmacies rather than going to Accident and Emergency Departments. These services can play a vital role in providing the public with access to primary care services and I would encourage the public to make full use of them in order to reduce the pressure on vital hospital services.

In June, I initiated the Review of Health and Social Care Services to examine the future provision of health services, including hospital and primary health and social care services. The Review is examining how we help to ensure patients are treated in the right place, at the right time, by the right people. The Review is due to report its conclusions to me by the end of November.

DHSSPS: Joined-up Working

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to promote joined-up working across Government.

(AQO 701/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health is not just an issue for my Department; it belongs to all the Executive Departments and knows no borders. I have met with a number of my Ministerial colleagues specifically to promote joined-up working, identify issues and tackle any areas of difficulty. I have also met with colleagues in Edinburgh, Cardiff, London and Dublin. There are many areas where we can co-operate to maximise efficiency and impact on service delivery.

Joined-up working is the key to success on many vital issues:- ill-health prevention, the protection of children, suicide prevention, early intervention initiatives such as the family nurse partnerships, tackling

alcohol abuse, development of an autism strategy and capital programmes such as Desertcreat. The establishment of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership by the Health and Social Care Board is an excellent example of joined-up working across statutory agencies which I am confident will deliver a real improvement in outcomes for our children.

Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the model of integrated planning and commissioning of children's services through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

(AQO 703/11-15)

Mr Poots: I welcome the establishment of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership and the commitment to the partnership of the leaders of organisations, which have within their individual gift the potential of achieving positive outcomes for children across Northern Ireland in key areas of their lives. In my view, the Partnership, through its integrated approach to planning and capacity to jointly commission children's services, has the very real potential of making a difference in the lives of children and Northern Ireland.

The Partnership is young, it has met only twice, but it has already made the links with government through its adoption of the 6 outcomes of the Executive's 10-year Strategy for Children and Young People. I am keen to see the links established in the other direction, that is, the Executive linking with the Partnership. This would enable us to draw on the evidence about what works for children, gathered through the Partnership's five Outcomes Groups, for the purpose of informing policy development and assessing the extent to which our policy aims are being met. The focus of the Partnership on early intervention is particularly welcomed.

Prescription Drugs

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his Department's involvement in combating the illegal trade in prescription drugs.

(AQO 704/11-15)

Mr Poots: This Department, through its Medicines Regulatory Group (MRG), has a statutory obligation to ensure compliance with national and international legislative requirements regarding the sale of medicines.

However, there is a recognised increase in unlawful trading in medicines - particularly on the internet. This is a global issue and my Department is working very closely with other regulatory agencies including the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the United Kingdom Border Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland to tackle this problem.

We have been proactive in that:

- (a) We continue to undertake local, national and international collaborative enforcement work to seize unauthorised drugs and we recently destroyed some 500,000 tablets and injections seized by the Medicines Regulatory Group; and
- (b) We have also acted to raise public awareness of the dangers of purchasing medicines from unregulated sources recommending that patients obtain their medicines from a legitimate source.

Notably, we also participate in international regulatory activities including Operation Pangea IV which resulted in more than 12,000 illegal websites being closed down in the UK and over one million doses of unlicensed medicinal products being destroyed including antibiotics, steroids, anti depressants and anti cancer medicines to the value of an estimated £2 million.

Department of Justice

Prison Review Team

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice what has been the cost, to date, of the Prison Review Team; and what is the projected final cost.

(AQW 3813/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): The cost to date for the work of the Prison Review Team, including team member's remuneration is £430,337.60. The final projected outturn figure will be circa £460,000 once all outstanding invoices have been paid.

Children Who Commit a Criminal Offence

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 2676/11-15, what action his Department is taking to ensure that there is a clamp down on parents or guardians who use or encourage children in the committing of crimes.

(AQW 3819/11-15)

Mr Ford: Within the justice system, the identification and prosecution of parents or guardians who use or encourage children in the committing of crimes is a matter for the independent investigatory and prosecuting authorities. There will also be a role for social services in challenging parents or guardians who are found to have encouraged their child in the commission of an offence.

There is, however, no evidence to suggest that this practice is at all commonplace. On the contrary, the overwhelming majority of parents adopt a responsible attitude to their children's behaviour and many are in need of support rather than punishment.

Separated Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether separated prisoners who have not signed the required compact can be held accountable to the prison authorities for breaching rules, even if the Prison Governor has signed the compact on their behalf.

(AQW 3879/11-15)

Mr Ford: All prisoners, including separated prisoners, can be held to account for breaching prison rules.

Access to Justice Review

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what discussions are planned with the Family Bar Association regarding the Access to Justice Review.

(AQW 3897/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Access to Justice Review Report was published for public consultation on 13 September and responses invited by 13 December. In addition my Department has written to more than 450 individuals and organisations seeking their views on the report. This included the Bar Council which represents all practising barristers in Northern Ireland and the Family Bar Association. My Department has not received a request for discussions about the report from the Family Bar Association or the Bar Council.

Legal Aid System

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what consideration has been given to reforming the Legal Aid system to rebalance fees between junior and senior barristers.

(AQW 3919/11-15)

Mr Ford:**Criminal Legal Aid**

In making rules to set fees for junior and senior barristers for work in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts, the Legal Aid, Advice and Assistance (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 places a duty on me to have regard, among the matters which are relevant, to:

- (a) the time and skill involved in the work to which the rules relate;
- (b) the number and general level of competence of persons undertaking that work;
- (c) the cost to public funds of any provision made by the rules; and
- (d) the need to secure value for money.

In discharging this requirement and setting fees for junior and senior barristers, I must also take account of historical practice in relation to the linkage of fees between barristers, whereby a junior barrister supporting a senior barrister in a case would expect their fee to be two-thirds of the senior's fees. Generally, junior barristers in Northern Ireland are paid fees that are proportionately closer to those of senior barristers than would be the case with fees paid in England & Wales.

No consideration is being given currently to reforming criminal legal aid to rebalance fees between junior and senior barristers for work in the Magistrates' and Crown Courts.

The fees of junior and senior barristers, as they relate to work in the Court of Appeal, are subject to taxation. Consideration of any rebalancing of fees would be a matter for the Taxing Master.

Civil Legal Aid

In civil proceedings junior barristers' fees are generally two-thirds of the fees of senior barristers (where a senior barrister has been engaged).

The Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has been reviewing the remuneration for both junior and senior barristers across all court tiers and jurisdictions, including the balance of fees between junior and senior barristers.

This work also includes a review of the criteria for engagement of barristers in civil proceedings and will take into consideration both research which the Commission has undertaken and the recommendations of the Access to Justice Review. The Commission intends to consult shortly on proposals for remuneration.

The fees in cases where both junior and senior barristers are engaged are generally within the High Court jurisdiction and are subject to taxation where the fees are determined by the Taxing Master. The Commission is reviewing the fees and hourly rates and the proportion of fees between junior and senior barristers.

The Commission is also reviewing the levels of remuneration in the Family Care Centre.

These proposals will lead to a rebalancing of all legal fees and remuneration including between junior and senior barristers (where a senior barrister is engaged) to bring more control and predictability to the legal aid budget and to ensure that an appropriate level of representation is provided to assisted parties.

