

Written Answers to Questions

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Contents

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister WA 239

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development WA 260

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure WA 276

Department of Education WA 284

Department for Employment and Learning..... WA 312

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment WA 321

Department of the Environment..... WA 332

Department of Finance and Personnel WA 338

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety..... WA 352

Department of Justice WA 367

Department for Regional Development..... WA 384

Department for Social Development WA 394

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission..... WA 406

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

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Weir, Peter (North Down)
Wells, Jim (South Down)
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 3 February 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Funding for Youth Work

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the level of funding allocated by their Department in the 2011/12 financial year to each youth work project and group in (a) East Belfast,; and (b) including groups that based in the city centre; and (ii) the duration of the funding in each case.

(AQW 4981/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): OFMDFM does not directly fund youth work as this is the responsibility of other departments. However, we do provide funding towards good relations and summer intervention work which either target or involve young people and youth workers in East Belfast.

In addition, OFMDFM funds a number of after school clubs in East Belfast. Details of this funding is included in the table below:

After School Club	Funding for 2011/12 (£)
Oasis Caring in Action Ltd	9,000
Short Strand Community Forum	10,865
Bloomfield Community Association	6,262
Ballymac Friendship Centre	11,300

Spend in the West Belfast Constituency

Mr P Maskey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail their Department's, and its arm's-length bodies', spend in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years; and the proposed spend for each year until 2015.

(AQW 5312/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Expenditure by our Department and its Arms Length Bodies in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years is set out in the table below. An accurate forecast of proposed expenditure for each year until 2015 cannot be provided at this time.

EXPENDITURE IN THE WEST BELFAST CONSTITUENCY BY OFMDFM AND ARMS LENGTH BODIES

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
OFMDFM	£409,676	£643,984	£367,785
Community Relations Council	£775,752	£1,107,070	£1,142,977
NI Memorial Fund	£296,000	£418,000	£639,000

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Playboard	Nil	Nil	£56,222
Strategic Investment Board	£140,307	£377,695	£28,905
Total	£1,621,735	£2,546,749	£2,234,889

One Plan in Londonderry

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for a breakdown of the estimated funding which will be provided, during this mandate, for the One Plan in Londonderry, given the commitment to its implementation in the draft Programme for Government.

(AQO 936/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our department has provided just over £30.5m expenditure allocation in the 2010 Budget for the development of the Ebrington site, which is a key element of the One Plan.

DSD has provided over £16m expenditure allocation as well as an additional £10m to City of Culture.

The Executive agreed the main principles and objectives of the One Plan at its meeting on 24 November and Ministers agreed to nominate a senior official within each department as a central point of contact for One Plan issues.

In addition, the Executive also agreed to provide any necessary support to Ilex in more effectively accessing appropriate EU sources of funds that may be available and in the seeking of additional funding streams particularly from the private sector in order to fully finance the spending set out in the One Plan.

Freezing Campaign Advertising

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to provide an estimate of (i) the savings that will be made by freezing campaign advertising, as agreed on 8 December 2011; and (ii) the expected resulting job losses in (a) the local advertising industry; and (b) the Executive Information Service.

(AQW 5856/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: It is estimated that there will be potential savings of £400,000 from the campaign advertising freeze.

The campaign advertising freeze is short-term and is in place until the end of March 2012. Therefore no assessment has been made of potential job losses in the advertising industry or the Executive Information Service.

Archived Statements and Publications

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the archived statements and publications which appear on the Northern Ireland Executive website are limited to those produced post 2007.

(AQW 6084/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The current Northern Ireland Executive website was launched in late 2010 as the main online publishing platform for news releases for all Executive departments, and Executive statements.

At this stage it was decided only to publish information on the new live site which dated from the return of devolution in May 2007. This reflected current best practice in website management so that the website is current and up-to-date rather than being an online repository for all NICS departments'

historical documents, statements and news releases going back over numerous administrations, including those under direct rule.

Removal of Historical Executive Documents from the Northern Ireland Executive Website

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of whether transparent government is being promoted by the removal of historical executive documents from the Northern Ireland Executive website.

(AQW 6085/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We refer you to the answers provided to AQW 6084/11-15 and AQW 6086/11-15.

The NI Executive website features a feedback facility for enquiries and individual requests for ad hoc information. In addition, there are listings on the site whereby readers may request historical documents on specific areas such as RPA and PFG. Contact information for all departments is also readily available via the website.

Such arrangements are reasonable for accessing older information and are in line with the ethos of transparency in government.

Archived Statements and Publications

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they intend to restore the archived statements and publications produced pre-2007 on the Northern Ireland Executive Information Service website.

(AQW 6086/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We refer you to the answers provided for AQW 6084/11-15 and AQW 6085/11-15. There are no plans to restore the archived statements and publications produced pre-2007 to the Northern Ireland Executive website.

US Canadian Strategy

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the US Canadian Strategy.

(AQW 6209/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Northern Ireland Bureau, based in Washington, DC, is responsible for the delivery of the Department's US and Canadian Strategy. The Bureau also has an office in New York City. The Bureau's strategy of engagement in North America is driven by the Programme for Government. The strategy was developed by matching elements of the Programme for Government with initiatives being carried out in several cities and regions across the US and Canada. Given the limited number of staff and financial resources at the Bureau's disposal, activities have been prioritised on those areas which offer the greatest potential for promotion and co-operation.

The overarching objective of the strategy is to work with InvestNI and Tourism Ireland and other stakeholder interests to promote inward investment, tourism and to encourage strategic co-operation in key areas including education and research and development. The relationship with our partner agencies is strong and information and leads are exchanged on a regular basis. In terms of themes, the Bureau has promoted NI's Creative Industries Sector at events in Los Angeles and Washington, DC and its R&D capability and educational excellence in North Carolina and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the majority of cases, the activities undertaken have been enhanced by the participation of a member of the Executive or the Speaker of the Assembly.

Canada represents a key market for us and we share a great deal in common in view of the historical, economic and cultural ties that exist between our two countries. We see significant opportunities to further these links in building strong and mutually beneficial relationships to support economic growth

and job creation here. The Bureau and InvestNI have established a stronger presence in Canada over the past year with the aim of supporting our businesses looking to trade in Canada; to attract businesses to invest here and in promoting our region as a great place to live, learn, visit, work and do business.

In terms of wider outreach, the Bureau has been active, over the past twelve months, in Washington, DC, New York City, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Silicon Valley, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Boston, the Durham/Raleigh Triangle in North Carolina and in Toronto and Ottawa. Each of the above cities was selected based on research which identified synergies with the Programme for Government.

From our own perspective, we have used our visits to the US to promote the local economy and to engage on a one-to-one basis with President Obama, Secretary of State Clinton, members of Congress and potential and existing investors across the USA. We also have tentative plans to include a short visit to Canada after our visit to Washington, DC in March 2012.

Draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the results of the consultation on the draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration (CSI) Strategy, with particular reference to education; and (ii) whether, in light of the consultation responses, his Department plans to redraft its key CSI priorities.

(AQW 6229/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Cohesion, Sharing and Integration consultation attracted 288 individual responses and these are available on the OFMDFM website along with the analysis report on the consultation (www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/community-relations/csi-consultation.htm).

Party leaders agreed to the establishment of the cross party working group on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration in June 2011 and representatives from each of the five main parties were nominated. The group held its first meeting on 27 September 2011 and continues to meet on a weekly basis. The working group received a presentation from the consultation analyst at the outset of the process and this helped inform the work plan of the group. The current priority is to establish a political consensus and agree on the strategic direction against the range of issues raised by the consultation. The cross party working group will continue to work with a view to publishing the final strategy and an associated action plan in early 2012.

Many of the issues within the programme for Cohesion, Sharing and Integration are of a cross-cutting nature and there will be a need to seek departmental views and inputs to ensure that the document is as reflective and comprehensive as possible.

A number of the Department of Education's existing educational policies contribute to building a more united community. In light of the relevance of education to the wider good relations agenda, input on its role and impact will be built into the document before it is finalised. The finalised strategy will also reflect how departments can better align policies and resources in a more strategic way across the range of cross-cutting areas that contribute to meeting good relations objectives.

Executive's Strategic European Policy and Funding Arrangements

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the Executive's Strategic European policy and funding arrangements.

(AQW 6263/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive's Strategic European policy and funding arrangements are set out in its published European Priorities 2011-12. These can be found at:

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/co-operation/about-the-european-policy-and-co-ordination-co-operation/co-operation-european-priorities-2011-2012.htm>.

Funding Allocated to Bonfire Committees

Mr McLaughlin asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the level of funding allocated to Bonfire Committees in each local council, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6301/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM provides annual funding to district councils to administer the District Councils' Good Relations Programme. Each council prepares an annual Good Relations Plan based on the findings of their Community Audit and OFMDFM provides 75% funding for the programme and 75% salary costs for at least one Good Relations Officer in each council area. Not all councils have Bonfire Committees but some of them facilitate schemes and initiatives to address what are often contentious issues associated with summer bonfire events.

The majority of the funding allocated to such schemes is spent on diversionary activities such as Fun Days and family activities by way of promoting a celebratory atmosphere and reducing the potential for division and intimidation. Alternative events to traditional bonfires include beacons fuelled by willow chippings or gas. Many district councils use their own funds to assist with bonfire-related events in their areas. The Housing Executive also has funded some councils and community groups via its Housing Executive Bonfire Funding.

Details of the funding spent on bonfire-related activities by each of the district councils during the last five years is included at Annex A.

Annex B details the District Council areas where the Housing Executive has funded local Councils and Community Groups through its bonfire management programme: Housing Executive Bonfire Funding.

ANNEX A

FUNDING FOR BONFIRE RELATED ACTIVITY BY COUNCIL AREA

Council	2007 £	2008 £	2009 £	2010 £	2011 £	5 Year Totals £	Notes
Antrim	45,000	45,000	35,000	35,000	30,000	190,000	Funding via Environmental Health.
Ard's	21,503	52,369	54,765	82,784	73,003	284,424	-
Armagh	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	No core funding allocated towards Bonfire Committees.
Ballymena	3,510	13,734	11,470	5,443	7,500	41,657	Council does not have Bonfire Committees, but "have had 3 schemes whereby local groups apply for funding of events associated with bonfires".
Ballymoney	4,400	3,000	4,000	12,000	3,717	27,117	Funding from both Community Safety and Good Relations.
Banbridge	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	-
Belfast	21,000	25,000	27,000	84,000	73,500	230,500	Includes all funding approved via the GR Partnership.
Carrickfergus	Nil	Nil	6,083	5,245	5,803	17,131	Bonfire Forum only established in 2009.
Castlereagh	2,000	2,000	3,400	8,400	11,000	26,800	-
Coleraine	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	-
Cookstown	Nil	2,050	2,600	1,400	Nil	6,050	-
Craigavon	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	No Bonfire Committee.

Council	2007 £	2008 £	2009 £	2010 £	2011 £	5 Year Totals £	Notes
Derry City Council	50	50	50	50	6,937	7,137	Environmental Services Committee deals with Bonfires. £50pa is allocated to Bonfire Management meetings. The 2011 allocation is for a pilot-based training scheme for groups "engaged in Bonfires or alternatives to bonfires".
Down	Nil	Nil	10,500	Nil	Nil	10,500	Funding via the Community safety Partnership. Capital spend on beacons.
Dungannon	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	-
Fermanagh	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000	Funding via the Community Safety Partnership
Larne	7,302	8,560	6,036	8,236	9,052	39,186	-
Limavady	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	902	902	-
Lisburn	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Does not have a Bonfire Committee.
Magherafelt	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	-
Moyle	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Does not have a Bonfire Committee.
Newry & Mourne	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Does not have a Bonfire Committee.
N/Abbey	Nil	Nil	Nil	36,015	34,536	70,551	Bonfire Protocol established in 2010.
North Down	7,500	7,500	7,000	13,300	2,400	37,700	-
Omagh	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	-
Strabane	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Has a Bonfire Committee but no resources attached to it.
Totals	113,265	160,263	168,904	292,873	259,350	994,645	

ANNEX B

The table below details the District Council areas where the Housing Executive has funded local Councils and Community Groups through their bonfire management programme

Housing Executive Bonfire Funding

Council Area	Year	Paid to Council	Paid to Community Group
Antrim	2007-08	£15,500	£0
	2010-11	£500	£0
Ards	2009-10	£500	£0
	2010-11	£1,500	£0
	2011-12	£1,500	£0
Ballymena	2009-10	£500	£0
	2010-11	£500	£0
	2011-12	£500	£0
Ballymoney	2009-10	£500	£500
	2011-12	£500	£500
Belfast	2007-08	£25,000	£0
	2010-11	£0	£1,000
	2011-12	£7,500	£0
Carrickfergus	2009-10	£500	£0
	2010-11	£500	£3,000
	2011-12	£500	£0
Coleraine	2011-12	£0	£650
Craigavon	2009-10	£0	£500
	2011-12	£0	£1,500
Down	2009-10	£500	£0
	2010-11	£500	£0
	2011-12	£500	£0
Magherafelt	2007-08	£0	£1,000
Newtownabbey	2009-10	£0	£500
Strabane	2011-12	£1,500	£0

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what has been the total spend on hospitality by their Department in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6358/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The following table sets out the total spend on hospitality by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in each of the last five financial years:

Year	Cost (£)
2006/07	78,523
2007/08	207,000
2008/09	238,000
2009/10	187,000
2010/11	116,237

10-year Strategy for Children and Young People

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the findings of the mid-term review of the 10-year Strategy for Children and Young People.

(AQW 6367/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have not reviewed the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People and have no plans to do so.

We are, however, evaluating the success of the 2008-11 Strategy Action Plan with a view to developing a successive Action Plan for the next period along with the governance arrangements required to support its implementation.

Racism Strategy

Mr D McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Racism Strategy.
(AQW 6370/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work has been ongoing to develop a new Strategy to replace “A Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2005-2010”. The Racial Equality Panel has discussed this at meetings during 2011 and will continue to progress this work through early 2012.

We consider that the six shared aims set out in the original Racial Equality Strategy are robust and comprehensive and that the section concerning the “Scale of the challenge” in the Strategy is as relevant now as ever before, although we remain open to suggestions as to how we might strengthen these six shared aims.

We are committed to developing the new Strategy through a partnership process with minority ethnic groups and the wider community, as was the case with the original Strategy.

0845 Numbers

Mr Girvan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much revenue has been raised by their Department, in each of the last three financial years, by the usage of 0845 numbers.
(AQW 6435/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In the last three financial years, our Department has not generated any revenue through the use of 0845 numbers.

Work Programme Developed after the Severe Weather in December 2010

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the delivery of the work programme that was developed after the severe weather in December 2010, to enhance wider preparedness and resilience, as detailed in their Department’s Business Plan 2011/12.

(AQW 6452/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A good deal of work has been done since January 2011 to capture and build on the learning points from the emergency response to the prolonged sub-zero temperatures of December 2010 and the subsequent rapid thaw which gave rise to severe disruption to water supplies.

The Civil Contingencies Group (CCG(NI)), led by OFMDFM, has significantly progressed a work programme aimed at developing new and enhanced arrangements to improve resilience to any future emergencies that may arise, not only those resulting from severe weather. These new and enhanced arrangements comprise a number of Protocols which include:

- A Co-ordination Protocol for Local Level Emergencies – to facilitate effective co-ordination of the multi-agency assessment of, response to, and recovery from local level emergencies.
- A Protocol for Escalation of the Multi-Agency Emergency Response – to facilitate the rapid, smooth and timely transition of the multi-agency response from the local to the strategic level.
- A Toolkit for Addressing the Needs of Vulnerable People in an Emergency – comprising a multi-agency Protocol for Identification of Vulnerable People; guidance on information sharing and data protection issues for use during the emergency response; and guidance to responders on the use of geo-spatial mapping to aid in the identification of the vulnerable and the targeting of resources to assist them during an emergency.
- A Collaborative Communications Process – for the co-ordination of the provision of timely, accurate and up to date information to the public and the media.

These new arrangements were tested in a large scale multi-agency emergency exercise which took place on 22 November 2011, involving 150 participants from a wide range of organisations including central government departments, district councils, health and social care bodies, and emergency services. The exercise proved very successful and concluded with a strong consensus amongst participants that the new and enhanced arrangements would significantly strengthen the multi-agency emergency response.

CCG(NI) has reviewed the findings from the exercise and agreed final amendments to the new and enhanced Protocols to ensure that they are fit for purpose. OFMDFM will continue to promote these arrangements and encourage all civil contingencies organisations to embed them into emergency plans, test exercising regimes and working practices.

It is clear that as a result of this work programme our collective ability to respond to, and recover from, a future emergency has been improved.

Asset Management Unit

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the Asset Management Unit has produced regular reports for the Executive, on better asset management in the public sector, as detailed in their Department's Business Plan 2011/12.

(AQW 6454/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Asset Management Unit (AMU) reported to the Executive's Budget Review Group (BRG) on 11 October 2011 on progress with meeting the Executive's asset management objectives, including establishing an Asset Management Strategy. The AMU is due to report again on 31 January 2012.

Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast

Mr McCartney asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the total number of civil servants in their Department who live in the Foyle constituency and travel to work in the Greater Belfast area; and the total cost to their Department for subsidising the travel.

(AQW 6474/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There is one civil servant in our Department who lives in the Foyle constituency and travels to work in the Greater Belfast area. Travel costs are not subsidised by the Department.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the Social Investment Fund, to detail why so much has been invested in creating parallel structures and a layer of bureaucracy to administer funding, when there are already well established, proven mechanisms for identifying need and delivering services, such as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.

(AQW 6541/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There has been no investment in creating parallel structures or a layer of bureaucracy to administer funding,

Area Plans coming from the Investment Zones will set out how they intend to address need.

In regard to proven mechanisms for the delivery of services, communities will then identify how best they feel services should be delivered.

Child Internet Safety

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the strategic development within their Department on child internet safety.

(AQW 6615/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety leads the Safeguarding sub-group of the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People. Child internet safety is one of the many issues upon which the sub-group has been focusing.

Children and Young People's Strategy

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the review of the structures which support the implementation of the Children and Young People's Strategy, to detail (i) what progress has been made; (ii) the terms of reference; (iii) who is undertaking the review, including names; (iv) the structures which form part of the review process; (v) the input to the review process from other Departments; (vi) how children and young people will be engaged and involved in the review; (vii) how the children and young people's sector will be engaged and involved in the review; and (viii) when the review will be completed and published.

(AQW 6625/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are currently evaluating the success of the 2008-11 Action Plan, with a view to developing a successive Action Plan for the next period.

Alongside this, we will be putting in place robust governance arrangements to ensure that implementation of the Children and Young People's Strategy is appropriately integrated with wider policy priorities and maximises outcomes for children and young people. In taking forward this work, we will take account of the views of stakeholders, including children and young people, in finalising our ideas.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the Social Investment Fund, to detail how an area-based response can cater for, and respond to, the needs of small marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities and their families.

(AQW 6685/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The public consultation, on the Social Investment Fund proposals, ended on 23 December 2011. There was a significant response to the consultation, which our officials are currently analysing.

The Social Investment Fund is an area based fund designed to tackle poverty and disadvantage across those areas in greatest identified need.

The Strategic Objectives of the Social Investment Fund are to support communities to:

- Build Pathways to Employment
- Tackle the systemic issues linked to deprivation
- Increase community services and
- Address dereliction

It will be the communities within the Investment Zones who will bring forward Area Plans setting out their priority needs through agreed Action Plans.

At this moment in time, no Area Plans have been submitted so we are not in a position to know if marginalised groups, such as children with disabilities and their families will be targeted.

In addition, the Executive has also established a Social Protection Fund. This is designed to address the needs of individuals, to mitigate against the impact of the financial cuts on the most vulnerable in our society. The fund operates as an Executive Fund and it is up to Ministers to make bids as they deem appropriate.

Social Investment Fund for Children and Young People

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the interventions funded through the Social Investment Fund for Children and Young People, whether they would consider utilising the existing expertise, such as the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, to assist in the development of plans and the identification of priorities.

(AQW 6694/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Strategic Objectives of the Social Investment Fund are to support communities to:

- Build Pathways to Employment
- Tackle the systemic issues linked to deprivation
- Increase community services and
- Address dereliction

It will be the communities within the Investment Zones who will bring forward Area Plans. It is entirely up to the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership if they wish to engage with the Investment Zones in regard to assisting them in the development of Area Plans and the identification of priorities.

Social Investment Fund Community Plans

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Social Investment Fund community plans will complement the model of community planning which is being considered as part of local government reform.

(AQW 6695/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Social Investment Fund Area Plans should be a demonstration of community planning in action.