Legal Aid System

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what consideration has been given to reforming the Legal Aid system to provide greater access and support to victims of domestic violence.

(AQW 3920/11-15)

Mr Ford: As part of its programme to reform civil legal aid, the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission will consider the introduction of a waiver on the financial eligibility limits for those suffering from domestic violence.

In advance of these reforms on 30 December 2010, I announced an immediate change to legal aid in order to provide increased protection for victims of domestic violence.

The changes I announced removed the upper income and capital limits for people applying for legal aid for non-molestation orders in the Magistrates' Court meaning that those who would previously not have been entitled to funding because of their financial status could now access legal aid to obtain these orders.

Since the introduction of the waiver on 22 December 2010, the scheme has benefited 101 applicants, none of whom would have qualified for legal aid before the introduction of the waiver.

A review of the scheme will be completed in December 2011.

Prisoners on Remand

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many prisoners are currently on remand in each prison facility, including the Juvenile Justice Centre and Hydebank Young Offenders Centre; and how many of these are foreign nationals.

(AQW 3935/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number of prisoners, including foreign nationals, currently on remand in each prison facility is set out in table A below:-

TABLE A

Establishment	Total number of Prisoners currently on remand.	Number of Foreign Nationals on remand.
Maghaberry	541	86
Magilligan	0	0
Hydebank Wood	120	8
Juvenile Justice Centre	13	0

These figures are correct as at 31 October 2011.

Glorification of Terrorism

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether there is a provision within legislation to lay charges in relation to the glorification of terrorism.

(AQW 3936/11-15)

Mr Ford: Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006 makes it an offence to encourage terrorism, which includes a statement which glorifies the commission or preparation of an act of terrorism.

The maximum penalty on indictment for an offence under section 1 is seven years imprisonment, an unlimited fine or both. A summary conviction can attract imprisonment for up to six months, a fine of up to £5000 or both.

Justice and Security (NI) Act 2007

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases have been judicially reviewed, after being made subject to the Justice and Security (NI) Act 2007; and of these, how many (i) are pending; (ii) have been successful; and (iii) have been unsuccessful.

(AQW 3937/11-15)

Mr Ford: There has been one case where the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions to issue a Certificate under Section 1 of the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 has been judicially reviewed.

The judgment in this case was delivered on 30 June 2010 and the application for judicial review was dismissed. On 21 October 2011 leave to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom was refused.

Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of whether some prisoners are in custody, as sentenced or remand, to protect public safety and that these prisoners cannot be placed in the category of solely seeking to rehabilitate.

(AQW 3939/11-15)

Mr Ford: In detaining someone in custody the court has decided that they are not suitable for bail, community sentence or other disposal. However, it is recognised that the time spent by offenders in prison offers a significant opportunity to work towards their rehabilitation and reintegration into society by working with them to tackle the causes of their offending, and to help reduce their risk of reoffending. This rehabilitative approach aims to improve public protection by helping offenders to desist from crime.

In addition, the new public protection sentences introduced under the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 provide for an increased number of prisoners to be discharged under licence, and to be subject to compulsory supervision in the community. The Order also provides for judges to recommend the inclusion of specific licence conditions when sentencing an offender. The purpose of the licence is not just to rehabilitate the offender, but also to protect the public and prevent re-offending and this is done by supporting him/her during their licence period. It can be argued that to achieve success, there has to be some level of participation by the offender, but every possible effort is made to provide support in what can often be difficult and complex circumstances for offenders in the community.

Police Ombudsman

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, given the legal status of the Police Ombudsman as a 'corporation sole' and the number of statutory powers which are personal to the office holder, what would be the practical consequences of the office being vacant; and what functions could not be performed during a vacancy.

(AQW 3953/11-15)

Mr Ford: The office of the Ombudsman is a corporation sole. Paragraph 9 of Schedule 3 to the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 provides that any functions of the Ombudsman may be performed by any officer of the Ombudsman authorised for the purpose by the Ombudsman. The Department considers that officers of the Ombudsman so authorised may perform functions of the Ombudsman during a vacancy.

Proposals by the Secretary of State for Justice

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the proposals by the Secretary of State for Justice to have (i) mandatory life sentences for a second serious sexual or violent crime; and (ii) mandatory custodial sentences for 16 or 17 year olds threatening with a knife.

(AQW 3974/11-15)

Mr Ford: I understand that the proposal to increase the scope of mandatory life sentences is part of a wider piece of work to address the significant difficulties created by operation of the Indeterminate Public Protection (IPP) sentence in England and Wales.

Through the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, similar Indeterminate Custodial Sentences (ICSs) are available to judges in Northern Ireland in order to protect the public. However, our framework operates in a different way and we have not experienced the same problems with this type of sentence in our justice system.

The proposed mandatory penalty for using a knife to threaten others is, I understand, in response to a Westminster Report into gang and youth violence following this summer's riots in England and Wales.

The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 only recently completed a revised knife crime sentencing package for Northern Ireland, doubling penalties for a wide range of offences involving knives.

Although I will keep these areas under review, at this stage I have no plans to introduce similar proposals for Northern Ireland.

Robert Black

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) what form of transport was used to transport Robert Black from prison in England to Northern Ireland for trial; (ii) whether this transport was specially chartered; and (iii) to detail the total costs involved in transporting Mr Black for all his court appearances in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 3975/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) Mr Black was transported by aeroplane from Leeds to Belfast International Airport.
- (ii) The plane was chartered at a cost of £5,675 including VAT and was paid for by the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
- (iii) Mr Black was transported from Maghaberry Prison to attend for trial in Craigavon Courthouse on three occasions and Armagh Courthouse on 22 occasions at a total cost of £7,012.28.

Legal Aid

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether a language barrier is grounds for granting legal aid to an applicant; and how many applicants were granted legal aid for this reason in each of the last five years, broken down by court division.

(AQW 4006/11-15)

Mr Ford: While interpretation assistance may be funded through legal aid to assist a defendant in preparing his defence, this is not normally the determining factor in the decision whether or not to grant legal aid and accordingly the information requested is not collected. If a person before the courts requires an interpreter one will be provided by the court. This service is funded directly by the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

Separated Republican Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether negotiations are on-going with the separated Republican prisoners who are refusing to conform to prison regulations; and to what extent the Prisoner Ombudsman is involved.

(AQW 4007/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no ongoing negotiations with separated republican prisoners who are refusing to conform to prison regulations. They have been encouraged to take part in a 'prisoner forum' where they can discuss their concerns with prison management. Prisoners have declined the opportunity to take part. The Prisoner Ombudsman continues to investigate complaints by prisoners and make recommendations arising from those investigations. I have not asked the Ombudsman to become involved in negotiations. I am satisfied that sufficient and appropriate arrangements for engagement with prisoners in Maghaberry Prison are already in place.

Uninsured Drivers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline any plans to give additional powers to the PSNI for dealing with uninsured drivers.

(AQO 713/11-15)

Mr Ford: A range of powers already exist to deal with vehicles being driven without insurance. Since 2007, the police have had powers to seize vehicles being driven without insurance. I understand that this power is extensively used, with around 200 vehicles per month being seized.

The maximum penalty for driving without insurance has also been increased in 2008 to a fine of up to £5000, six months imprisonment, or both. Whilst I have no immediate plans to provide any additional powers or penalties, if the police were to approach me with such a request I would, of course, consider it.

Prisoners: Annual Cost

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Justice what is the average annual cost of keeping an inmate in prison.

(AQO 707/11-15)

Mr Ford: As published in the Northern Ireland Prison Service's Annual Report and Accounts, the average cost per prisoner place in 2010/11 was £73,762. This figure was significantly lower than the target of £76,500.

The average cost of keeping a prisoner in custody has reduced by £4,069 from 2009/10, to £ 73,762 in 2010/11, and it is anticipated that this will be further reduced to approximately £60,000 when the current reform process is complete. This is subject to the successful delivery of the voluntary exit scheme announced today, and construction of new accommodation as part of the Estates Strategy.

Security: Dissident Republicans

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the current level of dissident Republican activity and the threat it poses to members of the security forces and the general public.

(AQO 715/11-15)

Mr Ford: The threat from dissident Republicans remains SEVERE. To date this year they have been responsible for 25 attacks; compared to 40 in 2010 as a whole. It is clear that their principal target is police officers, as illustrated by the pipe bomb attack on the home of a retired police officer in Lawrencetown on 20 October. But they have also conducted recent attacks on commercial premises and on the Derry/Londonderry City of Culture office. They have demonstrated disregard for those serving the community and for public safety. Those responsible have no regard for the harm they cause whether to people, or business or, indeed, our image abroad.

The PSNI and An Garda Síochána are continuing to work hard to tackle the threat, and I would like to acknowledge their continued endeavours and co-operation in frustrating the efforts of terrorists. There have been significant successes both sides of the border in recent months.

The way forward, of course, depends not simply on police to provide the answer. This is an issue for the Executive, Assembly and community. The message is clear, as demonstrated recently when this Assembly stood united against terrorism and through the united response to the attack on the City of Culture office. Those responsible appear to be deaf to the will of the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland. We need to continue to demonstrate to all terrorists that they have nothing to offer and that there are democratic means for engagement.

Sex Offender Notification and Violent Offender Orders

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the public consultation on Sex Offender Notification and Violent Offender Orders.

(AQO 717/11-15)

Mr Ford: A summary of responses was published on the Department's website on 1 November. The overall message was one of support for the proposed changes to the law. This has allowed for policy proposals to be further developed. A paper detailing the proposed legislative changes will be presented to the Justice Committee at its meeting on 17 November.

Security: Community Buildings

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Justice what actions he and his Department have taken to assist the police in providing better security around buildings such as Orange halls, churches and GAA facilities.
(AQO 718/11-15)

Mr Ford: As you are aware from my letter of 17 October, I met recently with senior Police Officers to discuss attacks on symbolic buildings. In an effort to bring a greater focus to their work on this issue the PSNI have developed a strategy based on engagement, patrolling and investigation. There is no doubt that this has contributed to a reduction in the number of attacks – statistics show a 30% decrease in the number of attacks for 2010/11 as compared to 2009/10.

This, however, is not a problem that the police can solve alone. Those responsible for these buildings must also take reasonable steps to ensure they are secure and can call on Crime Prevention Officers to offer advice.

In addition local communities, councils and central Government all have a responsibility to build mutual respect and tolerance. For my part, I will continue to encourage those with influence to work together to address the underlying issues and build a shared future for all.

Parole Commissioners

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what steps are being taken to reform how the Parole Commissioners exercise their functions to ensure public confidence.
(AQO 719/11-15)

Mr Ford: The functions of the Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland are set out in the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. As the Parole Commissioners are statutorily independent of Government, it is a matter for them how they express these functions.

The Department is in discussion with the Parole Commissioners and the relevant criminal justice agencies regarding updating the Parole Commissioners Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009. Possible changes to Commissioners' procedures under consideration include the release of information about oral hearings, and a review of the right of certain offenders to an automatic oral hearing.

Any proposed revision of the Rules will be brought forward through the appropriate Assembly procedures including consultation with the Justice Committee.

RUC Museum

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the progress made on the new RUC Museum planned for PSNI Headquarters.
(AQO 720/11-15)

Mr Ford: I continue to fully support the creation of a Police Museum. However there remain some significant issues to be resolved before the outline business case can be submitted to Department of Finance and Personnel which include substantial planning issues and further consideration by PSNI of scale, location, access and throughput issues.

My officials continue to work with the RUC GC Foundation and PSNI to address these outstanding issues as a matter of priority to enable the business case to be finalised.

Department for Regional Development

Unadopted Pumping Stations in the Strangford Constituency

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development to list the unadopted pumping stations in the Strangford constituency which have outstanding agreements with NI Water or its predecessor. (AQW 3479/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that there are currently no agreements in Strangford Constituency solely for pumping stations as they are normally processed as part of a sewerage system package including sewers within a development site.

The information requested about unadopted pumping stations in the Strangford constituency is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Unadopted Pumping Stations in the Strangford Constituency

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development which of the unadopted pumping stations in the Strangford constituency, which have an outstanding agreements with NI Water or its predecessor, have not been completed to the requisite adoption standard for more than (i) one year; (ii) three years; and (iii) five years. (AQW 3481/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that there are currently no agreements in Strangford Constituency solely for pumping stations as they are normally processed as part of a sewerage system package including sewers within a development site.

The information requested about unadopted pumping stations in the Strangford constituency is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Unadopted Sewers in the Strangford Constituency

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development which of the unadopted sewers in the Strangford constituency, which have an outstanding agreement with NI Water or its predecessor, have not been completed to the requisite adoption standard for more than (i) one year; (ii) three years; and (iii) five years. (AQW 3482/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that there are currently some 322 existing agreements in place with persons constructing or proposing to construct a sewerage system, to adopt the system at a future date provided the terms of the agreement have been met. This includes agreements formerly with its predecessor Water Service which transferred to NIW on 1 April 2007.

It is the responsibility of the persons constructing the sewerage system to advise NIW when they consider it is completed to a satisfactory standard, to enable the system to be inspected and a Certificate of Completion to be issued with a view to future adoption.

The information requested about unadopted sewers in the Strangford constituency is not readily available and could only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Connecting Europe Facility

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development how he plans to maximise the benefits to the local community following the announcement of significant funding for transport by the European Commission as part of the Connecting Europe Facility. (AQW 3681/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) will provide funding to invest in transport infrastructure on the proposed 'Core' Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). However, under the

current proposals only Northern Ireland's Eastern Seaboard Corridor, between Larne, Belfast and the border with the Republic of Ireland, will be included on the 'Core' Network. In addition, CEF funding opportunities for transport infrastructure may be further restricted due to the Commission's preference for funding to be targeted at rail rather than road infrastructure.

I recently met with a range of key European contacts in Brussels, including the Head of Cabinet for the Commissioner for Transport, to seek support for the needs of peripheral regions like Northern Ireland to be taken into account. My officials also liaise with the Department for Transport in Whitehall to ensure that Northern Ireland's interests are being adequately articulated during the UK's engagement with the Commission.

The European Parliament and Council's deliberations on the proposals to establish the CEF provides an opportunity for amendment. In order to maximise the benefits to Northern Ireland from the CEF, my officials and I will continue to engage with the Commission and other influential parties to secure amendments, to provide further funding opportunities for Northern Ireland.