We would not envisage the Social Investment Fund operating in isolation from other key programmes. Clearly, we would hope that Local Government would develop their community planning process in ways that would add value to all key programmes and take account of mechanisms and structures which are already established so as to ensure added value.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how will they ensure that disadvantaged and marginalised groups, that are dispersed geographically, benefit from the Social Investment Fund which takes a solely area-based approach.

(AQW 6696/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The public consultation on the Social Investment Fund proposals ended on 23 December 2011. Interest in the proposals was high and we have received over three hundred formal consultation responses, which our officials are currently analysing.

The Social Investment Fund is an area based fund designed to tackle poverty and disadvantage across those areas in greatest identified need.

The Strategic Objectives of the Social Investment Fund are to support communities to:

- Build Pathways to Employment
- Tackle the systemic issues linked to deprivation
- Increase community services and
- Address dereliction

It will be the communities within the Investment Zones who will bring forward Area Plans setting out their priority needs through agreed Action Plans.

In addition, the Executive has also established a Social Protection Fund. This is designed to address the needs of individuals to mitigate against the impact of the financial cuts on the most vulnerable in our society. The fund operates as an Executive Fund and it is up to Ministers to make bids as they deem appropriate.

Steering Groups Appointed under the Social Investment Fund Proposals

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether steering groups, appointed under the Social Investment Fund proposals, will include groups listed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, to ensure that they are representative of vulnerable and marginalised groups.

(AQW 6697/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The public consultation, on the Social Investment Fund proposals, ended on 23 December 2011. There was a significant response to the consultation, which our officials are currently analysing.

Whilst several key issues have already emerged, it would be wrong for us to detail these in depth at this time. Issues, such as the operational arrangements for the Fund, will only be finalised after the outcome of the consultation has been fully considered.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the process of appointments to steering groups, under the Social Investment Fund, will be subject to independent oversight.

(AQW 6698/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The public consultation on the Social Investment Fund proposals ended on 23 December 2011. There has been a significant response to the consultation, which our officials are currently analysing.

Whilst several key issues have already emerged including the process for the formation of the steering groups, it would be wrong for us to detail these in depth at this time. All issues around the operational arrangements for the Fund will only be finalised after the outcome of the consultation has been fully considered.

Administration Costs

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the reasons for the 18.1 percent increase in their Department's administration costs during this financial year, as identified in the Minister of Finance and Personnel's January 2012 Monitoring Round statement; and (ii) why their Department has overspent when most other Departments have succeeded in cutting their administration costs.

(AQW 6706/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The entire increase of 18.1% relates to technical changes agreed as part of June 2011 Monitoring, incorporating the reclassification of costs and budget transfers from other departments for services provided centrally by OFMDFM.

These are:

- Technical transfers into the Department for NI Direct costs (£0.5m) and Government Advertising Unit costs (£0.4m).
- Reclassification of Attorney General for Northern Ireland (AGNI) costs (£1.45m) from resource to admin as it is not a frontline body

The Department has therefore not overspent in terms of its administration budget.

Childcare Strategy

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Childcare Strategy.
(AQW 6819/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM is leading on the development of the Childcare Strategy in support of the draft Programme for Government action to implement a strategy for integrated and affordable childcare. This action requires co-operation and joint working across departments and agencies.

In December 2011, the first meeting of a high level working group, the Childcare Strategy Group (CSG), was convened. Chaired by a senior OFMDFM official, the CSG comprises senior officials from key departments involved in childcare provision. The work of the CSG will take account of the views of stakeholders, as well as other relevant information and research, and will put forward proposals to us on the development of the Childcare Strategy. The intention is to carry out a public consultation later in the year on proposals to promote the availability of high quality, accessible and affordable, integrated childcare provision.

Additional funding of £12 million (£3m per year) has been allocated to support the development of the Childcare Strategy. This funding will not replace existing baseline provision for the delivery of childcare services.

Programme for Government

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how the detailed guidance on Programme for Government (PfG) delivery will monitor, assess and evaluate how Departments work together to produce policies, plans and strategies consistent with the draft PfG; (ii) whether it will include guidance on addressing a failure to work together; (iii) whether the Executive will be consulted on the PfG delivery framework; (iv) when departmental action plans to deliver on the PfG will be initiated; and (v) what plans there are for consultation and public engagement on these action plans.
(AQW 6821/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A key component of the new Programme for Government (PfG) is a delivery framework which ensures that progress against the agreed priorities and commitments is managed with maximum effect. This framework, which was originally included in the draft PfG agreed by the NI Executive, draws on previous experience and best practice and makes provision for regular reporting and monitoring by officials within departments. Departmental Action Plans, which provide

specific details for delivery, and identify particular roles and responsibilities including those associated with progression and intervention measures, will be finalised as soon as possible and no later than the end of March 2012. The Action Plans are designed to take into account policies and stakeholder views that will inform and shape delivery of the Programme for Government commitments and priorities.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they are using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to source economic support for tackling poverty and disadvantage, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6860/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group led by a senior official and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe.

OFMDFM is leading the Social Cohesion Thematic working group which is made up of officials from eight government departments who have agreed to collaborate to ensure a wide perspective is maintained.

Our officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF) set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for European Funding and can assist in sourcing economic support for tackling poverty and disadvantage.

The Social Cohesion Thematic has a dedicated desk officer to be based in Brussels, due to take up post mid-February. An objective of the desk officer is to source funding in Europe.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on the key objective to explore best practice for tackling disadvantage in other regions, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6861/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group led by a senior official and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe.

OFMDFM is leading the Social Cohesion Thematic working group which is made up of officials from eight government departments who have agreed to collaborate to ensure a wide perspective is maintained.

OFMDFM officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF) set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding. OFMDFM officials will be able to build contacts with organisations who have worked with other regions in tackling disadvantage.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for European funding and can assist in utilising contacts in other regions to explore best practice for tackling disadvantage.

The Social Cohesion Thematic has a dedicated desk officer to be based in Brussels, due to take up post mid-February. An objective of the desk officer is to build contacts in Europe that will assist NI organisations in exploring best practice for tackling disadvantage.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they are using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to build on and share experiences of conflict resolution, in terms of peace-keeping, peace-building and peace-making, with other regions, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6862/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group led by a senior official and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe.

OFMDFM is leading the Social Cohesion Thematic working group which is made up of officials from eight government departments who have agreed to collaborate to ensure a wide perspective is maintained.

Our officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF) set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for European Funding and sharing the experience of NI in Europe and throughout the world.

OFMDFM is making use of the EU programmes to build on and share experiences of conflict resolution by bringing forward proposals for an international Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre to be based at the Maze/Long Kesh which is currently seeking funding under PEACE III.

The Social Cohesion Thematic has a dedicated desk officer to be based in Brussels, due to take up post mid-February. An objective of the desk officer is to build contacts that would allow NI to share its experience throughout Europe.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, how they are using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to engage in communities, including the 'other' perspective, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6863/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group led by a senior official and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe.

OFMDFM is leading the Social Cohesion Thematic working group which is made up of officials from eight government departments who have agreed to collaborate to ensure a wide perspective is maintained. The Social Cohesion Thematic group will also review the consultations on Programme for Government and the Social Investment Fund to ascertain and maintain a focus on those objectives that are of most importance to communities.

Our officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum (NIERF) set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding. The NIERF has members from both the public and voluntary sectors in NI.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for European Funding and a wide range of contacts that can assist in providing a wide perspective.

Social Investment Fund

Ms Ritchie asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) when the determination on the Social Investment Fund will be made and announced; and (ii) what criteria will be used to identify areas which will receive funding.

(AQW 6884/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The public consultation on the Social Investment Fund proposals ended on 23 December 2011. There has been a significant response to the consultation, which our officials are currently analysing.

Whilst several key issues have already emerged, it would be wrong for us to detail these in depth at this time. Issues, such as the operational arrangements for the Fund, will only be finalised after the outcome of the consultation has been fully considered.

The criteria used to identify areas was set out in the consultation document as those areas of high deprivation, drawn together and resourced on the basis of:

- Neighbourhood Renewal areas
- multiple deprivation output areas
- Community Empowerment Partnership (CEP) areas (where relevant)
- Areas at Risk Programme
- Rural poverty measurements

We hope to be in a position to publish a consultation report in the coming months. In parallel, we will develop and bring final proposals to the Executive, with a view to having the Fund fully operational as soon as possible.

Foreign Direct Investment

Mr McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they are planning to be involved in any trade missions to help secure potential Foreign Direct Investment.

(AQO 1098/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In the coming months, we plan to travel to Washington DC, Canada, India and the United Arab Emirates.

We will continue to promote our economic strategy and our investment strategy at the highest levels of the Obama Administration during our visit for St Patrick's Day.

We will then make our first official visit to Canada. Over 4 million Canadians have Irish or Ulster-Scots heritage and the historical, cultural and economic links between our two countries are strong. Plans are also in hand for us to meet existing and potential investors and to host a tourism event which will capitalize on the exciting tourist focused initiatives that will be happening both this year and next year.

We place a great deal of importance in using our overseas visits to promote the local economy. In fact, the promotion of the economy is the underlying objective for any visit we undertake.

By way of illustration, we would like to refer to the recent investment decision by the Chicago Mercantile Exchange – a world leader in the Financial Services Sector. We did not publish details of our visit to Chicago last September simply because the project was at a crucial stage and we wanted to get it over the line. We met with the company's most senior management team to promote business opportunities here and to assure those senior executives that the project had our personal support.

We also met with Jeff Smisek, the Chief Executive of United Continental Airlines. As a result of that meeting we were able to work with the Treasury to have Air Passenger Duty devolved to the Assembly. That intervention helped secure the Newark to Belfast route, our only trans-Atlantic service.

In both cases we worked quietly behind the scenes to deliver results. Those positive results may take months to come to the public's attention but the important factor is – our intervention makes a difference.

We also plan to lead a Trade and Investment Mission to India and the United Arab Emirates in April 2012, along with the DETI Minister.

This mission is part of Invest NI's 'Opportunity India' campaign and will be the first mission to visit the market in 2012. We will be meeting with existing and potential investors, key business influencers and university contacts and we will be reinforcing the message that the Executive is pro-business and is committed to growing our economy.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on the key objective to build on exemplar strategies and delivery mechanisms, such as the Child Poverty Strategy, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6926/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe. In relation to child poverty, the Social Cohesion Thematic has recently appointed a dedicated Desk Officer to be based in Brussels who is due to take up post mid-February. These contacts will be utilised to build upon existing strategies and delivery mechanisms in NI bodies.

OFMDFM officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding. This forum will provide opportunities to build on exemplar strategies and delivery mechanisms of members and partners in other European regions.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for and administering European funding for NI bodies. Through the development of a relationship with NI-CO, exemplar strategies and delivery mechanisms can be built upon.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on the key objective to align with the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative 'The Platform Against Poverty', as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6927/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has established a Barosso Task Force Working Group which is addressing four key themes. Each of those themes will have a dedicated working group and a desk officer, an objective for whom is to build contacts in Europe.

In relation to poverty issues, the Social Cohesion Thematic has recently appointed a dedicated desk officer to be based in Brussels, due to take up post mid-February. An objective of the desk officer is to keep abreast of developments in terms of EU policies, events and funding streams relevant to Social Cohesion and ensure this is fed back to the thematic group. This will assist in alignment with the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative "The Platform Against Poverty".

The Social Cohesion Thematic working group is made up of officials from eight government departments who have agreed to collaborate to implement the aims of "Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12".

Our officials will attend the Northern Ireland European Regional Forum set up by Belfast City Council which aims to provide a strategic platform for collaboration on EU policy and funding. Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative “The Platform Against Poverty” will be one of the bases upon which funding bids will be pursued.

OFMDFM officials have also met with NI-CO to discuss how the Social Cohesion Thematic of the Barroso Taskforce Working Group can be brought to bear in assisting funding proposals from NI. NI-CO has 20 years experience in bidding for and administering European Funding and this experience can be utilised in aligning with the Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative “The Platform Against Poverty”.

Programme for Government

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 6366/11-15, to detail (i) how often the reporting will occur; (ii) what the reports will contain; and (iii) when the reports will be published.

(AQW 7005/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Progress against the new Programme for Government (PfG) will be reported and monitored on a quarterly basis throughout the duration of the PfG cycle. The reports will include evidence and information from departments relating to the progression of commitments for which they are identified as being responsible for. The Delivery Reports arising from this work will be published at regular intervals.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the number of people who attended each public consultation event on the Social Investment Fund; (ii) a breakdown of the cost of each event; (iii) for their assessment of value for money and possible greater engagement with the public if the events had been held in community venues; and (iv) what consideration they have given to using community venues in the future.

(AQW 7060/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The table below outlines the number of people who attended each of the six Social Investment Fund (SIF) consultation events and provides details of the costs associated with each event.

Venue	Attendees	Cost
Belfast	56	£1027.50
Derry/Londonderry	48	£669.00
Antrim	49	£505.00
Craigavon	50	£487.50
Enniskillen -	30	£377.50
Newry	14	£0.00

In selecting venues for the SIF consultation events, our officials had tried to ensure that in all cases they had a central location that was accessible to all, including people with a disability, offered the necessary communication equipment and was large enough to cater for anticipated numbers.

Mindful of value for money, officials had compiled an extensive list of possible venues, including some community facilities. The venues selected were those deemed most suitable based on the requirements we have outlined above. Possible future venues, including community facilities, would also be assessed against these general requirements.

Recent Figures for Child Poverty

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, given the recent figures for child poverty and the Executive's commitment under the Child Poverty Act, whether they will ensure that all Departments play a full and active role in addressing this issue.

(AQO 1100/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Child Poverty Act 2010 required the Executive to lay a Child Poverty Strategy before the Assembly. The Act also places a statutory duty on departments here to describe the progress that they are making in contributing to meeting the target to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

To meet this statutory obligation, we co-ordinated the Executive's agreement to the 'Improving Children's Life Chances' Strategy. The Strategy was laid before the Assembly in March 2011. The Strategy sets out the priority action areas proposed by the Executive to address the issue of child poverty.

We continue to work with colleagues in other departments here to finalise a draft action plan which will detail those key departmental initiatives and signature projects to progress the strategic priorities and priority action areas identified in the child poverty strategy.

Crumlin Road Jail Project

Mr T Clarke asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Crumlin Road Jail project.

(AQO 1101/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A £5.3 million restoration programme has recently been completed at the Gaol. This will facilitate the opening of the Gaol as a visitor attraction and conference centre.

The Department is currently inviting tenders for an Operator to manage this facility.

The restoration work has also facilitated the commercial leasing of A wing at the Gaol. A number of proposals have been received and are currently being assessed. This process is at an advanced stage.

Ensuring that Organisations Demonstrate Value for Money

Mr Hussey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they ensure that organisations such as Ilex demonstrate value for money.

(AQO 1102/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Arms Length Bodies operate with a degree of independence and flexibility. They must nonetheless operate within clearly defined parameters set by the sponsoring Minister and Department to ensure that proper governance arrangements and value for money are demonstrated in usage of public funds. The Department's Corporate Governance Framework sets out details of its corporate governance arrangements and provides an understanding of arrangements to ensure proper and effective management of the Department's affairs, its relationship with Arms Length Bodies including Ilex and the process involved in ensuring the proper usage of public funds in discharging allocated resources.

The Civic Forum

Mr S Anderson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Civic Forum.

(AQO 1103/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following the restoration of devolved powers in 2007, the then First Minister and deputy First Minister considered the position of the Civic Forum in the re-established devolved arrangements and commissioned a review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of its

structure, operation and membership. The review was also to make recommendations on the most appropriate mechanism for engaging with civic society.

The review was launched in 2008 with a public consultation exercise that attracted 60 written responses, which are accessible on the OFMDFM website. In addition, the review involved meetings with former Civic Forum members and stakeholders, and with similar bodies in other jurisdictions.

Analysis of the consultation phase of the review has been completed, and options for the future have been under consideration with a view to making recommendations to us.

Ministerial Sub-Committee for Children and Young People

Mr Spratt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the forward work plan for the Ministerial sub-committee for Children and Young People.

(AQO 1104/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Whilst there is no formal forward work plan, the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People is focusing on five key priorities:

- Safeguarding;
- NEETS;
- Special educational needs;
- Early years; and
- Vulnerable Young People.

Junior Ministers intend to discuss a number of proposals to streamline work across government to deliver further improved outcomes for children and young people at the Ministerial Sub-Committee meetings scheduled for April and June 2012.

As we are at the half-way point of the Ten Year Strategy, there will be a particular focus on the approach and timeframe for the development of the new 10 Year Strategy Action Plan for Children and Young People and the governance structures to support the development and delivery of the Action Plan.

All-Party Working Group on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration

Mr G Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the work of the All-Party Working Group on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration.

(AQO 1105/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Party leaders agreed to the establishment of the cross party working group on the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration strategy in June 2011 and representatives from each of the five main parties were nominated.

The group held its first meeting on 27 September and continues to meet on a weekly basis. The working group received a presentation from the consultation analyst at the outset of the process and this helped inform the work plan of the group. The current priority is to establish a political consensus and agree on the strategic direction against the issues raised by the consultation.

The cross party working group will continue to work over the coming weeks with a view to publishing the final strategy and an associated action plan in early 2012.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Recruitment Exercise for the General Board Members of the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applications were received for the recent recruitment exercise for the General Board Members of the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute; and how many applicants were shortlisted for interview.

(AQW 6534/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): A total of 29 applications were received during the recent recruitment exercise to appoint a Deputy Chairperson and five General Board Members to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute. Of these, 26 were for the position of General Board Member and 14 for the position of Deputy Chairperson (with 11 applications for both).

Seventeen applicants in total were shortlisted for interview. Prior to interview, one applicant withdrew from the process, leaving 16 to be interviewed. Of these, 15 were interviewed for the position of General Board Member and 10 for the position of Deputy Chairperson (with 9 interviewed for both).

Fishing Gear Selectivity Trials

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the fishing gear selectivity trials that her Department has committed to undertake with the fishing industry.

(AQW 6547/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The gear trials project which my Department is funding through the European Fisheries Fund is being carried out in partnership with industry. The Seafish led project team includes representatives from our 2 Producer Organisations, local net makers, AFBI scientists, and DARD policy officials. At its first meeting on 11th January the project team identified 5 different designs for highly selective gears for testing. The trials will take place on twin-rig and single rig vessels over a period of 20 days during February and March. The results of the trials will be reported to the European Commission and its Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF).

A successful outcome will mean that the Nephrops fleet will have the right technical solution for a highly selective gear which will enable them to secure an exemption from the effort regime as laid down in Article 11 of the Cod Recovery Plan.

Restructuring the Fishing Fleet

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when her Department will submit a business case on restructuring the fishing fleet to the Department of Finance and Personnel for approval.

(AQW 6548/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have instructed my Finance Division to have the business case with DFP in the next few days.

Bellarena/Magilligan Area

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there is a distinction in the water course maintenance work that is currently being carried out in the Bellarena/Magilligan area by both the Rivers Agency and the private contractors who are employed by the Rivers Agency.

(AQW 6550/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Whilst my Rivers Agency and the private contractor are both working in the Bellarena/Magilligan area, each is working on separate systems and independently of each other. The private contractor supplements the labour and plant resource available to my Rivers Agency. There is no difference in the standard of maintenance required from my Rivers Agency or the private contractor. The

only distinction in the current works being carried out in the Bellarena/Magilligan area is the manner in which the work is programmed. For my Rivers Agency programming is subject to competing priorities and available resources. For the private contractor, once a work package is instructed, it is free to decide what hours it works and what resource it allocates to complete works within the contracted time period.

Crimes of Animal Cruelty

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has any plans to increase sentencing for crimes of animal cruelty.

(AQW 6600/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Last year my predecessor, Michelle Gildernew, brought the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 through the Assembly. The 2011 Act replaces the Welfare of Animals Act 1972 and significantly increases the penalties for animal welfare offences. The maximum penalties in the 1972 Act are 3 months imprisonment and/or a £5000 fine on summary conviction. In the 2011 Act these will increase to a maximum of 6 months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of £5,000 on summary conviction and to a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine on conviction by indictment. The new penalties are stiffer than those introduced in England and Wales in the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which has a maximum penalty of 51 weeks imprisonment and/or a £20,000 fine.

I am pleased that the new penalties for all welfare offences become fully operational here on 2 April 2012. I can assure you that I take the welfare of animals very seriously and believe that the tough penalties in the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 will provide a strong deterrent, thus protecting animals from unnecessary suffering. I therefore have no plans to increase the fines and penalties further at this time.