Connecting Europe Facility

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of the potential for funding under the Connecting Europe Facility, whether his Department plans to prioritise the re-establishment of a railway line serving counties west of the Bann, including Fermanagh and Tyrone and connecting into counties such as Donegal, Leitrim and Cavan.

(AQW 3682/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As advised in response to AQW 3681/11-15, it is proposed that funding from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) will be made available for Member States to invest in transport infrastructure on the proposed 'Core' Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). Funding would not, therefore, be available under the CEF to re-establish rail links to counties Fermanagh and Tyrone and across the land frontier into Donegal, Leitrim and Cavan.

Within the budget available to me, my priority remains the maintenance and, where appropriate, the upgrading of the existing railway network.

Smell of Potent Raw Sewage Affecting the Danny's Mill Road Area of Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on work to tackle the smell of potent raw sewage affecting the Danny's Mill Road area of Enniskillen; and what further measures his Department will put in place given that the problem persists.

(AQW 3683/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the installation of odour control equipment at 2 of the pumping stations serving the Danny's Mill Road area is now complete and this has resulted in a reduction in the odours emanating from the sewer. Two recent odour incidents were traced to a problem at Rossorry Pumping Station, which does not have odour control equipment installed. In each case mechanical breakdown resulted in sewage not being pumped from the station for a few days and the sewage in the station became septic. The odours occurred when the fault was repaired and pumping recommenced. The problem has now also been resolved.

In the longer term, NIW is considering a proposal to upgrade Rossorry Pumping Station and to relocate its pumping main to bypass the Danny's Mill Road area. However, this is a major scheme which would take at least 2 years to implement and would be dependent on the availability of funding and all necessary approvals being obtained.

Cherrymount Link Road in Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development how the opening of the Cherrymount Link Road in Enniskillen will affect the on-going congestion problems in the village of Tempo; and what plans his Department has to resolve the matter.

(AQW 3684/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the B80 route from Enniskillen through Tempo carries a two way flow of approximately 5,000 vehicles per day. It is anticipated that upon completion of the Cherrymount Link Road, some motorists may use the route via Tempo and Clabby to Fivemiletown, as opposed to using the main A4 trunk route from Enniskillen to Fivemiletown.

As with many rural villages, there are currently no waiting restrictions in Tempo. Occasionally, when motorists park their vehicles on both sides of the street, through traffic can be impeded and some delays can occur.

Roads Service's efforts over recent years to provide waiting restrictions in Tempo have been met with significant opposition from the local Development Group, Traders, Councillors and the local community. It is not normally possible for Roads Service to provide waiting restrictions without some local support.

After Cherrymount Link Road opens to traffic, which is scheduled for February 2013, Roads Service will monitor the changes in traffic movements and assess the need for any further adjustments to the surrounding roads network. If it is determined that waiting restrictions in Main Street in Tempo would be beneficial, it would be helpful if the local community was encouraged to reconsider the matter and support the introduction of waiting restrictions.

Enniskillen Courthouse: Parking

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact on parking in Enniskillen resulting from the Courts Service's decision to impose parking restrictions outside Enniskillen Courthouse.

(AQW 3685/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The waiting restrictions recently introduced outside Enniskillen Courthouse removed 23 limited waiting parking spaces from the 360 on-street parking spaces available in Enniskillen. In addition to these on-street parking spaces, my Department's Roads Service provides 1510 off-street car park spaces, of which 655 are pay and display and 855 are free of charge.

Consequently, the removal of 23 of Roads Service's 1870 parking spaces in Enniskillen has had little impact on the overall availability of a parking space within the town.

Gritting of Roads

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 2009/11-15 and given his pledge that his "Department's Roads Service has in place sufficient finance, labour and materials to satisfactorily carry out the Winter Service programme for the incoming winter season of 2011/12", whether Roads Service has greater, the same or less finance, labour and materials available than last year.

(AQW 3711/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In my response to AQW 2009/11-15, I advised that while my Department's Roads Service has no statutory obligation to salt roads, it does earmark funds with the aim of helping main road traffic to move safely and freely in wintry conditions, through the removal of snow and gritting of the salted road network across Northern Ireland.

Funds in the order of £5 million are normally earmarked for gritting. However, as it is not possible to accurately forecast the extent or the severity of future winter weather, it is not possible to determine if additional funding will be required in advance of each winter season. Should further funding be required, Roads Service will either bid for additional funds from the Assembly or redistribute funds from

within its overall roads maintenance budget, by reducing maintenance works and activities in other areas in the year in question.

With regard to the labour force available, I can advise the Member that Roads Service will have over 300 staff on standby for the incoming winter season, which is approximately the same as last winter.

With regard to the availability of materials, I can advise that a significant amount of pre-planning is carried out by Roads Service each year to ensure a state of readiness for the winter season. This planning includes the early purchase and receipt of salt to ensure that salt barns are filled to capacity, prior to the start of the winter.

Roads Service normally holds sufficient stocks of salt in these barns to provide the winter service programme for a full season, without the need to restock. However, following last year's severe weather, Roads Service has advised that it has reviewed these levels and increased stocks significantly. Roads Service is now holding around 110,000 tonnes of salt compared to around 65,000 tonnes held in previous years. It also has arrangements in place to supplement stocks of salt during the winter period, if necessary.

Whilst it is not never possible to accurately forecast the extent or the severity winter weather, I am confident that Roads Service has sufficient finance, labour and materials in place to satisfactorily carry out the Winter Service programme for the incoming winter season.

Magilligan Ferry

Mr McClarty asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made on securing the future of the Magilligan Ferry since the issue was raised at the recent North/South Ministerial Council meeting.

(AQW 3733/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have confirmed that my Department was not involved in the setting up of this ferry service, nor does it have any operational responsibility for it. In addition, the Department for Regional Development does not have the legislative vires to support such a ferry service.

A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the delays to the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass, whether he would consider initiating planning proposals for a ring-road round Enniskillen.

(AQW 3741/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that while progress with the proposed A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass has been slow, the scheme remains the highest priority strategic road improvement proposal for the town. Together with the Cherrymount Link Road scheme, the Bypass will make a significant contribution to the easement of traffic congestion in and around Enniskillen.

There are no proposals to develop a ring road around Enniskillen and such a proposal would undoubtedly be extremely costly. Given the current funding pressures, initiating the planning process for a ring road would not provide good value for money.

Travel Costs

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the travel costs incurred by (i) the Minister; and (ii) departmental officials in the last 12 months.

(AQW 3744/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The travel costs incurred by (i) the Minister; and (ii) departmental officials in the last 12 months, to 30 September 2011, is provided below.

Travel Costs	Minister	Departmental Officials
Total	£13,720	£2,172,861

The 'Departmental Officials' expenditure does not include overtime mileage, nor does it include mileage incurred by Roads Service industrial staff using their own vehicles. Overtime mileage and Industrial Staff standard mileage could only be provided at a disproportionate cost.

Salt or Grit in Storage

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what tonnage of salt or grit is currently in storage for use by Roads Service during the winter gritting schedule; and what was the comparable amount at this time last year.