Animal Cruelty

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what additional action her Department intends to take to combat animal cruelty.

(AQW 6601/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Last year my predecessor, Michelle Gildernew, brought the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 through the Assembly. The 2011 Act replaces the Welfare of Animals Act 1972 and is a major step forward in terms of protecting the welfare of both farmed and non-farmed animals.

I take the welfare of animals very seriously and I am committed to implementing this new legislation. The majority of the provisions contained in the 2011 Act came into operation on 11 July 2011, introducing a new duty of care for all vertebrate animals and new powers to take action to prevent animals from suffering as opposed to having to wait until suffering occurs. The PSNI also now has stronger powers to deal with animal fighting. The penalties for serious animal welfare offences have been increased and the new penalties for all animal welfare offences become fully operational here on 2 April 2012.

In addition, the Act provides powers to regulate, through subordinate legislation, a wide range of activities involving animals.

The 2011 Act will fully replace the 1972 Act as current subordinate legislation is remade under the 2011 Act. In the coming months I propose to introduce a range of subordinate legislation to protect the welfare of animals including: the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations, Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations, the Welfare of Animals (Permitted Procedures by Lay Persons) Regulations and the Docking of Working Dogs' Tails (Certification and Identification) Regulations.

My Department will continue to work to prevent cases of cruelty and neglect concerning farmed animals and from April 2012 Councils here will have a new role in the enforcement of welfare in respect of non-farmed animals. My Department is providing annual funding to help Councils implement their new role, starting with £404k funding this year to meet their requirements as they prepare for implementation.

Next year, £780k funding is available, which increases by £20k for each of the remaining 2 years in this budget period.

Assisted Rural Travel Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding has been allocated to the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6602/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I refer the Member to the answer I gave to Question 5850.

Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail any funding that is available for measures eligible under Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund that has not yet been allocated to a specific project.

(AQW 6657/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: €18.1m of European Fisheries Funding is available to DARD over the duration of the Programme period. This must be matched by national funding.

Preliminary allocations were made to Axes and Measures within the draft NI Investment Plan which was the subject to consultation with stakeholders. These initial allocations were subsequently confirmed through the completion of Measure Level Business cases. The Department is now reviewing these allocations in light of applications received to date, changes in demand and fluctuations in the exchange between sterling and the euro. It is likely that changes to allocations will be made in due course, where business justification can be made.

The following table summarises the original funding allocations and available funding by Measure of the EFF Programme.

Measure	Allocation (Draft Investment Plan)	Allocation (Measure Level Business Case)	Funding Allocated to Projects	Available Funding
1.1 Permanent cessation of fishing activities	£10.28m	£4.00m	£0m	£4.00m
1.3 Investments onboard fishing vessels & selectivity		£2.50m	£0.234m	£2.266m
1.4 Small-scale coastal fishing	£1.00m	£0.600m	£0m	£0.600m
2.1 Investments in Aquaculture	£1.60m	£1.60m	£0.293m	£1.307m
2.2 Aqua-environmental Measures	£0.48m	-	-	£0.480m
2.3 Fish processing and marketing	£2.40m	£2.40m	£0.903m	£1.497m
2.3.1 Animal Health measures	£0.080m	-	-	£0.080m
3.1 Collective actions	£2.80m	£2.42m	£2.557m	£0
3.2 Protection of Flora & Fauna	£1.60m	£1.50m	£1.50m	£0
3.3 Ports, landing sites and shelters	£3.52m	£3.50m	£3.027m	£0.473m
3.4 New markets and promotional campaigns	£0.80m	-	-	£0.800m

Measure	Allocation (Draft Investment Plan)	Allocation (Measure Level Business Case)	Funding Allocated to Projects	Available Funding
3.5 Pilot Operations	£1.20m	-	-	£1.200m

Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail all the funding allocations to date under Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund; (ii) to detail, in each case, the article of regulation 1198/2006 EC under which support is granted; and (iii) to indicate, in each case, the actual or anticipated completion date of the measure.

(AQW 6659/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The following table summarises the current funding allocations, and references the Article under which each Measure is supported. While all funding commitments to projects supported under each Measure must be made by 31 December 2013, the Regulation allows for spend against those commitments to continue until December 2015.

It is the Department's aim to have all EFF spending completed on all measures by 31 December 2014 in order to facilitate the timely introduction of the 2014-2020 European and Maritime Fisheries Fund in 2014.

Measure	Current Allocation to Measure	Funding Allocated to Projects	Article of 1198/2006
1.1 Permanent cessation of fishing activities	£4.00m	£0m	23
1.3 Investments onboard fishing vessels & selectivity	£2.50m	£0.234m	25
1.4 Small-scale coastal fishing	£0.60m	£0m	26
2.1 Investments in Aquaculture	£1.60m	£0.293m	29
2.2 Aqua-environmental Measures	* £0.48m	£0	30
2.3.1 Animal Health measures	* £0.08m	£0	32
2.3 Fish processing and marketing	£2.40m	£0.903m	35
3.1 Collective actions	£2.42m	£2.557m	37
3.2 Protection of Flora & Fauna	£1.50m	£1.50m	38
3.3 Ports, landing sites & shelters	£3.50m	£3.027	39
3.4 New markets and promotional campaigns	* £0.80m	£0m	40
3.5 Pilot Operations	* £1.20m	£0m	41
Funding made available for reallocation following preparation of Measure Level Business Cases	£6.76m	£0m	

* Preliminary allocation made to these Measures in the draft NI EFF Investment Plan

Southern Organisation for Action in Rural Areas

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what measures she is using to ensure that all the communities in the SOAR (Southern Organisation for Action in Rural areas) cluster area are availing of her Department's funding opportunities on an equal and fair basis.

(AQW 6687/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am very keen to ensure that all communities right across the north avail of my Department's funding opportunities on an equal and fair basis. In the Southern Organisation for Action in Rural Areas (SOAR) Cluster, like all clusters, calls for applications for funding are advertised in local press (13 local Newspapers in SOAR) which cover all communities. Information sessions are held in locations which are easily accessible to all communities and Local Action Groups (LAGS) made up of local people from all walks of life pro actively market the programme and encourage applications. Ensuring equality in terms of representation on and participation in the LAG is of key importance. This is to ensure that equality issues across all Section 75 sectors are fully informing the direction of the programme and how the programme is managed and delivered.

In addition TADA Rural Support Network, funded by my Department, works with a wide spectrum of disadvantaged communities and groups in the SOAR Cluster area and supports them to avail of funding opportunities.

Prevention of Gorse Fires

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what meetings have taken place between her departmental officials and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to discuss the prevention of gorse fires in 2012.

(AQW 6727/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has participated in four meetings of the Inter-departmental Steering Group on Wildfires since September 2011 which is chaired by the NI Environment Agency's Director of Natural Heritage This Group discussed stakeholder responsibilities regarding the prevention of gorse fires. The Group will report on its findings to the Minister of the Environment in February 2012. DARD and NIEA were also represented at a workshop in November 2011 entitled "The impact of wildfires on biodiversity in NI".

Administrative Burden on Farmers

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been taken to reduce the administrative burden on farmers.

(AQW 6752/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Over the last number of years my Department has been taking forward a programme of regulatory investigation and analysis with the key goal being to reduce the amount of administrative burden that the Agri-food industry in the north of Ireland has to comply with.

In 2007 my predecessor Michelle Gildernew, along with her Ministerial colleague at the time from the Department of Environment Arlene Foster, asked an independent panel to review the regulations that apply in the agri-food sector in the north of Ireland with a view to simplifying and reducing the administrative burden placed on farmers and the industry generally.

The NI Agri-Food Better Regulations and Simplification Review was published in April 2009 and the recommendations put forward by the Independent Panel provided my Department with an opportunity to review and evaluate a wide range of policy areas and regulations. Furthermore, my Department agreed to a target to reduce the administrative burden on the agri-food sector by 25% by 2013, with an interim target of 15% by 2011

Since then the department has been actively taking forward an extensive programme of work to give effect to the 63 recommendations put forward by the Independent Panel which have been accepted or accepted in principle. Part of my Departments response was a commitment to develop an action plan

to implement, monitor and review the accepted recommendations. The action plan was published on 5 January 2011 following a detailed scrutiny by the ARD Committee.

The Department is constantly striving to improve its approach to policy development, simplify existing legislation and ensure that all new initiatives are of a high quality. The introduction of sheep EID from 1 January 2010 brought with it several simplification measures. For example, Markets, Meat Plants and Export Assembly Centres (EACs) are approved as Central Points of Recordings (CPRs). CPRs read tags on behalf of keepers and give them a list of their tag numbers, which keepers must keep with their flock register. This means that keepers, who move sheep to a CPR, do not have to read tags and record tag numbers on the movement document, which is a significant benefit.

Since April 2011 my Department has delivered 50 training courses on the use of APHIS Online accommodating 725 farmers with a further 33 courses planned before the end of March 2012. This training and increased promotion of APHIS Online has seen cattle birth registrations via this channel rise from 34% in December 2010 to 42% in December 2011. This service allows 24 hour access to records and is in keeping with customers expectations. Computerisation of the application process for Agri-environment schemes has also contributed to reducing the administrative burden for farmers who participate in the new Countryside Management Scheme. Also, my Department received 5,880 online Single Farm Payment applications during the 2011 scheme year which shows that farmers are keen to take advantage of alternative methods of communicating with the Department in ways which reduce the time and cost they are asked to spend on paperwork.

Plans to extend the telephony registration pilot across the north have been put in place and rollout of this service should be completed by the end of February 2012. This will enable all herd keepers in here to register births via telephone, eliminating the need to complete an MC1 form.

In addition the Department has eliminated herd size as a factor when synchronising annual Brucellosis surveillance herd tests with any due TB herd test. Furthermore, from 1 January 2011 the minimum level of Cattle Identification Inspections (CIIs) was reduced allowing my Department to reduce the number of CIIs from 5% to 3% which is approximately 700 inspections based on a total of approximately 23,300 holdings.

These are just some of the actions my department has taken to reduce the administrative burden on farmers. My Department has recently completed the interim re-measurement exercise which has demonstrated a reduction in administrative burden of 4.3%. We are currently validating this figure with industry representatives who originally worked with us to agree the baselines. The progress made to date has been slower than I would have wanted to see. This is due mainly to the nature of the key actions which the Action Plan highlights to be delivered, the vast majority of which are based on EU Regulations. Nevertheless, I am encouraged by the fact that we are making progress and moving in the right direction.

As we continue to move forward my Department wants to work closely with industry to ensure that the regulatory environment in which we operate has the appropriate level of governance without being unduly burdensome whilst at the same time maintaining our high quality standards. I feel it is vitally important that we make every effort to reduce red tape where possible for the future prosperity of the industry in the north and I want to see more progress being made on the ground that reduces the administrative burden for those in the Agri-Food industry and which helps them to grow their businesses.

I have asked my officials to go out and talk to agri businesses and the wider rural community, who have an important role to play in this process, to listen to their concerns on red tape issues. It is only by working together can we ensure that there are proportionate measures in place to regulate in an accountable way which best protects the public and at the same time allows businesses to grow.

Single Farm Payment Scheme

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress her Department has made on making payments under the Single Farm Payment Scheme to farmers.

(AQW 6753/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A total of 37,854 potentially eligible applications were submitted under the 2011 Single Farm Payment Scheme. My Department's targets for processing such claims were to complete 83% for receipt of any payment due by the end of December 2011 and 90% by 31 January 2012. I am pleased to say that we were able to exceed the December target with 85.3% having been completed, and we have also since achieved the January payment target of 90%. Single Farm Payments worth a total of £234.4 million were paid out by the end of January.

Jobs and Growth in the Food Production Sector

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been taken to promote jobs and growth in the food production sector.

(AQW 6755/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD is working in partnership with other Departments to support the agri-food sector in its efforts to become more market-led and to move forward with confidence in building an export-led economic recovery.

My Department's main financial mechanism to support the sector in developing business opportunities is the Rural Development Programme (RDP). Schemes such as the Processing and Marketing Grant (PMG) Scheme, provide support towards capital investment in the sector, I have recently announced that the PMG scheme has reopened for applications until 24 February 2012. This scheme, along with the Supply Chain Development Programme are together worth approximately £23m over the course of the current RDP.

Further support is provided through the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) including dedicated food technologists and a food incubation centre at Loughry campus. These facilities support agri-food businesses develop innovative products, while scientific research support is available through AFBI.

My Department also administers the EU Protected Food Names Scheme. This provides a system for the protection of food names on a geographical or traditional basis and is a valuable promotional tool. I am delighted that the "Lough Neagh Eel" has been recognised by the EU and, as you may have seen from the press, "Comber Earlies" are set to become our second protected food name. I would encourage other groups to consider the benefits of this scheme.

Another support mechanism is DARD's Regional Food Programme which has allowed organisations such as the Pork and Bacon Forum and Dairy Council to actively promote the quality products provided by our producers and processors. By raising the profile of produce through the schemes I have outlined, we can send out a strong message to consumers that local food is good quality, wholesome food. In doing so we can stimulate demand and increase sales, assisting DARD's aim of developing a thriving, sustainable rural economy.

I am delighted that the importance of the sector has been recognised by the Executive and the draft Programme includes a target to develop a strategic plan for the agri-food sector. In support of this, my Department is working with DETI/InvestNI to establish a Food Strategy Board (FSB) whose role will be to develop and implement this strategic plan.

The FSB will be industry-led as it is vital that the industry itself identifies and agrees its growth targets. Government will continue to play an important supporting role, however ultimately the growth of the sector can only be achieved by the industry itself.

The work of the FSB will be instrumental in helping to shape the future of the sector. I look forward to the Board being established so that it can begin the important work of further developing a strategic vision to support growth and employment in this important sector.

Inspections for Farmers

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress has been made in reducing the regulatory burden of inspections for farmers.

(AQW 6756/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From the introduction of SFP in 2005, my Department has worked to streamline its inspection process. Currently my inspectors undertake land eligibility and cross-compliance GAEC inspections in one visit with farmers to be inspected for cross-compliance purposes selected mainly using a risk analysis methodology with a smaller element chosen on a random basis. Moreover, the current practice in this risk analysis allows for positive weightings for membership of, for example, Farm Quality Assurance Schemes and Organic Schemes.

Furthermore, from 1 January 2011 the minimum level of Cattle Identification Inspections (CIIs) was reduced allowing my Department to reduce the number of CIIs from 5% to 3% which is approximately 700 inspections based on a total of approximately 23,300 holdings.

At this time Veterinary Service is making every effort to ensure that routine Brucellosis herd tests are synchronised, with any TB herd test that is due, so as to reduce the regulatory impact of these essential tests on farmers. The average level of synchronisation in 2010/11 was 87% in herds of twenty animals or less and 92% in herds of more than 20 animals.

Looking to the future, my Department is also making good progress towards eradicating Brucellosis in the north of Ireland and if this progress is maintained we could see brucellosis eradicated within 3 years. This is expected to lead to obtaining officially brucellosis free status here, allowing significant easements in the testing regime and hence reduced regulatory burden. However, it is essential that the current programme is sustained for the present as experience has taught us that brucellosis hotspots can develop with risk of considerable spread.

The south has already achieved EU officially brucellosis-free status and we are liaising closely with them so as to maximise the benefits to the north and south that freedom from Brucellosis will support.

DARD's Brucellosis programme (testing, laboratory costs, animal compensation, etc) is some £10 million with a further annual compliance cost to farmers of some £7 million. However, achieving success in the eradication of Brucellosis Programme will considerably reduce costs and farm business disruption in the future and is therefore a key component of my Departments strategic efforts to reduce regulatory burden.

My Department is continuing to investigate the use of new technologies, such as aerial photography and satellite imagery, to reduce the impact on farmers of land eligibility inspections for Single Farm Payment and Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance scheme.

My Department's inspection regime is based upon what is required by law and it is my Department's policy to maintain inspection levels at the minimum that is required.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when her Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 6815/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I submitted my proposals for primary legislation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 14 January 2012.

Flooding in Finaghy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to provide details of any investigative or remedial work carried out in response to reports of flooding in the vicinity of (i) Ormonde Park, Finaghy; (ii) Finaghy Park Central; and (iii) Lille Park, Finaghy, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6824/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Minister for Regional Development has received this same question (AWQ 6825 -11-15) and I shall answer on his behalf in this answer.

My colleague, Danny Kennedy MLA, Minister for Regional Development has advised that his Department's Roads Service is aware of the flooding in the area of Ormonde Park, Belfast. This has been an ongoing issue for some years and Roads Service officials have been involved in investigations and discussions with residents, elected representatives and other statutory agencies, including Rivers Agency and NI Water, regarding the problem.

The majority of the storm water carriageway gullies in this area discharge into a storm sewer, which subsequently discharges into an undesignated watercourse to the rear of Ormonde Court. Roads Service has previously undertaken cleaning and jetting operations in the storm sewer, and indeed, further remedial works are currently ongoing to ensure that the storm sewer is operating normally to its discharge point, into the undesignated watercourse

I am further advised that drainage investigations carried out by NI Water (NIW) appear to indicate that blockages in this undesignated watercourse, which is an old drainage pipe that is not part of the public sewerage system, are the cause of the flooding in the area. However, as the undesignated watercourse falls under riparian ownership, it is the responsibility of the landowner, under whose land the natural drainage water passes, to ensure its safe and unimpeded passage through their land.

NI Water has an occasional discharge to this system through a combined storm overflow (CSO) in Upton Park. This overflow is legally consented and acts as an important relief to prevent flooding in other areas of the estate, including potential internal flooding of homes. NI Water is currently undertaking a Drainage Area Study of the area and will review the use of this CSO as part of potential upgrade proposals for the sewer network.

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Common Agricultural Policy Reform

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what role her Department will play, alongside the Department of the Environment, in taking forward Common Agricultural Policy reform, particularly the greening of Pillar 1.

(AQW 6846/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The formal negotiations on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2013 began with the publication of legislative proposals on 12 October 2011. These proposals represent the Commission's opening position and the final agreement will probably be noticeably different.

The negotiations are unlikely to be concluded until 2013 and so we are clearly at the early stages of these discussions. The reform of CAP is crucial not just to our farmers and rural communities, but it will have considerable implications for the agricultural environment also. Consequently, I have met the Minister of the Environment, Alex Attwood MLA, and we have agreed the need to for our Departments to work together on this important issue.

Senior Officials from DARD, DOE and NIEA met on 30 January 2012 for detailed discussions on CAP reform, including 'greening' and will continue to work together as the negotiations progress. Of course, these discussions will continue beyond the point where a final agreement on CAP reform is reached when the focus will turn to the design of specific agri-environment measures for the north and their implementation and control.

My approach to the negotiations is to use every avenue of influence open to me. I am continuing to build alliances across the board to maximise our influence on the EU Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

I have already taken a number of steps to influence the negotiations. I attended the October and the November EU Council meetings and met with Agricultural Commissioner Dacian Cioloș on two occasions. I have also held a number of meetings with Defra, Scottish and Welsh Ministers as well as the Irish Minister, Simon Coveney TD. CAP Reform is also discussed at the North South Ministerial Council. I am seeking further meetings with the Commission and plan to brief MEPs from both the north and the south within the next month or so.

Draft Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, regarding the Draft Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill.

(AQW 6878/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The regulation of issues affecting competition is a reserved matter. You will therefore appreciate that the introduction of a Groceries Code Adjudicator is not within my direct remit. However, I support fully the concept of fair pricing and welcome the publication last year of the draft Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill. I believe that this is a crucial issue for our producers and processors and I want to see the early introduction of an Adjudicator with real power.

On 23 August 2011 I, along with the DETI Minister, wrote to the Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) who has responsibility for this draft Bill. We set out our support for the Bill and argued for it to be strengthened in relation to anonymous complaints, costs and sanctions. My aim remains to see a food industry where both farmers and other suppliers are getting a fair deal.

I will continue to monitor the progress of the Bill and engage as necessary with the BIS Minister and Defra Secretary of State as the Bill progresses.

Potatoes Exported to the Republic of Ireland and the Russian Federation

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the quantity of potatoes exported to the (i) Republic of Ireland; and (ii) Russian Federation in the last five years.

(AQW 6981/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The potato marketing year runs from 1st July to 30th June. To provide a complete response, export figures are provided for the previous 5 full marketing years and to the end of December 2011 for the 2011/12 marketing year.

QUANTITIES OF CERTIFIED SEED POTATOES IN TONNES WERE EXPORTED AS FOLLOWS;

	(i) south of Ireland	(ii) Russian Federation
2006	1332 t	0
2007	1462 t	20 t
2008	1423 t	0
2009	1499 t	0
2010	1204 t	0
2011	152 t to end on December 11	0

QUANTITIES OF CERTIFIED WARE POTATOES FOR CONSUMPTION WERE EXPORTED AS FOLLOWS;

	(i) south of Ireland	(ii) Russian Federation
2006	0	0
2007	0	0
2008	0	0
2009	0	0
2010	0	9545 t
2011	0 to end December 11	0

Ware potatoes for consumption or processing are freely traded within the EU. Consignments within the EU are inspected and sealed only if specifically requested by the exporter of the ware potatoes. There is a significant reciprocal movement of ware potatoes for consumption between the north of Ireland and the south of Ireland. As these are not officially inspected there is no official record of the tonnages involved.

Strategy for the Equine Industry

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the implementation of the Strategy for the Equine Industry.

(AQW 7151/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI' was developed by and for the equine industry and it identified the requirement for a single body to take forward the Strategy's recommendations. The Equine Council (ECNI) is the body tasked with taking forward the industry's Strategy. The Department fully supports the ECNI and recently made funds available for start-up costs, including the appointment of a Development Officer. Its Development Officer, appointed on 1 October 2011 is currently working on an implementation programme for delivery of the Strategy.

Equine Sub-Group of the Rural Stakeholder Forum

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (i) to detail the membership of the Equine Sub-Group of the Rural Stakeholder Forum, which was established in 2003; (ii) for her assessment of the accomplishments of the sub-group to date; and (iii) whether the sub-group met its targets.

(AQW 7152/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The membership of the Equine Sub-Group (ESG) established in 2003 comprised 21 members, representing 31 organisations across the Thoroughbred and Sport Horse Sectors, Equestrian education, Leisure and Tourism, and the Ancillary Sector.

The ESG was established to provide an effective two way communication with government on issues affecting the Equine industry and to devise a long term strategy for the industry. In 2005 the ESG assisted consultants to complete the report 'Research on the Equine Sector in NI', which allowed the ESG to develop a long term strategy. The ESG subsequently achieved its objectives and met its target through the publication of the resultant 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI' in March 2007.

The strategy set out some 75 actions to be taken forward by the industry, through a single body, namely the ECNI. The ECNI is now fully operational and has the Department's full support in its work going forward.

Horses Redesignated from a Domestic to an Agricultural Animal

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the implications of the horse being redesignated from a domestic to an agricultural animal.

(AQW 7153/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The implications of the horse being redesignated from a domestic to an agricultural animal have not been determined. The matter is a key consideration within the 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI' and is one of the priority actions to be taken forward by the Equine Council (ECNI), in its programme for delivery of the Strategy. It is anticipated that the ECNI will make its case, which will include the implications of any redesignation of the horse, to DARD in due course.

Horses Redesignated from a Domestic to an Agricultural Animal

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what funding streams, currently inaccessible to the equestrian industry, would be opened up if horses were to be reclassified as agricultural animals rather than domestic animals.

(AQW 7195/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The implications of the horse being redesignated from a domestic to an agricultural animal, which would include potential access to funding streams, have not yet been determined. The matter is a key consideration within the 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in NI' and is one of the priority actions to be taken forward by the Equine Council (ECNI), in its programme for delivery of the Strategy. It is anticipated that the ECNI will make its case, which will include the implications of any redesignation of the horse, to DARD in due course.

Horse Passports

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of horse passports in each council area.

(AQW 7196/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not hold detail on numbers of horse passports by council area. The National Equine Database (NED), which maintains data on horse passports, has confirmed the number of passports issued for horses in the north is 35,615. However, NED is not in a position to detail the number of passports in each council area.

Common Agricultural Policy

Ms Gildernew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the ongoing negotiations on the Common Agricultural Policy.

(AQO 1161/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have already taken a number of steps to influence the negotiations. This includes attending the October and the November EU Council meetings in 2011. I have also held a number of meetings with Defra, Scottish and Welsh Ministers as well as the Irish Minister, Simon Coveney TD. CAP Reform is also discussed at the North South Ministerial Council.

I have now met with Agricultural Commissioner Dacian Ciolos on two occasions – most recently in Dublin two weeks ago. These meetings have given me the opportunity to raise key issues such as greening, the active farmer definition and the need for a better share of Pillar II funding.

I am seeking further meetings with the Commission and plan to brief MEPs from both the north and the south within the next month or so. I will, of course, attend EU Councils where CAP is a significant item on the agenda.

There is an ongoing DARD consultation on the legislative proposals for reform of the CAP post 2013 which closes on 7 February and I look forward to reviewing the responses received. The views of stakeholders will help inform my position as the negotiations continue over the course of 2012 and beyond. Over the next six weeks my Department is planning a series of stakeholder roadshows throughout the north and CAP reform will also feature in each of these events giving stakeholders a further opportunity to engage on this important issue.

I will, of course, continue to build alliances across the board to maximise our influence on the EU Commission, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. I will continue to push hard for change to the proposed reforms to achieve the best outcome possible for the farmers in the north of Ireland.

INTERREG

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the Interreg programme, administered through her Department, has proven successful.

(AQO 1156/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Interreg Four A is a European Union Structural Funds programme which seeks to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. The current (2007-2013) programme has a specific Rural Development theme (€10M) targeting the strategic regeneration of disadvantaged rural areas through cross-border cooperation.

DARD and the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government (Ireland) are the accountable departments for this funding and SEUPB is the Managing Authority. The 6 rural projects that have been awarded funding have been selected because they demonstrated the strongest potential to deliver positive benefits for rural communities through cross-border cooperation. The actual makeup of each of the projects is unique but overall they involve councils from both sides of the border, plus enterprise bodies, universities and community based organisations. The activities being

delivered include the development of a specialist ICT facility for rural businesses in the North West, the harnessing of natural resources such as loughs, forests and trails for outdoor recreation and rural tourism and the establishment of the first north-south network for Social Farming.

I have attended two project launches and from what I have seen in relation to cooperative working and the drive and determination of the stakeholders involved I am confident that these projects will deliver for rural communities right across the region.

Rural Investment Fund

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in relation to her Department's announcement of a £1 million Rural Investment Fund, when the application process will open and who will be eligible for the funding.

(AQO 1158/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I take it the member is referring to my announcement in December regarding the re-focus of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme. It has become increasingly clear to me in recent months that getting funds quickly to the rural community by way of Axis 3 has not been realised and while commitments through Letters of Offer have been healthy, spend has been disturbingly low. I realise that the dire economic circumstances we find ourselves in have contributed to that. However it is even more crucial to maximise spend as quickly as possible to assist the economic recovery in rural areas and ensure that the real potential impact of this Programme is being felt in rural communities, and that rural businesses, tourism initiatives, village renewal plans and farm diversification etc are all being afforded the opportunity, through funding on the ground, to assist the economic recovery.

I have asked the seven clusters to review their strategies and prepare a list of suitable strategic projects with a value up to £1 million by the end January. The projects must be capable of timely spend and I know that within village plans drawn up under the Village Renewal Measure there already are a number of larger projects which are quite likely to have Council buy in and are capable of being developed in some cases through a community development process. This combined with a critical look by councils at other rural strategic projects should mean we can submit a change to the Programme to the European Commission in April to facilitate new grant levels. I would hope that through the spring and summer clusters can open calls and work through the assessment of these projects with a view to issuing letters of offer once the Commission approval comes through in late summer. This change has the potential to make a difference.

As I said recently in the press my aim is to assist rural businesses to maintain and create jobs through this Programme, and to help drive forward the opportunities for growth which exist in the rural community.

DARD: Headquarters

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she expects a decision to be taken on the future site for her departmental headquarters.

(AQO 1159/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Work on pursuing a new Headquarters location for my Department is progressing well. I am pleased to be able to inform you that my Department has now received approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel in respect of the Strategic Outline Case. This is a significant step forward within the NI Executives appraisal and business case processes. It is however only the first formal approval stage and work is now underway to develop a shortlist of potential locations as part of the ongoing process.

In line with the commitment contained in the Draft Programme for Government, I remain fully committed to the relocation of the DARD headquarters to a rural area. I hope to be in a position to make an announcement on the preferred location by the end of 2012.

Single Farm Payments: Inspections

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the timeframe between a farm inspection being carried out for Single Farm Payment purposes, and the inspector uploading the findings for further processing.

(AQO 1160/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The average timeframe between a farm inspection being carried out for Single Farm Payment purposes, and the inspector uploading the findings for further processing is 16 days. Due to the variation in the complexity of farm inspections in relation to factors such as land eligibility, cross compliance checks and map changes required, the onward processing of inspection findings after upload can also be time consuming.

DARD: Staff over Retirement Age

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many civil servants are continuing to work in her Department, even though they have reached retirement age and have earned full pension rights.

(AQO 1162/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Civil Service default retirement age was removed some time ago, giving staff a wider range of retirement options.

In my Department there are 175 staff aged 60 and over. For the majority of these staff the pension age for the pension scheme applicable to them is 60. So these staff could choose to retire and access their pension, if they so wished. However, pension entitlement is directly proportionate to the length of service so in cases where the maximum years service has not been achieved (in most cases this is 40 years) the pension entitlement would be affected.

Specific details of pension entitlement are determined only when an individual indicates that they wish to retire, as calculations are done on a case by case basis.

Food Strategy Board

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the Executive's overall economic strategy of focusing on rebuilding and rebalancing the economy, whether the proposed Food Strategy Board will be given the authority, finance and resources, including adequate private sector involvement, needed to enable it to put in place a strategy to allow expansion of the agri-food sector.

(AQO 1163/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am grateful for this opportunity to outline our approach to the expansion of the agri-food sector. This sector already makes a significant contribution to the economy and has a strong track record of export-led growth but I believe that there is room for further expansion and that to achieve this we need a longer-term strategy plotting out key growth targets.

I am delighted that the importance of the sector has been recognised by the Executive whose draft programme for Government includes a target to develop a strategic plan for the agri-food sector. In support of this, my Department is working with DETI/InvestNI to establish a Food Strategy Board (FSB) whose role will be to further develop and implement this strategic plan.

To achieve this it will be vital that the FSB has the necessary authority and industry involvement. That is why the FSB will have an independent Chair and will be predominantly made up of industry representatives.

As regards resources, my Department's Rural Development Programme will be our main funding mechanism for future activity related to the strategy. My Department has also committed staff resources to support the work of the Chair and the FSB.

Work is well advanced to getting the Food Strategy Board into place and I hope that the FSB will be up and running soon. I am committed to working with everyone involved to help secure the growth of this important sector.

The key is to grasp the opportunities that lie ahead. While this will require Government to play a supporting role, ultimately recognising the full potential of the sector can only be achieved by industry itself paying a leading role in the development and implementation of the new strategic plan.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she is taking to eradicate Tuberculosis in livestock.

(AQO 1164/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My aim is to reduce and ultimately eradicate TB in cattle here and I will continue to work towards this end. My Department has a rigorous EC Commission approved programme for TB eradication in place. This eradication programme is vital in safeguarding our annual £1,000 million plus export-dependent livestock and livestock products industry. I am pleased that progress has been made in reducing TB incidence in cattle here. The annual herd incidence has reduced from nearly 10% in 2002 to 5.7% at 30 November 2011.

Considerable work has been undertaken to enhance the TB eradication programme in recent years. We now remove as reactors those animals that give an inconclusive result to a second consecutive TB test rather than after a third test as before. We have improved communications with Private Veterinary Practitioners and strengthened the supervision process. We have improved DARD's own delivery of TB testing through monitoring Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). We also use DNA identity tags on reactors to help reduce reactor identity queries, substitution fraud and associated disease risks.

However, TB is a very complex disease and there is no simple solution or 'quick-fix'. Additional funding of some £4 million has been reserved in my Department's budget to commission a programme of TB and wildlife research and studies to help ensure we have well informed and evidence based strategies to address the issue of cattle to cattle spread as well as the wildlife issue. We have engaged with industry and wider stakeholders to help us identify and refine our TB evidence needs and priorities.

The issue of badgers and bovine TB is complex, emotive and contentious. While science has established that there is a link between TB in badgers and TB in cattle, it has not yet established, with certainty, how the disease is spread between them and what can be done to prevent its spread. A badger cull is not planned in the north of Ireland. As the badger is a protected species, any direct interventions in the badger population here would be subject to the agreement of the Environment Minister; to the issue of appropriate licences; and also to the availability of the substantial additional funding that would be needed. We would need to be certain that the benefit would justify the considerable costs.

I shall be very interested to see how the Defra trial badger cull pilot proposals are implemented in England and if they successfully withstand legal challenge. I will also be interested to see the outcome of the review of the scientific evidence base for the eradication of bovine TB in Wales.

Vaccination may be the best way forward for the future. We are closely tracking badger vaccine development progress in England and in the south of Ireland. An international vaccination experts' workshop is planned on the island of Ireland for 2012 to inform how best to proceed on badger vaccination.

Rural Poverty

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what progress is being made in implementing her tackling rural poverty strategy.

(AQO 1165/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Under the DARD Anti Poverty and Social Inclusion Framework a package worth £10m was successfully implemented over the 2008-09 to 2010-11 Budget period. The agreement of 2011/12-2014/15 budget confirmed an enhancement to the commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion in rural areas raising expenditure to around £16m. Officials continued to discuss, develop and deliver potential and continued intervention with a range of departments, agencies and stakeholders under the original framework agreed in 2009 and have completed a review of that framework to ensure that interventions remain targeted and focused on need. Revised framework and action plan will be launched in the next few weeks but I am pleased to say that intervention on the ground has continued through support for transport, maximising access, rural support and community development. Development of rural schemes for: the elderly; youth unemployed; those facing health issues; and those with no access to main waters are well advanced with activity to commence this financial year. I look forward to updating you on all this work as it progresses.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Bag and Drift Net Operations off the County Antrim Coast

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what procedures are in place to verify the accuracy of returns made by the bag and drift net operations off the County Antrim coast, in respect of salmon caught.

(AQW 6589/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): A combination of boat and shore patrols by Fisheries Protection Officers are used to inspect the DCAL licensed coastal salmon nets to ensure compliance with the Fisheries (Tagging and Logbook) Byelaws (Northern Ireland) 2001 and other Fisheries legislation.

Each catch is not individually verified. Catch figures, broken down by time and date, are determined by annual returns required to be submitted by licence holders to the Department.

Catches are subject to random inspection and verification at the point of capture and at licence holders' premises, such as their cold store.

Gyms for Community Use

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether councils can apply to her Department for funding for the setting up of gyms for community use.

(AQW 6768/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, rather my Department, is responsible for operating exchequer funding programmes for the setting up of sports facilities including gyms intended for community use. Whilst the eligibility criteria may differ between programmes, statutory bodies, such as district councils, are not normally eligible to apply to SportNI for exchequer funding. Furthermore, district councils, not the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, are statutorily responsible for local recreational provision in their respective areas under the Recreation and Youth Service (NI) Order 1986.

This responsibility extends to the provision and management of gyms for community use where existing provision is deemed to be inadequate within the council area.

Review of Fishing

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) whether she has any input, particularly on behalf of eel fishermen, into the review of fishing being carried out later this year in Brussels; and (ii) to detail the timescale for the review.

(AQW 6780/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) Scientific monitoring and supervision of conservation fishing has been ongoing since my Department submitted 3 Eel Management Plans to the Commission in December 2008. The Department shall report to the Commission in accordance with the requirements of the EC eel regulation in June 2012. Where there are grounds to argue that the Lough Neagh fishery remains sustainable and in compliance with the regulation, we shall present that case. The Department shall promote the success of the conservation fishery on Lough Erne that has provided opportunity for eel fishermen to receive an income while contributing to recovery of the European eel stock.
- (ii) Under the terms of COUNCIL REGULATION (EC) No 1100/2007 of 18 September 2007 establishing measures for the recovery of the stock of European eel each Member State shall report to the Commission, initially every third year, with the first report to be presented by 30 June 2012. Reports shall outline monitoring, effectiveness and outcome of the implementation of Eel Management Plans prepared in accordance with the regulation.

Northern Ireland Mountain, Cliff and Cave Rescue Coordinating Committee

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding her Department has allocated, through SportNI, to the Northern Ireland Mountain, Cliff and Cave Rescue Coordinating Committee, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6831/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In each of the last five years Sport NI has allocated funding to the mountain, cave and cliff rescue teams broken down by capital and revenue awards as follows:

	2006-07		2007-08		2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue	Capital	Revenue
Irish Cave Rescue organisation		£6,090		£7,800	£17,500	£5,526	£3,000	£5,200	£4,000	£4,800
NW Team		£12,338	£47,855	£5,800	£57,234	£9,600	£9,856	£25,580	£24,453	£9,760
MourneTeam		£10,956	£47,855	£10,800	£13,031	£16,154	£11,109	£15,490	£8,417	£15,750
Search & Rescue Dogs Association					£9,416					
Totals	£0	£29,384	£95,710	£24,400	£97,181	£31,280	£23,965	£46,270	£36,870	£30,310
Totals		£29,384		£120,110		£128,461		£70,235		£67,180

Northern Ireland Mountain, Cave and Cliff Rescue Coordinating Committee

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the work of the Northern Ireland Mountain, Cave and Cliff Rescue Coordinating Committee.

(AQW 6833/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The North of Ireland Mountain, Cave, and Cliff Rescue Coordinating Committee (NIMCCRCC) coordinates the organisation and administration of search and rescue provision.

The remit of NIMCCRCC is as follows:

- To make and review arrangements for the planning, operation and administration of an effective mountain, cave and cliff rescue service in the north of Ireland within an overall UK Search and Rescue Framework;
- To co-operate with Sport NI to encourage the development of Voluntary Mountain, cave and cliff rescue teams where a need is identified;
- To provide official recognition of such teams where they are competent and there is a need for their services; and
- To identify, prioritise and monitor the training and resourcing needs of the mountain, cave and cliff rescue services and to provide advice to Sport NI and others in this regard.

The PSNI has the statutory primary role in respect of the command, control and co-ordination of all mountain and cave rescue incidents.

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to list the organisations that are funded by her Department which will receive the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals.

(AQW 6834/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: A total of 47 Mountain, Cave and Cliff Rescue volunteers in the North of Ireland will be eligible to receive the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal. These volunteers are members of the following Mountain, Cave and Cliff Rescue Operational Units, which are in turn members of the Sport NI funded Northern Ireland Mountain Cave, and Cliff Rescue Coordinating Committee (NIMCCRCC):

- Mourne Mountain Rescue Team;
- Irish Cave Rescue Organisation;
- North West Search and rescue Team; and
- Search and Rescue Dogs Association Ireland North. Magherafelt Library

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the reduction of nine hours in the opening hours of Magherafelt Library will have an impact on staff numbers.

(AQW 6851/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: As a result of the additional funding allocated by my Department to Libraries NI the level of savings required are not as great as initially envisaged, but savings are still required.

Levels of staffing in libraries is an operational matter for the Board of Libraries NI. I have been informed that Library staff are a mixture of permanent, temporary and agency staff and a process is in place to reduce the number of staff hours overall through a range of measures, including voluntary redundancy, flexible retirement, family friendly policies etc.

It is not possible for Libraries NI at this stage to be definitive about the impact on any individual library, given that the process of considering requests from individual members of staff for voluntary redundancy, flexible retirement, different working patterns etc is still underway.

The reduction in opening hours in Magherafelt Library will mean fewer staff hours will be required in the library, but this does not necessarily mean a reduction in the number of staff who are based in Magherafelt Library for some or all of their working hours.

Bag and Drift Nets for Coastal Salmon Fishing

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether, under the Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966, her Department has the power to ban (i) bag nets; and (ii) drift nets for coastal salmon fishing; and what action she intends to take to address the dwindling number of salmon returning to rivers to breed.

(AQW 6935/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am currently considering powers under the Fisheries Act to introduce a range of salmon conservation measures, which will include consideration of provisions relating to bag nets and drift net licences.

Stakeholders have been asked to support a range of voluntary conservation measures for 2012 to allow DCAL time to consult on the way forward to contribute to the long term sustainability of wild Atlantic salmon stocks.

Bag Nets for Salmon Fishing in Coastal Waters

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department has licensed the use of bag nets for salmon fishing in coastal waters.

(AQW 6936/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In 2011 the Department licensed 2 bag nets for salmon fishing in coastal waters in the DCAL jurisdiction.

Fish: Catch and Release

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions her Department has had with fishing and angling clubs, that fish on rivers which are under the control of her Department, regarding its plans to promote 'catch and release' for the 2012 season.

(AQW 6983/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has presented a series of proposals to the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum which is the advisory body set up by the Department to reflect the views of all stakeholders, including fishing and angling clubs.