(AQW 3776/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Prior to the start of each winter service season, my Department's Roads Service carries out a significant amount of planning, including the early purchase of an adequate stock of salt with the aim of meeting the needs of the full winter service programme without the need to re-stock.

Last year, Roads Service salt stocks amounted to some 65,000 tonnes. However, following last year's severe weather, Roads Service has reviewed its assessment and has increased salt stocks significantly, to approximately 110,000 tonnes. In addition, Roads Service has arrangements in place to supplement salt stocks during the winter period, if necessary.

Grit supplies, as opposed to salt supplies, are more readily available from local quarries and are therefore purchased, as required, by local section offices.

Phosphoric Acid in Drinking Water

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the reasons for the use of phosphoric acid in drinking water and for his assessment of its use.

(AQW 3792/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that all major water supplies in Northern Ireland are modified through the addition of orthophosphoric acid in the treatment process. The use of orthophosphoric acid in the water treatment process enables a protective coating to be formed over lead pipes to minimise the levels of soluble lead in the water supply. Its use has been approved by the Drinking Water Inspectorate. Orthophosphoric treatment is used across the United Kingdom water industry as an effective process to assist in achieving compliance with the European standards for lead in drinking water which apply at the consumer's tap. During 2010, 99.53% of samples taken from the regulatory sampling programmes complied with the current lead standard of 25µg/l and 95.77% complied with the stricter lead standard of 10µg/l which applies at the end of December 2013. NIW continues to work towards achieving compliance with the lead standards.

The process is an effective way of reducing consumers' exposure to lead where it has been used as the material for service pipes, mostly linking the water main and the kitchen tap, or in domestic plumbing.

A5 Project

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the process for making changes to the A5 project.

(AQW 3820/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that changes to the A5 project will materialise primarily through the Public Inquiry process. During the Public Inquiry hearings, which were held between 9 May and 1 July 2011, the independent Inspectors heard representations from over 500

people. These representations often included suggested changes, such as alternatives, omissions or additions to the scheme, as presented by Roads Service.

In some cases, Roads Service has accepted the suggested changes and these will be incorporated into the scheme. Where Roads Service does not agree with the suggested changes, the independent Inspectors will make recommendations.

The Inspectors are currently considering the merits of all the suggested changes presented at the Public Inquiry and it is expected that they will report back to the Department before the end of the year. Roads Service will then comment on the Inspectors' report and recommendations.

Once this takes place, I will consider all issues and make decisions in relation to the project. These decisions will address both strategic and local issues and will be reflected in the Departmental Statement, which I expect will be published in Spring 2012.

Accidents Resulting from Uneven Road Surfaces

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many claims were made against his Department because of accidents resulting from uneven road surfaces in the North Down area in each of the last three years; and how much compensation was paid as a result of these claims.

(AQW 3826/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service records information on claims for compensation by Roads Service Section Office area. The North Down Section Office area is almost identical to the North Down Borough Council area. Details of the number of compensation claims resulting from carriageway defects and the amount of compensation paid in each of the last three years, for the Roads Service North Down Section Office area are provided in the table below:

Year	Claims Received	Compensation Paid
2008/2009	16	£17,925.43
2009/2010	31	£3,620.52
2010/2011	42	£17,906.34

It should be noted that liability was denied in 27 of the claims received during this period and three claims are still being processed.

Blue Badges

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many blue badges have been granted in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3828/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of Blue Badges issued by my Department's Roads Service, since 1 April 2006, are provided in the table below:

Financial Year	Total Number of Blue Badges issued
1/04/2006 – 31/03/2007	31,324
1/04/2007 – 31/03/2008	31,804
1/04/2008 – 31/03/2009	33,097
1/04/2009 – 31/03/2010	30,720
1/04/2010 – 31/03/2011	35,205
1/04/2011 – 28/10/2011	22,787

Maintenance Work on Buses

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Translink staff are given a time limit within which to complete maintenance work on buses.

(AQW 3837/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have advised me that they do not put time limits on completing maintenance work on buses. They employ experienced Supervisors who are in charge of monitoring quality and efficiency of the work output. They can gauge how long each task may take. However they recognise that even when completing similar tasks on different vehicles, the time taken can vary due to differing circumstances that can arise.

Maintenance Work on Buses

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development whether it is best practice for Translink staff, who are carrying out maintenance work on a bus, to complete that work before starting work on another bus.

(AQW 3840/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have advised me that it is normal practice to complete tasks once they have been initiated, however it is necessary to continually monitor priorities. This may mean that if a tradesperson is working on a particularly difficult and extended task and a simpler task presents, it may be prudent for the supervisor to transfer the tradesperson from the difficult task to deal with the simple one, as this will have a more immediate effect on vehicle availability.

Furthermore, there are times when parts are not readily available and have to be ordered. In these situations the tradesperson is better utilised on other tasks until the part arrives.

Departmental Staff

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many departmental staff are currently seconded to external bodies.

(AQW 3869/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As at 28 October 2011, a total of six staff within my Department were seconded to external bodies.

Speed Limits

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are any plans to change speed limits.
(AQW 3899/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has powers to set or amend speed limits under Article 38 of Part IV of The Road Traffic Regulation (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

The latest Roads Service policy document, Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland, was published in April 2010. This provides guidance for traffic engineers to assess a suitable speed limit for any road under consideration. It also contains a commitment for Roads Service to review the speed limits for the entire Upper Tier rural road network within five years of the publication of the policy.

The policy document can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address: www.roadsni.gov.uk/local_speed_limits_ni_e051_.pdf

Collaboration Between Roads Service and the Rivers Agency

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister for Regional Development what mechanisms exist to allow collaboration between Roads Service and the Rivers Agency when combating flooding.

(AQW 3904/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service plays a key role in the Flood Liaison Groups (FLGs), which promote cooperation and coordination between the main organisations required to respond to flooding incidents, namely Rivers Agency, Northern Ireland Water, Roads Service, NI Fire and Rescue Service and Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG). These groups maintain and review, on an ongoing basis, a schedule of combined Multi Agency Flooding hotspots.

At a strategic level, Roads Service has Directorate representation and actively participates on the Flood Strategy Steering Group (FSSG), which oversees and formulates policy and gives guidance to the Flood Liaison Groups to ensure cooperation and coordination between the main organisations, as required.

At an operational level, the Flood Liaison Group has developed a Best Practice Guidelines (BPG) document, which provides a framework for the three drainage agencies to coordinate their response to flooding incidents. This document establishes lines of communications and reporting across agencies.

Car Parking Charges

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the timescale for the proposed introduction of car parking charges in car parks which are currently free.

(AQW 3918/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is in the process of implementing an increase in car parking tariffs in charged car parks, which was formally approved in July 2010. The review of tariffs also includes a proposal to introduce charging to a number of car parks that were previously free. A list of these car parks has been placed in the Assembly Library.

I can advise that Roads Service is currently dealing with a number of objections received in relation to the proposed introduction of charges. In these circumstances, it is not possible to be definitive about timing, however, it is hoped that the proposals can be implemented within the current financial year.

A5 Road Project

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the proposed A5 road project is a key priority for his Department.

(AQW 3938/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: With two thirds of Roads Service's capital funding for this Budget period, almost £800 million, presently allocated to the A5 Londonderry to Aghnacloy and the A8 Belfast to Larne dual carriageways, the A5 is indeed a key priority for my Department.