The forum's members include representatives of the Ulster Angling Federation which is the recognised representative body for game angling clubs in the North.

The Department has also provided detailed guidance on catch and release best practice for the information of all anglers on the NI Direct angling website at www.nidirect.gov.uk/angling.

The Department will be holding a public consultation process on the future of salmon exploitation in the DCAL jurisdiction in the near future and will welcome responses from angling clubs and individual anglers.

Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline how a member of the Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum appoints, or selects, a proxy to attend meetings on their behalf; and how the selection process is conducted.

(AQW 6990/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum at its inaugural meeting on 10 December 2009 agreed item 5 of the proposed Standing Orders which stated:

“The Forum should only accept substitute members in exceptional circumstances to be agreed by the Chair in advance of each meeting.”

Monitoring of Nets

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 5920/11-15, whether her Department has had to reimburse fishermen who had their nets seized from their premises.

(AQW 7084/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has not had to reimburse fishermen who have had their nets seized from their premises.

Rory McIlroy: US Open Golf Tournament

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how she will use the international media attention that will be on Rory McIlroy at the US Open Golf Tournament in San Francisco in June 2012, to promote Northern Ireland as a centre of sporting excellence.

(AQO 1239/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am already seeking to develop and promote the north of Ireland as a centre of sporting excellence through the use of my Department's 10 year strategy for sport, Sport Matters. Under Sport Matters, government is committed to establishing world class sports services, facilities and places for playing and watching sport in the north. Government is also committed, under Sport Matters, to establishing the north as a world class venue for sporting events.

To help deliver on these commitments, Sport Matters sets out 26 high level targets to be achieved over the life of the strategy which focus on the key pillars of sporting excellence, namely Participation, Performance and Places for sport. These targets are underpinned by an action planning structure which identifies, amongst other issues, increased media coverage of sport in the north, both local and international, as a key step to success. I have, and continue, to promote such coverage by recognising, through the media, sporting success and excellence in the north including achievements of Rory McIlroy. I anticipate that there will be further opportunities for me to do this on the back of international media attention that is likely to be on Rory McIlroy at the US Open Golf Tournament in San Francisco in June 2012.

Boxing

Mr A Maskey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline her priorities for the sport of boxing.

(AQO 1172/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Priorities for boxing are set by the governing body of the sport, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA). However, I recognise the cultural importance of boxing to many people in the north of Ireland and particularly those in areas of high social need. Furthermore, amateur boxing has been one of the north's major sporting success stories, for example, finishing top of the boxing medal table at the 2010 Commonwealth Games with 3 gold and 2 silver medals.

Given the importance of boxing, I have recently agreed that Sport NI should assist the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council in developing a strategic implementation plan for the sport which will give effect in the north to the IABA's 5-year strategy for boxing across Ireland. I have also asked Sport NI to develop a suitable business case to help identify required investment needs for the sport. This work is due to commence shortly.

Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action she intends to take to update the Fisheries Act 1966.

(AQO 1173/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, as amended, has been in place for 45 years and I am aware that some of its provisions have been superseded by more recent European Directives.

The Act provides a sound foundation for the conservation and protection of fisheries and can address changing circumstances through the making of subordinate legislation.

There is no immediate requirement to replace the 1966 Fisheries Act as it is reviewed frequently to take account of changing circumstances. It still meets the requirements today to protect and conserve fisheries, which was the original purpose of the creation of the Act

The Fisheries Act is a considerable and wide ranging piece of primary legislation and a review of the Act would be resource intensive for DCAL.

DCAL: Legislation

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the legislation her Department plans to introduce in this Assembly mandate.

(AQO 1174/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My officials are engaged in comprehensive scoping work on renewed proposals for an Irish Language Bill which I intend to bring forward to the Executive Legislative Programme 2011-2015.

Cuireann Cumann Forbartha Charn Tóchair

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what support she can offer to Cuireann Cumann Forbartha Charn Tóchair in its bid to obtain Gaeltacht status.

(AQO 1175/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Carntogether Community Association promotes a range of economic, social, cultural and environmental projects aimed at developing a prosperous and environmentally sustainable rural community.

I believe that the establishment of a Gaeltacht Quarter, as shown in West Belfast, has the potential to make a useful contribution to economic, social and cultural development in the area. Using Irish language and culture as the unique selling point will have significant tourism opportunities.

Officials from my Department are arranging to meet with the Association to see if it is possible to offer further support.

Suicide

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline any discussions she has had with her ministerial colleagues regarding suicide prevention.

(AQO 1176/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Edwin Poots MLA, has responsibility for suicide prevention in the north and I met with him in December 2011 to discuss the contribution of sport and arts to health promotion including suicide prevention. DCAL has identified a number of areas where it can be involved in helping DHSSPS deliver Protect Life. These have been submitted to DHSSPS for consideration within the final version of refreshed Protect Life Action Plan.

2012 Olympics: Training

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the number of Olympic teams which plan to use training facilities in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1177/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: To date Sport NI have secured three pre Games training camps in the run up to the London 2012 Games.

The three teams are the Chinese Artistic Gymnastics team, the Australian Boxing team and the Irish Paralympics Team.

In addition a number of pre Games events involving International athletes have taken place in the north of Ireland. These are the Boccia World Cup, a 2012 Paralympic qualifying event; a table tennis tournament; and the Yonex Irish Badminton Championships, a 2012 Olympic qualifying event. An International Wheelchair basketball tournament will take place in February 2012.

Sport NI is involved in sensitive negotiations with a number of other countries about pre Games training and qualifying events. This is a highly competitive process and therefore I am unable to detail these Countries or sports.

Re-imaging Communities

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department will allocate resources to support the Re-imaging Communities Programme.

(AQO 1178/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In November 2009 the Arts Council submitted an application to the Peace III Programme which builds upon the key successes of the Re-Imaging Programme and looks to the development of artistic interventions on an intra-community, cross-community and cross-border basis. They are currently at the final stages of this application process.

If successful, the proposed programme will deliver long-term cross-community and cross-border projects which will, in turn, compliment current work by addressing issues of sectarianism; racism and prejudice between communities and contributing to achieving a society rooted in mutual recognition, respect and trust.

Football: DCAL Funding

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action she is taking to ensure that Irish League Football derives maximum benefit from funding from her Department.

(AQO 1179/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: SportNI is responsible for the provision of exchequer funding to sport including to Irish League football clubs. All exchequer funding programmes developed by SportNI are designed to contribute towards DCAL's strategic priorities and targets as set out in the Department's 10 year sports strategy, Sport Matters.

To enable sports, including Irish League Football clubs, derive maximum benefit from available exchequer funding, SportNI advertises all funding programmes in the press and on its website. In addition, SportNI regularly hosts local road shows across the north to ensure that potential applicants are aware of the opportunities available and the aims and criteria of its programmes. All applicants and potential applicants to SportNI programmes can also contact SportNI for advice and one-to-one support on the development of individual applications.

Conservation Legislation

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when a new legislative programme will be brought forward to ensure that her Department is meeting its European Conservation obligations.

(AQO 1180/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Fisheries Act (NI) 1966, as amended, has been in place for 45 years and I am aware that some of its provisions have been superseded by more recent European Directives. I consider that the Act still provides a sound foundation for the conservation and protection of fisheries and can address changing circumstances through the making of subordinate legislation.

DOE is the lead Department in the devolved administration for the implementation of the Habitats Directive to meet European conservation measures. DCAL seeks to ensure compliance with the requirements of European Conservation obligations and implementing legislation in the north of Ireland

through the discharge of its responsibilities in relation to the conservation and protection of salmon and inland fisheries.

Department of Education

Pupil Numbers Recommended in the Bain Report

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to list the schools which can hold the pupil numbers recommended in the Bain Report, broken down by school type.

(AQW 6153/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): Enrolment numbers are currently the way in which the Department defines the capacity of schools. However as we develop a more strategic approach to planning on an area basis a greater understanding of need and capacity within the system will emerge.

I have arranged for the information requested, to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Lower Tier GCSEs

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last three years, to detail the percentage of pupils, attending each school, that uses academic selection as an admission criterion, who have taken lower tier exams in GCSE (i) Maths; and (ii) English.

(AQW 6249/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Data are not available for all awarding bodies and the following information relates to CCEA examinations only. It is not possible to supply GCSE mathematics data as CCEA offers this qualification as a mixed tier GCSE. Candidates may take a mix of both foundation and higher tier papers.

The information below relates to pupils who were admitted to schools that use academic admissions criteria who have taken lower tier exams in GCSE English.

PERCENTAGE OF EXAMINATION ENTRIES IN LOWER TIER CCEA GCSE ENGLISH FOR SCHOOLS USING ACADEMIC SELECTION AS AN ADMISSIONS CRITERION 2008/09 TO 2010/11

Entries in lower tier CCEA GCSE English as % of total entries in CCEA GCSE English in each year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Abbey Christian Brothers, Newry	6.1	8.3	1.6
Antrim Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
Aquinas Grammar School	0.0	0.8	0.0
Assumption Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
Ballyclare High	0.6	0.0	0.0
Ballymena Academy	0.0	0.0	0.0
Banbridge Academy	1.6	1.6	2.2
Bangor Grammar School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Belfast High School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Belfast Royal Academy	0.0	0.0	0.0
Bloomfield Collegiate	0.0	1.0	0.0
Cambridge House	6.4	6.7	3.6

Entries in lower tier CCEA GCSE English as % of total entries in CCEA GCSE English in each year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Campbell College	2.9	12.5	4.1
Carrickfergus Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.8
Christian Brothers Grammar, Omagh	0.0	2.2	0.7
Coleraine Academical Institution	6.8	10.2	22.3
Coleraine High	0.8	3.3	4.9
Collegiate Grammar School , Enniskillen	0.0	0.0	0.0
Dalriada School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Dominican College, Belfast	0.0	0.0	0.0
Dominican College, Portstewart	4.2	9.7	9.3
Down High School	3.1	1.4	6.5
Foyle College	0.0	0.0	0.0
Friends School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Glenlola Collegiate	0.0	1.3	0.6
Grosvenor Grammar	0.6	0.6	0.6
Holy Cross College, Strabane	0.0	0.0	0.0
Hunterhouse College	0.0	6.0	1.9
Lagan College	48.3	63.1	53.3
Larne Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
Limavady Grammar	8.3	3.1	3.9
Loreto Grammar, Omagh	0.0	0.0	0.0
Lumen Christi	0.0	0.8	0.0
Lurgan College	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Mary's Grammar, Magherafelt	0.0	0.0	1.2
Malone Integrated College	0.0	100.0	100.0
Methodist College	2.9	3.2	0.4
Mount Lourdes Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
Omagh Academy	6.1	0.0	0.9
Our Lady And St Patricks College	0.5	0.0	0.0
Our Lady's Grammar, Newry	0.0	0.0	0.0
Portadown College	0.0	0.0	0.0
Portora Royal School	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rainey Endowed School	0.0	0.0	0.0

Entries in lower tier CCEA GCSE English as % of total entries in CCEA GCSE English in each year	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Rathmore Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
Regent House	10.0	4.8	7.0
Royal Belfast Academical Institution	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sacred Heart Grammar	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Colman's College, Newry	1.6	2.4	2.2
St Columb's College	0.0	0.5	0.0
St Dominic's High School	6.0	0.6	1.5
St Joseph's Grammar, Dungannon	2.7	0.0	1.4
St Louis Grammar, Ballymena	0.0	0.0	2.8
St Louis Grammar, Kilkeel	0.0	2.3	4.7
St Macnissi's College	0.0	2.2	0.0
St Malachy's College	2.7	2.6	2.7
St Mary's Cbs, Belfast	21.3	22.8	39.1
St Michael's College	1.0	10.6	7.8
St Michael's Grammar, Lurgan	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Patrick's Grammar, Armagh	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Patrick's Grammar, Downpatrick	0.0	0.0	0.0
St Patrick's College, Maghera	9.1	7.5	1.1
Strabane Academy	0.0	100.0	0.0
Strathearn School	1.8	0.0	0.0
Sullivan Upper School	0.0	0.0	0.0
The Royal School, Armagh	6.3	5.0	3.0
The Royal School, Dungannon	9.9	3.9	2.0
Thornhill College	0.0	0.0	0.0
Wallace High School	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: CCEA

Joint Efficiency Review: Stage One Report

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to ensure savings of approximately £10,000 per annum, as indicated in his Department and the Department's of Finance and Personnel's Joint Efficiency Review: Stage One Report.

(AQW 6535/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Stage 1 of the review involved the identification of broad areas within the education sector where there appeared to be scope to make savings. Areas covered were: home to school transport;

school meals; Education and Library Board (ELB) administration; school cleaning; Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) running costs; professional development; teachers' pay & pensions administration; and ELB procurement.

The Stage 1 Report has been taken into account in the development of the Savings Delivery Plan (SDP) for my Department. The SDP requires ELBs and other bodies to deliver core services within reduced budgets and as such incorporates requirements for cost reductions in most of the areas identified in the Stage 1 Report.

In addition, a Stage 2 review has been carried out which considered home to school transport and school meals service as areas most suited for a more in depth review. The Stage 2 reports on these areas are due to be finalised and published very soon and I am determined to ensure that action is taken on recommendations to drive out further savings. This is very much part of my programme of work to ensure the maximum possible funding is delegated to the classroom to support teaching and learning.

Viability Audits

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education whether the viability audits will be published, and if so, to detail the timescale.

(AQW 6556/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department received the first viability audit reports from the Boards on Monday 16 January 2012. The Boards have also sent each school a copy of the information specifically relating to that school. My officials have made an initial assessment of the reports and are engaging with the Boards to obtain further information. Boards have been asked to resubmit the viability audits by 6 February and to submit proposals to address the position by the 15 February.

When the information is complete the five reports will be published by the Boards as soon as practicable.

Middletown Centre for Autism's Building Integrated Project Team

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education (i) for an update on the Middletown Centre for Autism's Building Integrated Project Team (ii) the number of times it has met since its establishment; and (iii) the associated costs to date.

(AQW 6575/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The Middletown Centre for Autism Building Integrated Project Team was charged with drawing up plans for the refurbishment of existing buildings and the proposed new build. The Team comprises a Building Project Manager, Architect led Design Team, Cost Consultants, representatives from DE and DES, a Director of MCA Ltd (the operational company) and senior management from the Middletown Centre for Autism.

(ii) The Integrated Project Team has met on 30 occasions.

(iii) A total of £620,451 has been paid in fees to the project managers, design team and cost consultants to date. The DE share is £310,225.50

One-Year Funded Pre-School Places

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Education how many children in (a) Banbridge; (ii) Lurgan; and (iii) Portadown might benefit from his Department's plan to provide a one-year funded pre-school place.

(AQW 6640/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: This information is not held in the format requested. However, provisional figures for District Council areas for the current 2011/12 school year (which may be subject to minor changes once the Education and Library Boards have completed their validation processes), provide the number of children enrolled in funded pre-school places in nursery schools/units and voluntary/private pre-school settings. These are Banbridge District Council - 606, and Craigavon District Council (including Lurgan and Portadown) - 1275.

The Department is already working with the Education and Library Boards on establishing the number of pre-school places likely to be required for the 2012/13 school year. I also made a statement to the Assembly on 17 January, in respect of the outcomes of the Review on the Pre-school Admissions Arrangements. That Review makes recommendations on how improvements might be made to the process. This will be an important factor in terms of considering what changes are needed and the best way forward in light of the draft PfG.

Area-Based Planning Process

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of whether the area-based planning process may work towards dissolving the different sectors in education or ensure their continuing existence. **(AQW 6647/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The focus of the area planning process is on developing a planned network of viable and sustainable schools to provide high quality education to meet the needs of the children and young people in an area.

Our educational system is diverse, including controlled and maintained schools, voluntary grammar schools, integrated schools and Irish-medium schools. This diversity is a reflection of parental choice.

The Terms of Reference for Area Planning, published on 15 December 2011, make it clear that, as part of the process, the Boards will engage with, and seek input from, the other school sectors. This will facilitate the development of a broad vision of the type and scale of education provision required to meet the future needs and will provide opportunity to advance innovative solutions, including those for shared schooling that may span more than one sector.

Staff in the Education and Library Boards

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education for an estimate of the cost of the financial packages that will be offered to staff in the Education and Library Boards, following the establishment of the Education and Skills Authority. **(AQW 6710/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The announcement on the establishment of ESA has changed the context within which the RPA will be implemented in education. ESA will subsume the functions of 8 bodies including the Education and Library Boards; Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; Staff Commission and the Youth Council. The Executive has decided that the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) will remain separate for the time being and its functions and staff will not transfer to ESA.

The estimated cost of the financial packages that will be offered to staff in the Education and Library Boards, following transfer to ESA cannot be determined until the Voluntary Severance Programmes for 2011/12 and 2012/13 are completed and the impact of CCEA remaining separate for the time being is quantified, however funding of £50m in 2011/12, £55m in 12/13, £51m in 13/14 and £61m in 14/15 has been set aside to support the severance programmes across the budget period.

All staff in the affected organisations in post on the date of the establishment of ESA will have the right to transfer into this organisation under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE).

Pre-School Education Facilities

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to detail all pre-school education facilities, including whether they are statutory, voluntary, private or reception units, broken down by council area. **(AQW 6723/11-15)**

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested has been placed in the Assembly library.

Schools: New Builds

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education with which schools he, or his officials, have met in the last 12 months in relation to new builds.

(AQW 6744/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the last 12 months I or my predecessor have met with the following school authorities to discuss new build programmes or proposals:

- Gaelscoil Eanna
- St Mary's College, Banbridge
- Lagan College
- Torbank
- Foyle and Londonderry College
- Ebrington Primary School

Officials from my Department, as part of their routine responsibilities in relation to the support and governance of infrastructure development, regularly meet with schools and their managing authorities regarding a range of matters pertaining to the schools' estate. During the course of these meetings the potential for new capital projects may have been discussed. It would not, therefore, be possible to identify which of these meetings solely related to new builds.

Religious Background of Pupils

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what percentage of pupils currently attending (i) controlled; (ii) maintained; (iii) integrated; and (iv) Irish-medium primary schools come from a (a) Catholic; (b) Protestant; or (c) other religious background.

(AQW 6796/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed in the table below.

RELIGION OF PUPILS ATTENDING PRIMARY¹ SCHOOLS BY TYPE – 2010/11

Religion	Management type			
	Controlled ²	Maintained ³	Integrated ⁴	Irish medium ⁵
Protestant	72.1	1.2	38.6	0.2
Catholic	5.6	96.9	37.2	96.0
Other religion ⁶	22.3	1.9	24.2	3.8

Source: school census

Note:

- 1 Figures for primary include children in nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- 2 Figures for Controlled schools exclude the Controlled Irish medium school and Controlled Integrated schools.
- 3 Figures for Maintained schools include non Irish medium Catholic Maintained and non Irish medium Other Maintained schools, but exclude Irish medium schools and units.
- 4 Figures for Integrated schools include controlled integrated and grant maintained integrated schools.
- 5 Figures for Irish medium schools include Irish medium schools and units from all sectors.
- 6 The 'other religion' category includes other Christian, non Christian and no religion specified/ religion not known.
- 7 Figures for 2011/12 will be available at the end of February.

Accrued Money Held Within Schools

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Education, in light of the Minister of Finance and Personnel's statement to the Assembly on 17 January 2012, in relation to the accrued money held within schools, or on behalf of schools by his Department, to detail the amount held on behalf of schools in the (i) Belfast Education and Library Board; and (ii) the South Eastern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 6848/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Budget cover held by the Department on behalf of schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board, and the South Eastern Education and Library Board, is as follows:

Board	£000
Belfast Education & Library Board	1,315
South Eastern Education & Library Board	2,500

Note: Figures reflect requirements as advised by the respective ELBs in December 2011.

School Principals

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education whether school principals are included in his redundancy offer to teachers aged over 55.

(AQW 6858/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Principal posts are prescribed posts and it is therefore not possible to make a principal redundant unless a school is closing or amalgamating with another school.

In line with teacher appointment procedures, all Principal posts must be publicly advertised. It is therefore not possible for a Principal to volunteer for a transferred redundancy.

I have made funding available to allow employers to offer enhanced discretionary compensation to teachers made redundant at August 2012. Employers may pay discretionary compensation to any teacher eligible for a redundancy payment, not only those aged over 55.

Teacher Redundancies

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education who has the responsibility for setting the terms under which teachers can avail of the recently announced funding for teacher redundancies.

(AQW 6879/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Responsibility for determining the compensation to be paid to redundant teachers rests with the "appropriate person" under the Teachers' (Compensation for Redundancy and Premature Retirement) Regulations (NI) 2010.

For controlled and maintained schools, this is the Education and Library Board.

For voluntary grammar and grant maintained integrated schools, this is the Board of Governors.

Boards of Governors

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, given that 27 voluntary grammar schools have a total of 104 vacancies on their Boards of Governors, whether he intends not to proceed with appointments until adequate nominations have been received.

(AQW 6918/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In accordance with the guidelines issued by the Commissioner of Public Appointments, it is my preference to have a choice of candidates for each DE governor post. In some schools I do not have a 2:1 choice for all of the governor vacancies. I have already given a commitment to making appointments for each post for which I do have a choice of candidates.

Following the recent advertising campaign, my Department has received 103 additional applications from persons expressing an interest in being a school governor. We are processing these applications and I hope to be in a position to make further appointments to voluntary grammar schools shortly.

School Inspections

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education what measures he will put in place to ensure that school inspectors take account of the difficult budget situation facing schools when they are conducting future inspections.

(AQW 6931/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Inspectors, when evaluating the quality of provision, consider each school in its context. Inspectors will continue their practice of evaluating the effectiveness of the use of resources by the school, to ensure it provides a high quality education for the pupils and meets the needs of the community which it serves.

Entitlement Framework

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education whether he is aware of school principals' concerns that school budget cuts have the potential to hinder their progress in relation to the future stability of the Entitlement Framework.

(AQW 6932/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Entitlement Framework is about putting the needs of pupils first. All pupils, no matter what school they attend or where they live, are entitled to receive a high quality education with access to a broad and balanced curriculum to enable them to reach their full potential. Our economy demands a flexible and skilled workforce to respond to the areas of growth and opportunity both now and in the future. That is why I have moved to commence the legislation making the Entitlement Framework statutory from September 2013.

I have listened to the concerns of school principals and given the difficult budgetary situation, I decided to phase in the full requirements of the Entitlement Framework, starting with interim targets for fewer course numbers from 2013. I have argued the case with Executive colleagues for further investment to help alleviate pressures on school budgets. I am, therefore, pleased that, as a result, additional allocations totalling £120 million over the next three years has been made available for schools.

Area Learning Communities provide the forum within which schools can work together to come up with imaginative and innovative solutions to address the issues of broadening the range of curricular pathways for their pupils, the pooling of resources, the sharing of expertise and the avoidance of duplication of provision.

Where a school appears to be at risk of not being able to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum by September 2013, I expect managing authorities to work alongside the Department to take action. That action will, of course, include exploring what support the school may need and it may also involve a further assessment of the viability of the school in the longer term.

Recommendation by FSG McClure Watters

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education what progress has been made on the recommendation by FSG McClure Watters that his Department and the Department for Employment and Learning work together to deliver improved academic attainment and increased participation in higher education.

(AQW 6933/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Since taking office, I have been working closely with the Minister for Employment and Learning and we meet regularly to discuss areas of common interest.

In recent years, we have seen continued improvement in the achievements of school leavers and an increase in the proportion entering higher education. But we still have more to do to tackle underachievement and ensure more of our young people leave school with the skills and qualifications

needed to progress to further or higher education, training and employment. I am continuing to implement a range of policies aimed at raising standards, which will make a significant contribution to DEL's strategies on widening participation in higher education and reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what extra support his Department provides for primary school pupils whose date of birth falls between 15-30 June.

(AQW 6963/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of research and analysis that has been carried out to examine the impact of the month of birth on pupils' educational outcomes. My Department's focus is on every child reaching their full potential and we need to ensure our policies help to achieve this no matter when the month of a child's birth falls.

Each child is unique and the teacher will use their professional judgement to assess their strengths and where they need additional support, to tailor their teaching to accommodate the educational needs of each child.

Within all stages of a child's education in school, my Department's focus is on supporting and promoting high-quality teaching and learning and our school improvement policy is designed with this purpose in mind. This policy along with our literacy and numeracy strategy, Count, Read: Succeed, set out the clear expectation that teachers and schools will meet the needs of all their pupils and provide the support they need to achieve to their full potential.

As pupils develop and move up through primary school, teachers regularly monitor their strengths, progress and areas for improvement to ensure that they learn as effectively as possible. This monitoring can take many forms, including teacher observation, marking class work and home work as well as a wide variety of more specific assessments. Diagnostic assessment provides teachers with information to inform their professional judgement of pupils' strengths and areas for improvement. The assessment outcomes are intended to help teachers plan their teaching during the school year to meet the needs of their pupils and to monitor their progress. One important element in support of schools' use of diagnostic assessment is that the legislation provides for the assessment of pupils in Years 4 to 7 during the autumn term, using a computer-based method specified by the Department. Computer-based assessments are an integral part of the Department's wider efforts to raise outcomes in literacy and numeracy for all young people.

I am also aware that evidence does suggest that class size in the early years of education can have an impact on pupil outcomes so it is my Department's policy to limit class sizes for Years 1-4 to a maximum of 30 pupils.

Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last five years, to detail the number of pupils, whose birthday falls between 15-30 June, who have repeated an academic year of education in (i) nursery schools; (ii) primary schools; and (iii) post-primary schools.

(AQW 6965/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not have this information available. While the school enrolments census collects information on children's date of birth, it does not collect information on those children who have repeated an academic year of education.

Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail his Department's policy for dealing with pupils whose date of birth falls between 15-30 June and who are experiencing difficulties at nursery school.

(AQW 6967/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not collect data on the individual dates of birth of children who require additional support and are, therefore, not in a position to specifically identify children born between 15-30 June who may fall into this category.

However, early intervention and support is of paramount importance to help ensure all young children have the support they need at the earliest possible stage, to help prevent them falling behind at the very start of school, and the subsequent impact on their future years.

Article 4 of the Education (NI) Order 1996 placed a statutory responsibility on the Department to issue a Code of Practice giving practical guidance to the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) regarding their functions in relation to children who may have special educational needs (SEN).

Under this legislation if a child is identified as having SEN the statutory responsibility for securing provision rests with both schools, and the 5 ELBs which are responsible for identifying, assessing and, in appropriate cases, making provision for children with SEN in their areas.

Article 3 (2) of the 1996 Order explains that a child has SEN if he or she has a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made.

Statutory Nursery schools and classes are expected to follow broadly the same procedures for identifying and meeting young children's special educational needs as are recommended for children of compulsory school age.

The initial pathways for young children attending a non statutory pre-school setting are generally made through primary/core health services, such as the GP or Health Visitor, with a referral made to a child development centre or team to provide a multi-professional view at a very early stage, and before a referral to the ELB Educational Psychologist.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Young People

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education to detail the funding his Department has allocated to deal with drug and alcohol abuse among young people.

(AQW 6992/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department does not directly allocate funding to deal with drug and alcohol abuse among young people. However formal and informal education play a significant role in developing young people's knowledge, understanding and skills to deal with issues such as drugs and alcohol.

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) receive funding, within their overall block grant allocations, to enable them to employ drugs and alcohol education officers. These officers provide training and support to teachers in delivering drugs and alcohol education as part of the Personal Development strand of the revised curriculum.

The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has produced guidance and support materials to assist teachers in their delivery of the curriculum. This includes curricular resources which address the issue of drug and alcohol abuse.

In addition, my Department provides funding to each of the five Boards, and the Youth Council, to support youth provision. Health education programmes and interventions, which include drugs and alcohol awareness, are routinely provided for young people at youth clubs and units as part of the youth work curriculum.

My Department also provides funding for counselling support, available to all pupils of postprimary age, through the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS). The ICSS provides professional counselling to children and young people at vulnerable times in their lives.

The Department of Education has been working closely with colleagues in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to develop Phase 2 of the New Strategic Direction on Drugs and Alcohol, a fully integrated, inclusive and coordinated strategic direction for addressing alcohol and drug misuse.

Administrative Staff in Each Education and Library Board

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of administrative staff in each Education and Library Board, broken down by council area.

(AQW 7013/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Please see table below, which details the number of administrative staff in each Education and Library Board, broken down by council area and pay grade as further requested. The pay scales for administrative staff in the Education and library Boards can be located through the following link:

<http://www.staffcom.org.uk/pdfs/jnccirculars/No%20176%20%2009%2010%20Pay%20Rates.pdf>

SEELB

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Castlereagh	338	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	20
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	50
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	93
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	48
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	27
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	22
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	24
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	8
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	7
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	11

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	7
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 45	Solicitors	4
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 35	Education Welfare	14
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 67 TO 70	Senior Legal Adviser	1
Lisburn	3	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	1
Ards	3	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	1
North Down	1	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	1
Down	5	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	senior Clerical Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26-31	Senior Executive Officer	1

NEELB

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Antrim	41	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	22
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	11
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	1

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Ballymena	266	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	17
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	58
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	83
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	48
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	27
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	14
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	7
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	4
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	4

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Coleraine	11	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Moyle	6	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	6
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
N'abbey	8	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0

BELB

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Belfast	300	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	25
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	48
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	62
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	69
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	29
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	24
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	14
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	8
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	2

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	7
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	7
Down	1	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	1

WELB

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Tyrone	237	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	17
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	69
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	56
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	53
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	18
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	7
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	11
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	3

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0
L'derry	49	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	13
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	13
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	11
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	8
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0
Fermanagh	21	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	8
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	0

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	0
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	0

SELB

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
Armagh	365	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	20
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	88
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 21	Senior Storeperson	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	101
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	67
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 33 TO 36	Administrative Officer	39
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 38 TO 41	Senior Administrative Officer	18
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	14

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 46 TO 49	Principal Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 49 TO 52	Senior Principal Officer (1)	6
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 52 TO 55	Senior Principal Officer (2)	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 58 TO 61	Education Officer	4
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 64 TO 67	Assistant Senior Education Officer	1
Banbridge	1	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	1
Cookstown	1	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	1
Craigavon	41	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	13
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	10
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	12
Dungannon	9	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	1

Council	Council Count	System Grade Description	Grade Description	Grade Count
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	2
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 42 TO 45	Assistant Principal Officer	1
Newry And Mourne	17	APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 4 TO 13	Clerical Officer	5
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 14 TO 17	Senior Clerical Officer	6
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 18 TO 25	Executive Officer	3
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 22 TO 25	Senior Driver	1
		APTC SALARY SCALE PTS 26 TO 31	Senior Executive	2

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed location of the headquarters of the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 7014/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No decisions have been taken yet on the location of the headquarters of the Education and Skills Authority.

Funding for Sentinus

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education whether funding for Sentinus will be extended after April 2012.

(AQW 7078/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As you will be aware, the education budget faces significant challenges over the period to 2014-15. I am currently reviewing my budget allocations for the next three years and until this exercise is complete I am unable to confirm any future budget allocations for Sentinus.

Carrick Primary School, Warrenpoint

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new build for Carrick Primary School, Warrenpoint.

(AQW 7081/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A new build for Carrick Primary School commenced construction work in March 2011 and is due to complete August 2012.

New Builds for Corranny Primary School and Cornagague Primary School, Roslea

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the new builds for (i) Corranny Primary School; and (ii) Cornagague Primary School, Roslea.

(AQW 7082/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A new build school on a new site to accommodate the amalgamation of the two existing schools for Corranny and Cornagague Primary schools commenced construction work on 17 January 2011 and is due to complete February 2012.

Teachers from a Catholic Background

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Education how many teachers from a Catholic background are currently employed in the controlled sector in the Southern Education and Library Board, broken down by (i) nursery; (ii) primary schools; and (iii) post-primary schools.

(AQW 7114/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 provides for employers to make annual monitoring returns to the Equality Commission about the composition of the workforce and those applying for employment. However, this provision does not apply to recruitment as a teacher in a school. Therefore, employers of teachers in controlled schools do not hold information on their religious background.

Teaching and Classroom Assistant Redundancies

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, given the extra £120m funding for schools over the next three years, for his assessment of the backloading of the expenditure which may result in a failure to mitigate the threat posed to educational provision in the early years, in the event that financially induced teaching and classroom assistant redundancies will have done irreparable harm.

(AQW 7118/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The greatest financial pressure over the Budget 2011-15 period facing classrooms is in 2014-15. This is as a result of the cumulative effect on schools budgets of inescapable pay and price pressures. It is clear therefore that, to address this pressure, any additional funding that would become available for schools would be most needed in 2014-15. On 12 January 2012 I announced additional funding of £30m / £15m / £75m over the next 3 years to be allocated directly to schools. The profiling of this funding fully reflects the fact of the above analysis.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 7134/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department submitted its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 20 December 2011.

Educational Attainment in Disadvantaged Areas

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to improve educational attainment in disadvantaged areas, particularly among Protestant males.

(AQW 7139/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am determined to take action to break the link between social disadvantage and educational underachievement – through encouraging schools to set high expectations for all their

pupils and supporting and, where necessary, challenging schools to improve. I also want to stress the value of education and work with local communities to ensure that young people receive clear and consistent messages about the importance of doing well at school, are encouraged to have high aspirations, and are supported to achieve to their full potential.

I am continuing to implement Every School a Good School – a policy for school improvement, which stresses the central role of well-led schools, with high quality teaching for all their pupils and strong links to their communities, in improving outcomes for pupils. It is supported by a range of policies aimed at raising standards, including the literacy and numeracy strategy, the revised curriculum and Entitlement Framework, the Extended and Full Service Schools Programmes and work to finalise strategies on early years and Special Educational Needs and Inclusion.

School Viability Audits

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the statement released by his Department on 27 January 2012, on school viability audits, in what respect each of the Education and Library Boards has failed to provide the complete information.

(AQW 7290/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I asked for the viability audits to be resubmitted as they did not fulfil the requirements as set out in the terms of reference.

Education and Library Boards were asked to identify schools facing significant viability challenges in terms of enrolment trends, quality of education and financial stability. Where there were problems, they were to determine the root cause and present proposals to address them, in order to protect the education of the pupils.

While the reports go some way toward this, the information submitted was not detailed enough to reflect the extent of the challenges – particularly around quality of education and financial stability.

It has been claimed that the purpose of this audit is to compile a “hit list” of schools for closure. That is not the case. It should not be assumed that where schools are facing significant stress, closure is the only, or even a desirable, option. It is likely, in some instances, that it will be more appropriate to plan intervention to safeguard pupils' education rather than to close a school.

Primary Schools: Reception Classes

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Education what is the required teacher to child ratio for reception classes.

(AQO 1183/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A school's ability to admit reception-age children is limited by the school's admission and enrolment number in the same way that these numbers limit the schools admission of P1-7 children. The number of children admitted to reception places, therefore, changes on an annual basis depending on the overall number and age of children admitted each year.

Whilst there is no policy which stipulates the child:pupil ratio in reception and primary classes, it is the Department's policy to keep classes for our youngest pupils at 30 or fewer. This policy covers Foundation and Key Stage 1 (Years 1-4). This is also set out in 'The Class Sizes in Primary Schools Regulations (NI) 2000', although the Regulations do not specify reception classes.

One of the actions within the Review of Pre-School Admissions Arrangements, which I announced in the Assembly on 17 January, is to bring forward legislative amendments to the Education (NI) Order 1997 required to prevent reception provision.

Removal of reception places will, however, require a plan to replace this provision with alternative pre-school places. This task will be undertaken as part of the implementation of the Review.

Schools: Newbuilds

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education how many primary and post-primary school new builds are planned over the next two financial years.

(AQO 1181/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As I set out in my Statement to the Assembly on Monday 26 September 2011, I have commissioned the five Education and Library Boards, working with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and other sectors, to co-ordinate a strategic area planning process to shape the future pattern of education delivery.

All previously identified new build projects will be critically assessed alongside all other potential projects as part of the area planning process. This will determine how potential projects will contribute to the overall infrastructure needed and if identified as a priority within the area plan, might be taken forward within the funding available.

Until the area planning process has been completed I am not in a position to state how many school buildings will be planned over the next two financial years

DE: Budget

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Education why his Department had to surrender £10 million to the Minister of Finance and Personnel, at a time when schools are being forced to close or to make cutbacks, and when teachers are being made redundant.

(AQO 1189/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In line with the new arrangements my Department made a bid for £20.5 million, based on the latest information then available from Boards and schools, for the drawdown of school surpluses which was approved in the June Monitoring Round. The process - to use Monitoring Rounds - was recommended by the Finance Minister in his June Monitoring Executive Paper . In December 2011, in line with the arrangements agreed with DFP, my officials reviewed the position with the ELBs and this showed a forecast drawdown of £10.0m. Hence £10.5m was returned in the January 2011/12 Monitoring round to DFP and returned to the stock of Schools Surplus EYF. I have agreed with the Finance Minister that my officials will revisit the procedures around this process to ensure they are as robust as possible but I am conscious that the amount drawn down is based on the individual decisions of the c800 schools with surpluses.

No money has been lost by schools.

Schools: Measurement of Disadvantage

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to outline the measurements that are used to determine disadvantage in school age pupils.

(AQO 1190/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The main measure used by the Department to determine disadvantage in school age pupils is free school meals entitlement. This measure is used for a number of reasons:

- It is highly correlated with the multiple deprivation measure;
- It relates to an individual – and therefore more robust than a spatial measure which assumes everyone in an area is alike;
- It is current;
- It is readily available as part of the annual census return;
- It provides an indication of the relative concentration of potentially 'disadvantaged' pupils in a given school in a way that no other indicator currently does.

In addition, as part of the formula for the allocation of funding through the Extended schools Programme, the Department utilises the Multiple Deprivation Measure for the North (MDM). This

measure, used by all Executive Departments, takes administrative and survey data from a number of domains to produce a score and rank for an area.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the timeframe for the Education and Skills Authority becoming fully operational.

(AQO 1191/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The timetable remains as set out in the draft Programme for Government. I intend to bring a draft Bill to the Executive in the very near future, aiming for introduction before the Easter recess. The Education and Skills Authority will be fully operational from 1 April 2013.

Schools: Employment Skills

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Education what steps he will take to increase the teaching of employment specific skills in post primary schools.

(AQO 1192/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Employability is an integral part of the revised curriculum delivered at post-primary through the area of Learning for Life and Work (LLW). It aims to prepare all our young people for all aspects of life and work and to enable them to develop as confident and articulate individuals, able to play their full part in society and our economy.

The employability strand of LLW consists of Work in the Local and Global Economy, Career Management and Enterprise and Entrepreneurship. Pupils will reflect on their own skills and areas for self-development and explore the changing concept of 'career' and various types of jobs, including in the local area. They also explore enterprise and entrepreneurship which provides opportunities to investigate the need for creativity and enterprise, whether as an employer or employee, and to identify and practise some of the skills and develop the attributes associated with being enterprising.

Schools receive delegated budgets to enable them to deliver all aspects of the curriculum, including LLW areas of learning. In addition, my Department also provides funding to a number of organisations for programmes either in school or at larger events designed to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship and to introduce young people to the world of work. Such events help to create an enterprise culture within the classroom and further develop the skills and attitudes our young people need to become employable.

Pre-School Provision: Social Disadvantage

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Education, in relation to pre-school provision, how widening the definition of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, will improve young people's overall attainment in the long term.

(AQO 1194/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: One of the primary objectives underpinning all Departmental policy is to raise educational standards overall and to close the gaps in achievement between the highest and lowest achievers.

Research indicates that children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds tend to experience more difficulty at school than other children.

Reviewing and widening the definition of social disadvantage for the purpose of admission to pre-school places will ensure that more children who will benefit most from pre-school education will receive priority in accessing a funded pre-school place.

Early Years Strategy

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Education for an update on the development of the Early Years (0-6) Strategy.

(AQO 1195/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I want to ensure that Early Years services provide all children with the best possible start in life by providing access to high quality cohesive services for our youngest children and their families and the forthcoming Early Years Strategy will set a framework for that.

Departmental officials are currently considering the wide range of responses to the public consultation on the draft Early Years Strategy. Given the volume of responses, and the level of complexity in the range of views expressed in a number of cases, it has taken longer than expected to analyse the responses to the consultation. Once the analysis is complete I will need to consider how best to take forward the strategy in light of the views expressed. Officials continue to work with the Stakeholder Advisory Group to progress work in this area.

In the meantime we have a commitment in the draft Programme for Government to ensure that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it and are taking forward work on the outcome of the Review of Pre-School Admissions Arrangements, which I announced on 17 January 2012.

Department for Employment and Learning

Liaison Officer from the Holylands area of Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 5394/11-15, (i) whether this matter has been reported to the police; (ii) whether the liaison officer was physically or verbally abused; and (iii) whether she sustained an injury.

(AQW 6265/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The University of Ulster has advised that as the question relates to a specific individual within the University, it is not appropriate to release any further information.

Funding for Trade Unions

Mr McCallister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the level of funding his Department allocated to each trade union in the (i) 2000/01; (ii) 2005/06; and (iii) 2010/11 financial years.