As you will be aware, the A5 dual carriageway project is being brought forward as part of an agreement between the Irish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive, to provide dual carriageways between the border at Aghnacloy and Londonderry, and on the A8 between Belfast and Larne. The Irish Government has committed to make a £400 million contribution towards both projects.

Public inquiries for both schemes were held in May and June 2011. The Inspector's report for the A8 has been received and the report for the A5 is expected by the end of this year. In conjunction with the Independent Inspector's report and recommendations arising from the A5 and A8 public inquiries, I intend to consider proposed investment levels across my Department, including the impact of Budget 2010 on the strategic roads programme.

30 mph Section of the Ballyquin Road to the Greystone Roundabout in Limavady

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of accidents resulting in personal injury on the 30 mph section of the Ballyquin Road to the Greystone Roundabout in Limavady in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3942/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of collisions resulting in personal injury on the 30 mph section of the Ballyquin Road to the Greystone Roundabout in Limavady, in each of the last five years, are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of recorded Personal Injury Collisions
2006	2
2007	0
2008	1
2009	2
2010	1

Road Links Between Belfast and Sligo

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the plans to improve road links between Belfast and Sligo, with particular reference to the A4/N16 from the Ballygawley Roundabout to Sligo.

(AQW 3969/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has carried out very significant road improvement schemes along the A4 Belfast to Sligo route in recent years. Improvements have included the new 20km dual carriageway between Dungannon and Ballygawley and a 3.8km road realignment at Annaghilla, both of which opened to traffic in 2010. These developments are in addition to the provision of a number of other schemes to improve overtaking between Ballygawley and Enniskillen and a significant road widening scheme at the Henry Street / Sligo Road junction in Enniskillen. Cumulatively, these schemes have made a significant contribution to journey time savings and road safety along the A4 route.

Looking to the future, design and development of the A4 Enniskillen Southern Bypass continues to progress, and a proposal for a bypass of Fivemiletown is also currently included in the Investment Delivery Plan for Roads. I would anticipate that the ten year Strategic Road Improvement Programme will be reviewed in due course, when a new Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland has been agreed.

Upgrade of the Existing A4/N16

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his discussions with Leo Varadkar, TD regarding the upgrade of the existing A4/N16.

(AQW 3970/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the member that I have had no discussions with Leo Varadkar, TD regarding the upgrade of the existing A4/N16.

Castlewellan Road in Banbridge

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Regional Development when the Castlewellan Road in Banbridge will be resurfaced.

(AQW 3977/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Castlewellan Road, Banbridge, remains within the maintenance period for road reinstatements completed following excavations by utility companies. During this period, utility companies have a statutory responsibility to maintain the reinstatements, including dealing with any significant settlement that may occur. Consequently, Roads Service does not plan to resurface the road until the maintenance period has expired.

However, subject to the availability of funding and confirmation that the various utility companies have no further works planned for this stretch of road, Roads Service plans to resurface the Castlewellan Road during the early part of 2013.

Millennium Way in Lurgan

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the completion of the Millennium Way in Lurgan.

(AQW 3980/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the route selection and preliminary design of the Millennium Way scheme in Lurgan has been completed. Planning approval has also been obtained, with a view to advancing the Vesting Order and completing the detailed design.

I should also explain that the limited funding available for capital improvements is already fully committed to a programme of major improvement schemes on the strategic road network. Furthermore, Budget 2010 and the reduction in the Executive's capital funding, means that there are sizeable pressures on the capital budget within my Department.

Difficult choices will have to be made over the next four years to deliver the best services and infrastructure in water, sewerage, roads, and public transport. I therefore intend to consider the proposed investment across my Department, including the impact of Budget 2010, and explore opportunities for bringing forward schemes, such as Millennium Way in Lurgan.

Translink Staff

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) whether he has any plans to reduce the number of staff at Translink (a) bus; and (b) rail stations; (ii) if so, how many staff will be affected by (a) redundancy; and (b) redeployment; and (iii) what impact these changes will have on the service to the public.

(AQW 4000/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink is responsible for operational matters of this kind. Each year, discussions take place about the nature of Translink's plans in the year ahead and over a 3 year timeframe. This takes account of Translink costs and revenue projections and the level of resources that my department can provide. This year, fares have not increased and Translink continues to find ways of optimising bus and rail services to minimise costs. This can have implications for staff. Translink have advised me that negotiations with the Unions have just recently been completed in this context. The service changes have been implemented for this year and were consulted upon. Detailed discussions between the Department and Translink on plans for 2012/2013 to 2014/2015 have yet to take place. It would be premature to comment on any decisions in advance of these discussions.

Larne Railway

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development when the public address systems at the stations on the Larne Railway line will be repaired.

(AQW 4001/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have advised that the Long Line Public Address (LLPA) system on the Larne line is approximately 20 years old and has experienced reliability problems over the last several years. NI Railways continuously monitor LLPA performance and repair as necessary. Obsolete and unreliable components of the system will be replaced on a phased basis over the next 12 months.

Free Desludging of Septic Tanks

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he would allow individuals, who have already benefited from free desludging of septic tanks and who were affected by the recent

flooding of rural areas, to receive a second free desludging of their tanks from NI Water in light of the extenuating circumstances caused by the floods.

(AQW 4093/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that its current policy provides for a septic tank desludging, free of charge, once per year. If the septic tank is functioning properly, with the outlet of the tank discharging freely to a watercourse or soak-away, it would be unusual for the contents of the tank to be affected by flooding. However, if a soak away became saturated it is possible that the contents could not be released from the tank. This would be a matter for the customer to address the problem with the tank outlet or soakaway. In such circumstances, there would be no benefit in emptying the tank until the problem with the soakaway was resolved as the tank would simply refill.

Department for Social Development

Travel Costs

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the travel costs incurred by (i) the Minister; and (ii) departmental officials in the last 12 months.

(AQW 3696/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The details requested in respect of travel costs incurred are provided below:

TRAVEL COSTS	01/10/10 TO 30/09/11 Net Cost £
Minister	2,315
Departmental Officials	1,179,634

The details provided include costs of official travel by air, sea and land together with any subsistence payable and reimbursement of other associated costs such as accommodation and car parking charges.

These costs must be considered in the context of the 7,000 plus staff working in the Department.

Motability Cars

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development how many new motability cars have been issued in each of the last five years, broken down by make of car.

(AQW 3763/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Motability Scheme whereby people who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance may exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car is administrated by the independent charity Motability. Information on administrative matters can be obtained from Motability by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, and Essex, CM19 5PX. The amounts paid to Motability in each of the last 5 years are as follows:

Year	Amount paid
2010/11	£1,003,000
2009/10	£1,058,000
2008/09	£1,097,000
2007/08	£861,000
2006/07	£600,000

The figures are taken from the Department for Social Development's Resource Accounts annual reports.