(AQW 6496/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department for Employment and Learning funds Civil Servants on secondment to NIPSA to carry out full-time trade union duties. Details of the allocations for each of the years noted above are set out in Table 1 of the attached Annex.

Salary costs have been provided in terms of pay bands as release of the information requested would result in a breach of the Data Protection Act 1998, in particular the first data protection principle of the Act.

During 2 of the years outlined above, the Department allocated funding to 13 trade unions via the Northern Ireland Union Learning Fund (NIULF). The Fund was established in 2002 to promote activity by trade unions in support of the government's lifelong learning agenda. The Fund supports a wide range of learning opportunities, many in the Essential Skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT, and is open to union and non-union members. It is managed by the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (NICICTU) on behalf of the Department.

The overall total funding allocations per financial year via the NIULF are detailed in Table 2 of the attached Annex.

Details of the allocations to each trade union are outlined in Table 3 of the attached

ANNEX

TABLE 1

Financial Year	Civil Servants seconded to NIPSA	Grade	Pay Band
2000/2001	1	Senior Instructional Officer	£21,491 - £26,340
2005/2006	1	Senior Instructional Officer	£24,304 - £30,525
	1	Deputy Principal	£24,804 - £36,650
	0.5	Administrative Officer	£12,268 - £16,112
2010/11	1	Senior Instructional Officer	£27,975 - £30,985
	1	Deputy Principal	£32,913 - £38,893

TABLE 2

	Financial Year 2000/01	Financial Year 2005/06	Financial Year 2010/11
Number of trade unions funded via the NIULF	0	7	10
Total Funding	0	£222,675	£293,759

TABLE 3

Trade Union	Financial Year 2005/06	Financial Year 2010/11
AMICUS	£35,000	
ATGWU (Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union)	£23,275	
BECTU (Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinematograph and Theatre Union)		£5,000
BFAWU (Bakers, Food & Allied Workers' Union)		£31,791
CWU (Communication Workers' Union)	£35,000	£25,000
FBU (Fire Brigades' Union)	£30,000	£25,000
PCS/NIPSA (Public and Commercial Services Union/Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance)		£25,000
POA (Prisoner Officers' Association)	£29,400	
TSSA (Transport Salaried Staff Association)		£26,575

Trade Union	Financial Year 2005/06	Financial Year 2010/11
UCATT (Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians.)	£30,000	£35,430
UNISON	£40,000	£33,830
UNITE		£52,633
USDAW (Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers)		£33,500
Total	£222,675	£293,759

0845 Numbers

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how much revenue has been raised by his Department in each of the last three financial years by the usage of 0845 numbers.

(AQW 6510/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department has a total of 3 telephone lines dedicated to Northern Ireland domiciled students using the 0845 telephone number and 12 shared 0845 telephone lines available for all students. The help lines are operated on the Department's behalf by the Student Loans Company (SLC).

The administrative costs of providing the telephone service for students throughout the UK negate any revenue being raised. Therefore, no revenue surplus has been recorded for the last 3 financial years. Full details of the Northern Ireland share of telephone revenue raised and offset against administrative costs are provided in the following table.

Northern Ireland Prefix & telephone number (0845)	Revenue 2008-09	Revenue 2009-10	Revenue 2010-11
Overall Total	£4,485	£9,821	£10,075

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on how they have used EU polices, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to equip young people with the skills and ambition needed to contribute to the economy, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6540/11-15)

Dr Farry: My department will assist young people to improve their workforce skills and seek sustainable employment in 2011/12 using European Social Fund Programme monies and through this contribute to the 2007-13 output target of providing training to 4,500 ESF Priority 1 participants aged 16 to 19 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). To date over 1,644 young people have received ESF supported training through projects run by community and voluntary sector partners and the department is confident of reaching the agreed target of 4,500 within the life-time of the ESF Programme 2007- 2013.

Training for Success Programme

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many young people are engaged in pre-vocational schemes that are not included in the Training for Success programme, such as Include Youth's Give and Take scheme.

(AQW 6598/11-15)

Dr Farry: Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (ESF) Programme 2007-2013, entitled 'Helping people into sustainable employment', provides support for pre-vocational training projects not included in the Training for Success Programme. Projects supported under Priority 1 of the Programme commenced activity in April 2008 and have provided training for 6,000 young people aged 16 – 19 years old up to 30 September 2011. This includes 249 young people (aged 16 – 19 years) that commenced training with Priority 1 projects between January and September 2011 - the most recent period for which figures are available.

Also, LEMIS has a total of 43 young people in the 18 -24 year old age bracket who are either engaged on or who have recently completed a pre-vocational training course. These are broken down into the following areas:

Londonderry Cityside	10	West Belfast	7
Londonderry Waterside	17	Greater Shankill	5
Strabane	2	East Belfast	1
North Belfast	1	South Belfast	0

Non-Attendance Rates of Lecturers

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for the non-attendance rates of lecturers, and those conducting sessions, at each regional college in each of the last three years, broken down by subject.

(AQW 6618/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not hold the information requested by the Member; employment related issues are a matter for each College Governing Body.

I have passed this query to the six Further Education College Directors to respond to the Member directly.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what progress has been made with the key objective to optimise European programmes and policies for employment, learning and social inclusion, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6622/11-15)

Dr Farry: As part of the Barroso Taskforce, the Competitiveness and Employment Thematic Group, chaired by my Department, is conducting a mapping exercise of key EU employment, learning and social inclusion programmes and to ascertain if there are further opportunities for us within these. This exercise is set for completion by March 2012.

To assist my Department and others in our engagement with the European Union, four Desk Officers have been appointed for the Executive Office in Brussels in order to improve contacts with EU officials and help Departments pursue potential funding opportunities.

AccessNI Checks

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what financial support his Department offers to people on low incomes who require AccessNI checks as part of a job application.

(AQW 6658/11-15)

Dr Farry: Financial support is available for people working less than 16 hours a week, who are applying for jobs requiring AccessNI checks, through my Department's Adviser Discretion Fund. This fund facilitates the purchase of goods or services essential in assisting an unemployed person to apply for a job, or accept a job offer. If an unemployed person requires financial support to pay for an AccessNI check, he or she should make an appointment with an Employment Service Adviser in the local Jobs and Benefits office or JobCentre so that eligibility for funding can be determined.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on how he is using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to reduce poverty and inequality with programmes to increase skills and employment, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6683/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am working towards this goal by a range of means.

My Department is the Managing Authority for the European Social Fund, and Priority Two of the 2007-13 Programme is designed to develop a skilled and adaptable workforce by increasing the number of workers qualified to levels 2 and 3, reducing the numbers of workers without Essential (basic) Skills; and reducing gender segregation in the workplace. By improving workforce skills, Priority Two will help to increase productivity, enterprise, and competitiveness and ensure the right workforce skills for future employment opportunities. It will also promote sustained employment and social inclusion by focussing on those who lack essential skills and level 2 and level 3 qualifications.

Priority Two has an allocation of 67,280,121 Euros and has a target of attracting 89,000 participants throughout the life of the programme. The Department is currently on target to meet this objective.

My Department is a partner in an application for funding to the PROGRESS programme. The application was submitted on 29th July 2011 and the Department is currently awaiting confirmation regarding the outcome.

The project aims to bring together experts from several partner countries to exchange different measures and initiatives, such as the promotion of inclusive labour markets through the re-skilling of workers, anti-crisis measures for job creation and community coaches for the inclusion of the people who stand furthest from the labour market.

My Department is active in promoting Erasmus and EU policies within the Higher Education sector. It has membership of several national advisory boards and strategic working groups whose main functions are to provide strategic oversight for the UK Higher Education International and Europe Unit, and to provide expert input on UK/European Higher Education activities.

My Department also engages with a range of European bodies and organisations on an ongoing basis, for example the Regional Skills Education and Training (ReSET) network, in order to identify partners for future projects in support of themes in the NI Skills Strategy.

Also the DEL LEMIS programme match funds one ESF programme - "Jobs4u" - a cross-community employment initiative run by East Belfast Mission (Stepping Stone) in the Lower Newtownards Road and Short Strand.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on how he is using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to identify and reduce barriers to work for long-term unemployed people, lone parents and people with disabilities and health conditions, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6684/11-15)

Dr Farry: Priority 1 of the Northern Ireland European Social Fund (NIESF) Programme 2007-2013 focuses upon individuals at a particular disadvantage in the labour market and directly contributes to the achievement of objectives detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12' by identifying and addressing participants' personal barriers to entering and competing in the labour market. Priority 1 of the NIESF Programme 2007-2013 supports activities to extend employment opportunities for unemployed, long-term unemployed and inactive people and assists a broad range of participants, including lone parents, people with disabilities and health conditions.

Since the commencement of the programme in April 2008 a total of 38,127 participants have been assisted under Priority 1.

The Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS), a community employment initiative designed to help the “hardest to reach” in targeted areas match funds one ESF programme: “Jobs4u”, a cross-community employment initiative run by East Belfast Mission (Stepping Stone) in the Lower Newtownards Road and the Short Strand. The total cost of the project is £300k and the match is a cocktail of funding made up as follows: Belfast City Council £7k, East Belfast Mission £30k and LEMIS £12k (per year).

Job Training Initiatives

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what new job training initiatives his Department intends to target at unemployed young people.

(AQW 6691/11-15)

Dr Farry: Addressing youth unemployment is an Executive priority. I recently circulated to my Executive colleagues proposals for a new package of training and employment interventions targeted at young people. My ability to do more for young people will depend on the resources made available to my Department.

Reducing the Claimant Count

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he is taking to reduce the claimant count.

(AQW 6739/11-15)

Dr Farry: Unless there is a significant improvement in the economy it is likely that the claimant count will remain high in Northern Ireland in the short to medium term. In the meantime the full range of Employment Service programmes and services remain open to the unemployed to help them find work as quickly as possible.

This includes:

- Steps to Work, our main adult back to work programme;
- Pathways to Work for people with health conditions and disabilities;
- the Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) targeted at the most disengaged in the most disadvantaged areas;
- the suite of programmes offered by the Disability Employment Service for people with more severe disabilities;
- through its network of 35 Jobs & Benefits Offices and Jobcentres, the Employment Service continues to offer a personal adviser service to help people find work.

We are continually developing provision. For example, LEMIS was extended to 3 new areas last September – Newry & Mourne, Cookstown and Moyle. LEMIS is also developing a province-wide service to help ex-prisoners, the homeless and those recovering from drug and alcohol problems.

In recent days we put in place Step Ahead 2012 and will, subject to resource availability, reinstate a variant of the main Step Ahead strand of Steps to Work, with a cap on numbers, in April. I am also considering, with Executive colleagues, an initiative to address youth unemployment which will not only meet the specific needs of young people but will also contribute to the rebuilding and rebalancing the economy. My ability to introduce new measures will be determined by the resources made available to my Department.

Catholic Certificate of Religious Education

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) for his assessment of whether it would be prudent and sensible to allow students from Stranmillis University College, Belfast to sit the Catholic Certificate of Religious Education at St Mary's University College, Belfast; (ii) whether this idea has been suggested and considered; and (iii) if not, why this is the case.

(AQW 6767/11-15)

Dr Farry: I believe that all students should be able to access the Certificate of Religious Education locally and the way forward you have suggested is one option in making this a reality.

Workers who are Currently Employed at Kuehnie and Nagel

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what actions are being taken to protect the jobs of workers who are currently employed at Kuehnie and Nagel but are due to transfer to Geiss.

(AQW 6800/11-15)

Dr Farry: The proposed transfer of workers from Kuehne and Nagel to Geiss is a business decision that will have been taken by the respective companies, and is one in which my Department cannot intervene. Nor can my Department seek to protect jobs for employees, where they are facing either redundancy or transfer.

However, some of my officials met with representatives from Kuehne and Nagel in December 2011 to offer my Department's Redundancy Advice Service to those employees who would be affected by redundancy. The Redundancy Advice Service works in partnership with the Social Security Agency, Further Education Colleges, HM Revenue and Customs and other agencies to provide advice on alternative job opportunities and access to training courses and a range of other issues such as benefits and taxation.

In offering the service, my Department will co-ordinate and deliver a tailored package of support. Employees will be provided with information and professional advice about the options and support available, including employment, training and education opportunities and careers advice.

It has been agreed that the Redundancy Advice Service will be offered free of charge to Kuehne and Nagel employees during February.

Work Connect Programme

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the Work Connect Programme to help those on Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit find Supported Permitted Work; and when this programme is due to begin.

(AQW 6804/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department is finalising the procurement process for the delivery of the Work Connect programme with the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel. It is anticipated that Work Connect will be available early in the 2012/13 financial year to improve participant's employability and assist them to find and keep suitable full or part time work.

Supported Permitted Work

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what assistance is currently provided by his Department to those on Employment and Support Allowance and Incapacity Benefit who are seeking Supported Permitted Work.

(AQW 6805/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are four categories of Permitted Work under which the Social Security Agency can allow clients who are in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance or Incapacity Benefit or Income Support in lieu of Incapacity Benefit (credits only cases) to undertake some work and retain their entitlement to benefit. Supported Permitted Work is one of these four options.

Supported Permitted Work is defined by the Social Security Agency as work that is supported by someone who is employed by a public authority or a voluntary organisation, whose job it is to arrange work for people with disabilities. This could be work done in the community or in a sheltered workshop. It also includes work as part of a hospital treatment programme.

The Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) has agreed to provide support to appropriate applicants on Supported Permitted Work with effect from the 1st February 2012. This support will be delivered by the Department's Disability Employment Service (DES) through its team of specialist Access to Work Advisers.

Access to Work Advisers will support the clients through a range of actions, including the following:

- addressing issues raised during the job settling in period ;
- advising the client in response to issues raised about benefit entitlement and where necessary, referring the client to the relevant Department;
- suggesting adjustments required to the working environment or employment duties;
- discussing or helping to address problems associated with transport to and from the workplace;
- discuss disability or health condition issues/concerns with the employer and/or with work colleagues;
- offering advice and guidance on Disability Employment Service and DEL employment programmes and products ;
- visiting the client at their workplace ;
- working with the employer to help structure the job and to ensure that the client is able to fulfil their full potential;

Clients requesting Social Security Agency approval to access Supported Permitted Work may also seek support from sources other than DEL. Alternative sources include disability organisations or certain health professionals.

Legislative Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 6812/11-15)

Dr Farry: I have already submitted my proposals for primary legislation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

St Mary's University College, Belfast

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what meetings he or his officials have had, or have planned, with the Equality Commission in relation to employment disparity at St Mary's University College, Belfast.

(AQW 6828/11-15)

Dr Farry: I and my officials have had no meetings with the Equality Commission in relation to employment disparity at St Mary's University College. No meetings are planned in respect of this issue. This is a matter for which the Equality Commission has responsibility.

Unemployment

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in light of the unemployment rate in the UK rising to its highest level in seventeen years, what action he will take to ensure a continuing reduction in the unemployment rate in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1201/11-15)

Dr Farry: Unless there is a significant improvement in the economy it is likely that unemployment will remain high in Northern Ireland in the short to medium term. In the meantime the full range of Employment Service programmes and services remain open to the unemployed to help them find work as quickly as possible.

This includes –

- Steps to Work, our main adult back to work programme.
- Pathways to Work for people with health conditions and disabilities.
- The Local Employment Intermediary Service (LEMIS) targeted at the most disengaged in the most disadvantaged areas.
- The suite of programmes offered by the Disability Employment Service for people with more severe disabilities.
- Through its network of 35 Jobs & Benefits Offices and Jobcentres, the Employment Service continues to offer a personal adviser service to help people find work.

We are continually developing provision. For example, LEMIS was extended to 3 new areas last September – Newry & Mourne, Cookstown and Moyle. LEMIS is also developing a province-wide service to help ex-prisoners, the homeless and those recovering from drug and alcohol problems. Some very innovative work is underway for these particular groups. In recent days we put in place Step Ahead 2012 and will, subject to resource availability, reinstate the main Step Ahead strand of Steps to Work in April.

As indicated in my earlier answer Executive colleagues are considering an initiative to address youth unemployment which will not only meet the specific needs of young people but will also contribute to the rebuilding and rebalancing the economy.

Programme-led Apprenticeships

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what measures his Department has taken to maximise the number of public sector employers involved in offering placements for participants in the Programme-Led Apprenticeships scheme.

(AQO 1202/11-15)

Dr Farry: I am aware that some training suppliers are finding it difficult to source the requisite work placements for participants on the Programme-Led Apprenticeship programme, particularly in the current economic climate.

To assist with this, my Department has secured 100 placement opportunities from the Northern Ireland Departments. In addition, a number of public sector placements are available with local councils, the Housing Executive, colleges of further education and schools.

Training suppliers have been urged to continue in their efforts in search of placements and to contact public sector bodies operating in their locality with a view to maximising these opportunities.

Employment: Construction Sector

Mr Murphy asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department is helping to provide job opportunities for unemployed people within the construction sector.

(AQO 1208/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not create employment opportunities. Anyone within the construction industry who has become unemployed may volunteer to participate in the Department's main adult return to work programme Steps to Work which offers opportunities to gain skills and experience in a range of sectors and providing people who are unemployed within the construction industry the opportunity to gain skills in a different area.

My Department is working closely with Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) to ensure that robust social clauses for the long-term unemployed and apprenticeships are built into all upcoming public sector contracts. Following a request from the Minister of Culture Arts and Leisure, officers from my Department are currently working with those involved in the three Sports Stadia to include social clauses.

My Department has recently set up a Social Clause Delivery Forum to share best practice approaches across the public sector, to create local skills and training opportunities, and to create employment opportunities by maximising opportunities from public sector contracts. The group consists of other government Departments, local council representation, CPD and the Construction Employers Federation.

Broadband: Students

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department will conduct a survey on the number of students in higher and further education who are disadvantaged by poor broadband provision.

(AQO 1209/11-15)

Dr Farry: Access to broadband in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment. All further education colleges and universities here have 1 Gigabit (1,000 Megabit) internet circuits, which gives them excellent broadband provision. Only 30 of the 600 further education colleges across the UK have such a high level of broadband capacity, with the rest having a capacity of 100 Megabits or less.

All our further and higher education institutions use this high speed broadband capability to enhance teaching, and students are able to take advantage of this technology in their learning.

North West Regional College: Governance

Mr McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning if he is in possession of all the details pertaining to the ongoing governance problems at the North West Regional College, and what measures he will take to resolve the matter.

(AQO 1205/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has maintained close contact with the Governing Body of North West Regional College regarding the ongoing dispute between the College's management and one of the College's Unions. The Governing Body is the employer of all College staff and, as such, oversees the employment policies and practices implemented by the College's management. In dealing with the immediate dispute, the Governing Body has taken a number of steps to address the concerns which have been raised. In addition to acting upon the findings of an independent review of the College's application of redundancy procedures, the Governing Body has announced a review of the business case and curriculum audit that led to the redundancy programme. A member of the College's staff and a representative of the Department will also participate in that exercise. The Governing Body is also committed to undertaking a comprehensive assessment of employee relations within the College as an initial step in the restoration of a harmonious working environment.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

InvestNI

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in circumstances where InvestNI has returned £39 million of its annual budget to the Department, what action is being taken to ensure

that (i) InvestNI is carrying out its functions properly; (ii) investment in local businesses is prioritised and promoted; and (iii) business investment budgets are managed and allocated correctly during the recession.

(AQW 6416/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Against the last Programme for Government, Invest NI met or exceeded all of its targets and goals. Invest NI's performance over the last four years has been exceptional.

However, it is recognised that in the last two years the economic climate has worsened, particularly across Europe and the USA. With declining demand, tighter funding conditions and reduced business confidence many companies continue to deliberately postpone or slow down investment plans to preserve cash, with a consequential impact on the local business base, largely comprising SMEs. This has a direct impact upon Invest NI's ability to utilise its budgets as drawdown is driven by external third parties over which Invest NI has no direct control.

Invest NI's performance is the subject of formal quarterly review by my Department and the agency's performance against key indicators is also reported on as part of the monitoring of the implementation of each Programme for Government. Invest NI activity is heavily focused on supporting local companies, and SMEs in particular.

Provisional results for the period April to December 2011 show that:

- offers to local companies represented around 94% of activity;
- 67% of all assistance offered was to SMEs;
- there was a 69% increase in the number of offers made to SMEs compared to the same period last year; and
- support to local SMEs increased by 23% on the same period last year and accounted for 97% of all assistance offered to local companies.

In addition:

- Boosting Business initiative was launched in November 2011, including the Jobs Fund; and
- All services have been reviewed to determine how they can be made available to a wider business base and changes implemented to make them easier for companies to avail of.