Motability Cars

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of motability cars in use in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3764/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Motability Scheme whereby people who receive the higher rate mobility component of the Disability Living Allowance may exchange all or part of their allowance in return for a car is administrated by the independent charity Motability. Information on administrative matters can be obtained from Motability by writing to: Declan O'Mahony, Director, Motability, Warwick House, Roydon Road, Harlow, and Essex, CM19 5PX. The amounts paid to Motability in each of the last 5 years are as follows:

Year	Amount paid
2010/11	£1,003,000
2009/10	£1,058,000
2008/09	£1,097,000
2007/08	£861,000
2006/07	£600,000

The figures are taken from the Department for Social Development's Resource Accounts annual reports

Department's Budget

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how much funding the Westminster Government has allocated for the social security aspects of his Department's budget in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 3770/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is set out in the table below. Figures shown reflect net social security related expenditure incurred in the last 3 financial years and includes the Department's own running costs. Expenditure figures have been shown as these were the amounts ultimately funded by Her Majesty's Government.

TABLE: SOCIAL SECURITY RELATED EXPENDITURE (£MILLION)

2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
4,623	5,001	5,152

Cross-Border Trade in Enniskillen and Newry

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the amount of cross-border trade in Enniskillen and Newry and the sale of large quantities of alcohol as a result of the price differential, what consideration he has given to meeting his counterpart in the Dublin Government to discuss setting a minimum price for alcohol across the island.

(AQW 3811/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In March, my Department launched a joint consultation with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) on the introduction of minimum pricing of alcohol. The consultation closed on 26 June and responses are currently being analysed. An options paper is being developed for consideration by Health Minister Poots and I before a decision on the way forward is taken.

I recognise that the possible introduction of minimum unit pricing could lead to unintended consequences, such as increases in cross border sales. This would be dependent on the price differential between alcohol products in Northern Ireland and other parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

I understand that, through the North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety Sectoral Group, DHSSPS has had discussions with counterparts from the Government in the Republic of Ireland in relation to policy in both jurisdictions in respect of preventing and addressing alcohol related harm. The role of minimum unit pricing has been discussed at these meetings, however, acknowledging in particular the need to clarify the legal position, there are no definitive proposals at this time.

I am also aware that DHSSPS have agreed to hold a joint North/South conference on alcohol misuse in early 2012, and this will cover a wide range of policy issues.

Supported 'Fold Type' Housing in the Antrim Town Area

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Social Development (i) whether his Department is aware of the lack of supported 'fold type' housing in the Antrim town area; and (ii) to outline any future capital projects that will address this shortage.

(AQW 3824/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The latest waiting list figures for Antrim Town indicate that the number of applicants requiring older persons accommodation has increased and additional housing is therefore required. However, there may not necessarily be a need for sheltered accommodation. The Housing Executive will carry out a survey in 2012 to identify the extent of the need for this type of housing. No sites are readily available in the area and through its Unmet Needs Prospectus the Housing Executive is currently advertising for a suitable location on which to build.

New Build and Maintenance Projects

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what plans his Department has to create a fairer balance between new build and maintenance projects.

(AQW 3838/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Whilst a recent report from Savills highlighted the excellent overall quality of Housing Executive homes, I remain concerned that there are small pockets of homes out there which are in urgent need of modernisation and refurbishment.

I am also concerned that so much of the existing stock is single glazed and this is simply not acceptable at a time when we need to do more to help people stay warm this winter and out of Fuel Poverty.

I have asked the Housing Executive to bring forward plans to dramatically increase the speed at which they can bring their stock up to standard and that includes double glazing for all their homes. I have also asked them to look at more innovative ways this can be delivered in light of the challenging economic climate all Departments face. This should include the potential to transfer the worst of their stock to Housing Associations who may be better placed to bring in the additional, private finance needed for the most urgent of improvements.

I also plan to see how we can increase the level of private finance in the delivery of new housing so we can make that resource go even further and will be happy to release more information on all this work in the coming months as it progresses.

Social Landlords

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how social landlords currently help their tenants cope with high energy prices; and (ii) how much funding his Department has provided for these measures in each of the last five years.

(AQW 3907/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive currently helps its tenants cope with high energy prices in a number of ways, including: -

- Making homes as energy efficient as possible through planned maintenance programmes, including heating replacements with controls, topping up loft insulation, providing cavity wall insulation where required and installing double glazing when windows require replacement.
- Providing energy efficiency advice via the Heatsmart programme.
- Funding Bryson Energy to provide an independent advice service to the general public.
- Funding National Energy Action (NEA), the fuel poverty charity.

In addition, the Housing Executive has carried out double glazing and insulation to thousands of homes. However these measures have been undertaken as part of External Cyclical Maintenance schemes and the costs cannot be disaggregated. The Housing Executive is also currently drawing up tender documents for a potential brokering scheme for discounted electricity for tenants.

The Housing Executive has provided £1.3m funding to the agencies mentioned above, as set out in the table below: -

	2006/07 £k	2007/08 £k	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k
Heatsmart	121	124	124	124	124
National Energy Action	40	40	40	40	111
Energy Efficiency Advice	95	105	95	95	24
Total	256	269	259	259	259

The Housing Executive also spent £118.8m in relation to heating schemes over the last five years, as follows: -

	2006/07 £k	2007/08 £k	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k
Heating	208	173	129	200	210
Heat Servicing	52	54	61	49	52
Total	260	227	190	249	262

In relation to Housing Associations, there are a variety of measures they take, for example, a number help by building energy efficient homes to 'Code 3 and 4' including solar panels and heat recovery systems if possible. Economy 7 heating systems have in the main been removed and most dwellings now have gas or oil heating. In addition, a number of Housing Associations take advantage of Cosy Homes schemes to keep their houses properly insulated and draught-proofed, including cavity wall insulation. Housing Associations also advise that they ensure that their houses are well maintained through planned maintenance schemes. Some have changed their fuel provider which has resulted in tenants benefitting from a reduction in the service charges which covers the cost of lighting all communal areas of flats and some are investigating the possibility of bulk purchasing fuel.

Finally, in 2009 the Department of Social Development made a £150 Household Fuel Payment to 167,000 households, to assist with the spiralling cost of heating. However it is not possible to provide figures for which recipients were social housing tenants. I am also working with the Housing Executive to develop a programme that will see all properties double glazed as soon as possible. In the interim I have secured additional funds of £2m in the October Monitoring round to enable the Housing Executive to replace single glazed windows with double glazing and additional insulation measures to tackle the thermal efficiency of individual homes.

Energy Brokering Report

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department is taking in response to the Energy Brokering Report.

(AQW 3924/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive is currently considering testing the market for discounted electricity on behalf of tenants. Both the Housing Executive Energy Conservation Unit and Procurement Department have been researching similar schemes located elsewhere and expect to market test the scheme within this financial year.

Areas at Risk: Ards Peninsula

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the areas in the Ards Peninsula that are designated as Areas at Risk.

(AQW 3925/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are two areas within the Ards Peninsula that are designated as Areas of Risk. They are Scrabo in Newtownards and Beechfield in Donaghadee.

Temperature Variances

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development if his Department has investigated whether there are significant temperature variances between the Ballykelly Met Office site and the proposed Magilligan temperature monitoring site.

(AQW 3966/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Met Office advises that the observation site at Magilligan is a new site replacing the site at Ballykelly. The site at Ballykelly will be decommissioned as the land it is on is being sold by the MoD. There are no contemporaneous records for the two sites which would allow for a meaningful comparison.

Boiler Replacement Scheme

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development why the Boiler Replacement Scheme has to conform with Building Control, when this could potentially add upwards of £1000 to the cost of replacing a boiler, therefore creating a financial burden for those it aims to support.

(AQW 4002/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Before introducing the Boiler Replacement Scheme at the beginning of July 2011 the Housing Executive consulted with Building Control to determine what their requirements would be. As a result of this consultation the Housing Executive was satisfied that there was no requirement under Building Control regulations to provide additional controls where an oil boiler was being replaced with a new oil boiler. An applicant may choose to fit these controls if he/she wishes but it is likely to cost in the region of an additional £600 to do so. In the circumstances where an oil boiler is being replaced by a gas boiler it is, however, a requirement of the Building Control regulations that full controls are also provided.

However, all 26 district councils are autonomous and there have been some differences in interpretation of Building Control Regulations among them. These differences have centred mainly on the need or otherwise for the controls mentioned above. Initially there were differing views among the Councils on this but it now seems to be generally accepted that the provision of full controls is not required when replacing "like for like" boilers. However, some Councils are now asking for the provision of a remote wireless thermostat control instead. Again this is not a Building Regulations requirement and the Housing Executive did not specify such a thermostat within the scheme. The reasons for this are:

- a) While the thermostat would switch off the boiler at a certain temperature the householder could not heat the water separately. It is therefore not considered to be a suitable control;

- b) The Allowance of £1500 for the boiler replacement scheme had already been determined and publicised. Specifying a wireless thermostat would add an extra cost to the householder of between £120 and £150. As applicants for the scheme are in receipt of a means tested benefit it was not considered appropriate to put them to the extra expense.

In some areas the Boiler Replacement Scheme is progressing well with good cooperation and input from Building Control. However, in other areas such as the West and Derry City Council area there still seem to be differing views on this matter. In Derry City Council the Building Control section is awaiting the return of the Chief Building Control Officer for the area, who is presently in Australia, to make a final decision on the subject. In the meantime there is some confusion among installers in the area as to the precise requirements of Building Control in relation to boiler replacement, and some of them will not proceed with the installation of replacement boilers until the area Building Control clarify the matter.

At present the central Building Control Standards Panel is trying to ensure consistency of approach among all the councils.

Double Glazing Scheme

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development what consideration he has given to introducing a double glazing scheme to make homes more energy efficient and to address fuel poverty for the most vulnerable in society.

(AQW 4003/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has a number of window replacement schemes included in their planned maintenance programme this financial year which will see work carried out to over 3,200 homes. In addition, the Housing Executive Board has set the objective of having all their properties double glazed by 2021.

However, I am working with the Housing Executive to develop a programme that will see all properties double glazed as soon as possible. In the interim I have secured additional funds of £2m in the October Monitoring round to enable the Housing Executive to replace single glazed windows with double glazing and additional insulation measures to tackle the thermal efficiency of individual homes. Much housing association stock already has double glazing and most associations have advised that they intend to replace any remaining single-glazed windows with double glazing in their planned programme of works.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Translation of Ulster-Scots

Mr Dallat asked the Assembly Commission how many times Ulster-Scots was spoken in Assembly plenary sessions over the last twelve months; and to detail the cost of translation for this period.

(AQW 3560/11-15)

Mr Cree (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission confirm that, other than an occasional word, no Ulster-Scots was spoken during plenary sittings in the last 12 months. In addition, no money was spent on the provision of Ulster-Scots translation services for plenary sittings.

Staff

Mr Dallat asked the Assembly Commission to detail the total number of staff employed by the Assembly Commission in each of the last three years, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) annual salary.

(AQW 3563/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Staff figures for each year are reported in the Assembly's Resource Accounts. Copies of the Accounts for each year are held on the Assembly's website at http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/corporate/resource_accounts.htm.

Staff numbers are based on the average number of staff employed over the course of the year. Only those staff that were engaged by the Assembly Commission are reported below. As noted in the Resource Accounts, the Commission also used the services of staff on an "Agency" basis in each of the three years.

For data protection reasons, the actual salaries for individual members of staff is not disclosed. The salary band for each grade has been provided.

For the 2008/09 financial year, the figures are shown below in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – STAFF NUMBERS AND SALARY SCALES FOR 2008/09

Assembly Grade	Average Number of Staff	Salary Band
AG1	1	£100,000 - £160,000
AG2	5	£64,820 - £80,111
AG3	4	£43,600 - £62,407
AG4	39	£37,322 - £50,796
AG5	21	£28,153 - £38,893
AG6	56	£22,621 - £30,520
AG7	17	£19,592 - £26,086
AG8	85	£16,683 - £22,718
AG9	50	£14,060 - £20,109
Total	278	

For the 2009/10 financial year, the figures are shown below in Table 2.

TABLE 2 - STAFF NUMBERS AND SALARY SCALES FOR 2009/10

Assembly Grade	Average Number of Staff	Salary Band
AG1	1	£100,000 - £160,000
AG2	6	£65,528 - £80,111
AG3	6	£53,657 - £62,407
AG4	39	£41,391 - £50,796
AG5	24	£32,643 - £38,893
AG6	80	£27,764 - £30,520
AG7	36	£23,066 - £26,086
AG8	63	£19,450 - £22,988
AG9	74	£15,277 - £20,799
Total	329	

For the 2010/11 financial year, the figures are shown below in Table 3. It should be noted that the information in Table 3 reflects a revised eight grade staffing structure implemented from 4 May 2010.

TABLE 3 - STAFF NUMBERS AND SALARY SCALES FOR 2010/11

Assembly Grade	Number of Staff	Salary Band
AG1	1	£115,216 - £130,519
AG2	6	£72,010 - £81,922
AG3	8	£57,608 - £65,259
AG4	39	£46,806 - £53,056
AG5	36	£36,485 - £41,331
AG6	82	£29,543 - £33,446
AG7	100	£24,004 - £27,357
AG8	118	£17,521 - £22,180
Total	390	

The total figures for each year including staff used on an Agency or temporary basis are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4 - TOTAL STAFF NUMBERS

	Employees	Agency Staff	TOTAL
2008/09	278	99	377
2009/10	329	62	391
2010/11	390	26	416

Within the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Assembly Commission is committed to reducing its budgetary requirements (including its staffing levels) by 2014/15.

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 11 November 2011

(AQW 2284/11-15)

My reply in September 2011 indicated information available from my Department's records regarding Planning Service Applications for Anaerobic Digestion Plants. However at that time I was unsighted of records held by the Department of the Environment's Planning Service. These records show (i) that the number of occasions in each of the last two years on which DARD has been consulted is as shown in Table 1:

TABLE 1

Year	Number of occasions
1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010	4
1 September 2010 to 14 October 2011	67
Total	71

(ii) Responses have been completed for 63 of these; (iii) eight responses are in the process of consultation; (iv) the average time taken to respond to the completed requests was approximately 60 working days.



Published by Authority of the Northern Ireland Assembly,
Belfast: The Stationery Office

and available from:

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www.tsoshop.co.uk

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ISSN 1463-7162

Daily Editions: Single copies £5, Annual subscriptions £325

Bound Volumes of Debates are issued periodically during the session: Single copies: £90

Printed in Northern Ireland by The Stationery Office Limited

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ISBN 978-0-339-70226-4