Since then, over 2,250 enquiries have been received from local SMEs keen to find out about the support available, while over 650 individuals registered to attend one of the "Focus on Finance" seminars, with demand being such that an additional three events have already been scheduled.

In order to assess the level of Programme budget required, an evaluation of the following three components is carried out: -

- Brought forward commitments; an estimation of the budget that is required to fund existing contractual commitments to client companies from previous years.
- Work in Progress; an assessment of the impact that current work in progress will have on budget allocations.
- New business; refers to the level of business/ offers that is required to deliver the Corporate Plan and Programme for Government targets.

An annual budget is allocated to the appropriate programmes on the basis of the above assessment. Then a forecast of how the budget will be drawn down on a monthly basis is prepared. This profiling will be based on information received from client companies overlaid with an assessment of any other relevant factors including how companies have performed against previous financial assistance offers.

The current challenging economic circumstances, which has resulted in delays to existing projects and new investments plans, makes it very difficult to predict the demand for Invest NI funding as companies predictions of what they can deliver are often over optimistic or may alter, at very short notice, as

global conditions fluctuate in different markets. However the current economic conditions have required us to be even more robust in our review of current and planned projects and we have attempted, wherever possible, to mitigate against known shortfalls through allocating budget to new projects and accelerating other existing projects.

Electricity Generation

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the current average cost, excluding all capital costs, of electricity generation from wind compared to the combined average cost of electricity generation.

(AQW 6422/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Excluding capital costs, the cost to wind generators of generating electricity is their annual operating costs as their cost of fuel is effectively zero. The Arup review of generation costs and deployment potential of renewable electricity technologies in the UK published in June 2011 identified average annual operating costs for onshore wind of between £30,000 and £70,000 per MW installed depending on the site conditions, technology type and turbine size.

Conventional generators also have annual operating costs however generation costs are calculated per MWh. Work undertaken by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation suggests that the average cost of electricity generation within the Single Electricity Market for 2011 is £36 (€42) per MWh. This figure is made up of the cost of fuel plus variable running costs and excludes capital and fixed running costs. SEM generators are paid in Euros and the sterling figure is calculated from average currency conversion figures for 2011.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 5407/11-15, (i) to detail the chemicals that were used, and in what quantities, to conduct each hydraulic fracturing operation; (ii) from where the water was taken to conduct these operations; (iii) how much water was used in each of these operations; and (iv) how the waste water was disposed of.

(AQW 6424/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

(i) The chemicals used in the hydraulic fracturing operations at the wells were as follows:

Name	Units	Slisgarrow No. 2	Knock Beg No. 1	Mullanawinna No. 1
15% Hydrochloric acid pre-flush	Gallons	105	105	245
Nitrogen (Base gas)	MMSCF*	4.44	1.52	3.5
20/40# Sand (Proppant)	lb	358,000	455,000	375,000
Envirohib Corrosion Inhibitor	Gallons	0.2	0.2	0.5
CMHPG Guar gellant	lb	2240	1665	1919
Foam surfactant	Gallons	298	222	255
Breaker E Enzyme Breaker	Gallons	224	166	192
X-cide 207 Bactericide	lb	8.5	6.3	7.3

* MMSCF - Million standard cubic feet

(ii) The fresh water was brought by tanker in to the well sites.

- (iii) The following volumes of water were used in the hydraulic fracturing of the three wells:
- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| Slisgarrow No. 2 | 74,500 gallons |
| Knock Beg No. 1 | 55,000 gallons |
| Mullanawinna No. 1 | 63,500 gallons |
- (iv) The waste water was removed by tanker for offsite disposal.

Invitation to Tender for the Go for It Programme

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to explain the delay in drawing up the Invitation to Tender for the Go for It programme.

(AQW 6430/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There was no delay in drawing up the invitation to tender for the Business Start Programme (BSP). Invest NI followed standard procedures in developing and securing approval to deliver a new BSP.

In late 2010, following a review of the former Enterprise Development Programme and consultation with Councils, Invest NI developed a proposal for a new Programme.

An independent economic appraisal of the proposal was initiated in January 2011 following a procurement process to appoint a consultant. A draft economic appraisal was received by Invest NI in March 2011. In line with procedures this was reviewed and challenged by both Invest NI and DETI economists before being finalised in early May 2011. Invest NI then progressed the case through the appropriate internal approval processes and secured final approval to proceed in June 2011.

The invitation to tender for the new BSP was then finalised and initiated with the final approvals in place.

Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the total number of civil servants in her Department who live in the Foyle constituency and travel to work in the Greater Belfast area; and the total cost to her Department of subsidising the travel.

(AQW 6516/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI has no staff who live in the Foyle constituency.

Profits Made by Wind Farm Developers

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the profits made by wind farm developers, compared to those of other energy providers, and the reasons for any anomaly in profits; and what powers she has to address any anomaly.

(AQW 6543/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department does not monitor the profits of energy companies. That role falls to the Utility Regulator and the regulated companies are required to submit accounts, from which profit figures can be extracted, to the Utility Regulator on an annual basis.

It is also the case, that as part of the regular price control process, the Utility Regulator needs to ensure that the companies are able to generate a sufficient level of profit to secure necessary future investment in Northern Ireland's energy infrastructure in order to maintain security of supply and meet renewable energy targets.

Specifically in relation to wind generators, they are incentivised via the issue of Renewable Obligation Certificates (ROCs). A Banding Review of ROC levels has been completed and a consultation on proposed ROC levels for on shore wind generators for the period 2013 – 2017 has recommended a reduction from 1 ROC per megawatt hour to 0.9 ROC/MWh to reflect changes in technology costs.

Broadband Enabling Technology

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) what types of businesses qualify for broadband enabling technology through the Broadband Fund; (ii) whether agricultural holdings qualify; and (iii) how many properties in each district council area receive broadband using broadband enabling technology.

(AQW 6582/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Broadband Enabling Technology is not supported by the Broadband Fund, but rather, it is one of three technologies currently used by BT to provide services under the Next Generation Broadband Contract. The other technologies are bonded Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line technology (ADSL) and Very-high-bit-rate Digital Subscriber Line (VDSL2) technology. Broadband Enabling Technology is usually deployed to qualifying consumers where digital subscriber line technologies (whether ADSL or VDSL2) cannot, or are extremely unlikely to, provide a minimum service of 2 Megabits per second.

It is available to all types of businesses including agricultural businesses where services can be provided.

The contract aims to deliver services to at least 85% of businesses in Northern Ireland so it is the case that some businesses will not be able to avail of these technologies and will have to explore other options. That is why I announced on 6 January 2012, a contract with Onwave Ltd for the provision of satellite broadband services offering download speeds of between 6 Mbps and 10 Mbps. These services are available across all areas of Northern Ireland.

There are around 100 locations across Northern Ireland where Broadband Enabling Technology has been deployed to date. Data is not collected for each district council area.

Child Internet Safety

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the strategic development within her Department on child internet safety.

(AQW 6584/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has no responsibility for, or involvement with, any strategic development on child internet safety.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how they are using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to create new sustainable and innovative job opportunities, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6623/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department contributes to the delivery of three of the four Thematic Priorities identified in "Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12". Specific activities undertaken over the period, aimed at supporting NI economic development and creating new sustainable and innovative job opportunities, include:

- Encouraging companies and research bodies to engage more fully with the 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities. This has involved supporting the SME sector, Universities and other research bodies to prepare applications and find partners. In the period 31 October 2010 to 31 October 2011, Northern Ireland based researchers (in private companies, academia and other) secured €11.54m from this source,
- Engaging directly with EU counterparts through membership of networks such as the "European Regions Research and Innovation Network" (ERRIN) which facilitates knowledge exchange, joint action and project partnerships between its members with the aim of strengthening their research and innovation capacities.

- Participating in and hosting EU workshops to exchange best practice and identify learning/funding opportunities for Northern Ireland in areas such as Smart Specialisation and Horizon 2020.
- Imminent appointment of additional staff resource based in Brussels, to engage directly with the EU institutions on this agenda and identify new funding opportunities for NI.

DETI continues to manage drawdown of the €306 million European Regional Development funds available to NI through the Sustainable Competitiveness Programme, 2007-2013.

Small Businesses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what further actions her Department can take to encourage small businesses to use the internet to advertise and sell their services.

(AQW 6661/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There are a number of initiatives my department provides to support Northern Ireland businesses wishing to sell products or services via the Internet.

Logon-ni is a programme sponsored by my Department, providing free and impartial advice to SMEs throughout Northern Ireland on the benefits of broadband. Logon-ni has already assisted 4,133 SMEs. Within the many ICT solutions offered, Logon-ni encourages companies to consider using the internet as part of their marketing campaigns, helping businesses keep in touch with existing clients, gain new clients and significantly strengthen their online presence.

Invest Northern Ireland has a network of ICT advisors based across Northern Ireland helping businesses make best use of ICT to be more productive or access new online markets. This includes help for businesses with an export focus wishing to market or sell their services online. These advisors can offer 1:1 advice to businesses and regularly organise seminars on a range of ICT topics. There is also a wealth of online guidance available on the nibusinessinfo.co.uk website.

The Local Economic Development (LED) measure of the EU Sustainable Competitiveness Programme is available to councils to support activities that will address locally identified needs with a view to improving the local economy. Invest NI works closely with Councils to help identify complementary projects and programmes and has agreed to provide up to 25% of total project costs where the anticipated outcomes align with Invest NI priorities. A number of Councils have or are in the process of developing initiatives focused on developing the capability of businesses in the area of ICT and e-commerce.

Investment Opportunities in the Far East

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what business and investment opportunities her Department is exploring in the Far East, and in particular, China.

(AQW 6662/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The economic and political environment in the Asia Pacific region is evolving rapidly and China's economy in particular has continued to grow despite global economic conditions. As a result, the region presents Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and significant Trade opportunities to Northern Ireland. Invest NI continually reevaluates its strategic focus in order to take advantage of any emerging opportunities.

Invest NI currently has representation in China, Taiwan and Japan. These offices focus on assisting Northern Ireland companies on market entry and export growth, generating inward investment opportunities and developing university linkages.

Over the past eight years, Invest NI has taken 22 missions with a total of 562 company participants to this region. As a result of this strategy, Northern Ireland manufacturing sales and exports to the Asia region in 2011 were valued at £439.5m. Two trade missions to China are planned for 2012/13, with an emphasis on returning to existing regions, but with a focus on developing links with some of the Chinese growth cities such as Chongqing.

FDI levels from the Asia Pacific region into Northern Ireland have been historically low. However, research indicates that this will increase in the coming years, particularly in Northern Ireland's key knowledge based sectors. Invest NI has established a dedicated FDI representative in Shanghai, China and will be focusing on developing FDI opportunities in the country.

Invest NI, in conjunction with UK Trade & Investment, RBS and Ulster Bank held a Doing Business in Asia event in February 2011 which was attended by 120 companies. The event brought together market specialists for 8 markets in Asia. The event is being held again in February 2012 focusing on India, China, Singapore and Malaysia.

It has also developed good working relationships with the Diplomatic Posts in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shanghai and Beijing and is a member of the China Britain Business Council (CBBC).

In addition, Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster both have close links to similar institutions in China and are working in partnership on research projects and exchanges between staff and students.

Invest NI's strategy means that it is well placed to take advantage of the significant opportunity from Asia Pacific and China in particular, with such relationships and exchanges contributing significantly to transforming Northern Ireland into a technology-led and innovation driven economy, and one focused on global business.

Reducing Levels of Poverty

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what policies her Department has introduced specifically to reduce levels of poverty; and what policies she plans to introduce to reduce levels of poverty.

(AQW 6673/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy sets out how the Executive plans to grow a prosperous local economy by 2030. Higher levels of employment and prosperity will be key to reducing poverty levels but delivery of the objectives of the Economic Strategy will be the responsibility of the Executive, not just my Department.

Recognising the importance of job creation in tackling poverty, as part of the PfG and NI Economic Strategy my Department has committed to promote 25,000 new jobs by March 2015.

DETI have also introduced a number of interventions which are specifically aimed at helping those in poverty.

In order to improve the availability of affordable credit, my Department has been liaising with HM Treasury and the Financial Services Authority on the introduction of legislation to allow NI credit unions to expand the range of services which they can currently offer. These changes will be implemented from 31 March 2012. It is also planned to introduce further legislation in the Assembly during the current mandate which will mirror changes introduced in GB in January 2012.

In addition, DETI has taken a number of steps to tackle the issue of fuel poverty including the opening of the gas and electricity market to competition; the creation of a Single Electricity Market and the mutualisation of energy assets. A number of actions have also been undertaken to improve domestic energy efficiency which is one of the main contributors to fuel poverty

My Department also provides a debt advice service which aims to help those with immediate debt problems meet the challenge put upon them by their circumstances and encourages them to regain control of their financial obligations. Furthermore, the Debt Relief Scheme came into operation on 30 June 2011. The Scheme has bridged the gap in legislative provision to address the needs of people in debt on low income, by providing debt relief for financially excluded, vulnerable people.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what progress has been made with the key objective to optimise European programmes and policies for economic development, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6682/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department contributes to the delivery of three of the four Thematic Priorities identified in "Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12". Specific activities undertaken over the period, aimed at supporting NI economic development and creating new sustainable and innovative job opportunities, include:

- Encouraging companies and research bodies to engage more fully with the 7th Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities. This has involved supporting the SME sector, Universities and other research bodies to prepare applications and find partners. In the period 31 October 2010 to 31 October 2011, Northern Ireland based researchers (in private companies, academia and other) secured €11.54m from this source,
- Engaging directly with EU counterparts through membership of networks such as the "European Regions Research and Innovation Network" (ERRIN) which facilitates knowledge exchange, joint action and project partnerships between its members with the aim of strengthening their research and innovation capacities.
- Participating in and hosting EU workshops to exchange best practice and identify learning/funding opportunities for Northern Ireland in areas such as Smart Specialisation and Horizon 2020.
- Imminent appointment of additional staff resource based in Brussels, to engage directly with the EU institutions on this agenda and identify new funding opportunities for NI.

DETI continues to manage drawdown of the €306 million European Regional Development funds available to NI through the Sustainable Competitiveness Programme, 2007-2013.

Go for It Programme

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the current legal challenge by Enterprise NI against InvestNI's tendering process for the Go For It programme, to detail (i) the service that is being provided in the absence of the Go For It programme; (ii) the number of mentoring hours provided during the period of the legal challenge to date; (iii) the number of business plans produced; (iv) the number of new business start-ups; and (v) how these figures compare to the same period last year.

(AQW 6708/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Invest NI is not delivering a Business Start Programme but has put in place appropriate arrangements to respond to enquiries and to ensure that those individuals with an interest in establishing their own business are able to access relevant advice and guidance during the period of delay.

As part of Invest NI's core service, through the Regional Office network, staff can provide one to one advice, business clinics and business plan support. Invest NI is also proactively engaging with other stakeholders providing services in this area including DEL and Princes Trust NI and where appropriate is signposting individuals to these organisations for support.

- (ii) Invest NI is not providing mentoring hours.
- (iii) Invest NI is not in a position to provide figures for the number of business plans produced by start up businesses across Northern Ireland. Invest NI will review this area within the next two months.

- (iv) The number of business starts can only be established as part of a review of those producing business plans. This would also have been the case in the former Enterprise Development Programme (EDP). It is too early for such an exercise to be undertaken.
- (v) Not applicable given answers to (iii) and (iv).

Claimant Count

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps she is taking to reduce the current claimant count.

(AQW 6728/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The draft Northern Ireland Economic Strategy (NIES) identifies a number of measures, across all Executive Departments, which will create jobs and increase employment.

Specific actions which my Department will deliver include:

- The promotion of 6,300 jobs in locally owned companies (with 50% paying above the Private Sector Median);
- The promotion of 6,500 new jobs in new start-up businesses;
- The promotion of 6,300 jobs with 4,000 to be created by March 2014 under the Jobs Fund; and
- The promotion of 5,900 jobs from inward investors (with 75% paying salaries above the Private Sector Median)

As part of its Boosting Business initiative, Invest NI provides a range of advice, guidance and support that will help local companies survive the impact of the economic downturn and thereby maintain or increase levels of employment.

Titanic Signature Project

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the contract entered into in relation to the Titanic Signature Project; (ii) whether there are any social clauses in the contract; and (iii) whether apprenticeships were created as a result of the social clauses; and if so, to detail the number and location of the apprenticeships.

(AQW 6747/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Titanic Signature Building is a £97million project, with funding having been provided by Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour Commissioners, Titanic Quarter Ltd and NITB.

The Central Procurement Directorate's (CPD) sustainability clauses, which cover social, economic and environmental issues, have been incorporated into the contract. They cover:

- Training and skills development - through apprenticeships;
- Employment – including planning and measures to target the long-term unemployed;
- Promotion of equality in the workplace;
- Sustainability - with a requirement to achieve a BREEAM Excellent rating; and,
- Encouraging the establishment of local partners.

There is also further specific clauses that the contractor agrees to recruit one apprentice, either directly or through the supply chain for each £2million of project value.

To date the Department for Employment and Learning has validated 25 Apprentices and are assessing a further 8. The location of validated Apprentices has shown that they have come from a variety of locations such as; Belfast; Newtownards; Newcastle; Newtownabbey; Newry; Antrim and Cookstown.

The validation evidence does confirm that Apprenticeships have been sustained during this difficult downturn period as a direct result of the Titanic Signature Building social clause contract although there is no evidence that new apprentice opportunities have been created.

Jobs and Growth in the Food Production Sector

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps have been taken to promote jobs and growth in the food production sector.

(AQW 6754/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The steps that have been taken to promote jobs and growth in the food production sector include continued investment by my Department through Invest NI; the introduction of the jobs fund and the longer term strategic development of the sector through the Food Strategy Board.

In terms of investment in the last financial year 2010/2011 over £8million was offered to food production companies leveraging total planned investment of £62 million. In the current financial year to date over £3 million has been offered leveraging a further £29 million investment.

Through the Jobs Fund Invest NI to date has provided employment support to four food production businesses which have already created 26 new jobs against a target of 31. There are also a further twelve projects across Northern Ireland at various stages of development which collectively have the potential to create a further 250 new jobs. Invest NI has also made a presentation on the Jobs Fund to a wide range of key stakeholders, local councils and industry bodies including the Food Industry Advisory Panel and the UK Dairy Council. Invest NI is continuing to work closely with the food production sector to promote the Jobs Fund and to identify further new employment based projects.

My Department is currently working closely with DARD to establish a new Food Strategy Board. One of its key objectives is to update the current strategy and develop a longer term vision for the sector. This will feature building on the current growth of the sector and the promotion of new jobs.

Third Energy Liberalisation Package

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in relation to the transposition of the Third Energy Liberalisation Package, (i) what is the current position on approval of the chosen model; and (ii) what contingencies are in place should the regulator or the European Commission decline approval.

(AQW 6789/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Gas and Electricity (Internal Markets) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 place an obligation on relevant gas and electricity transmission licensees to be certified by the Utility Regulator as complying with the unbundling requirements. The Regulations contain provision for a number of models, all of which satisfy the requirements of the Third Energy Package. The Utility Regulator is currently discharging its obligations in line with the process for certification contained in the legislation.

Applications to InvestNI for Funding for Hotels

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the applications made to InvestNI for funding for hotels, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6799/11-15)

Mrs Foster: In the period from 1st April 2003 to 23rd January 2012 Invest NI has received 63 applications for capital grant support for hotel projects as detailed below:

Belfast East	0	Mid Ulster	1
Belfast North	1	Newry & Armagh	2
Belfast South	0	North Antrim	6

Belfast West	2	North Down	3
East Antrim	2	South Antrim	1
East Londonderry	10	South Down	2
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	6	Strangford	2
Foyle	11	Upper Bann	4
Lagan Valley	7	West Tyrone	3

It should be noted that over the period more than one application may have been received for the same or a similar project. A project which was previously withdrawn or rejected may be the subject of a new application.

Ulster Bank Jobs

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what contact she has made with the Ulster Bank in relation to the announcement that 350 jobs are to be cut.

(AQW 6806/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A stable and competitive banking sector that meets the needs of businesses and individuals is vital for economic recovery in Northern Ireland. While I have no statutory control of the banking sector, we have met with the main banks in Northern Ireland, most recently in December 2011, to emphasise the importance of supporting business development and growth. I also spoke with a representative of the Ulster Bank on the evening the redundancy announcement was made.

Both the Finance Minister and I will continue to liaise with the UK and Irish governments and the local banking sector where appropriate to ensure that any impact on Northern Ireland's banks is minimised, and that we continue to have a competitive banking sector.

Energy Provision

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what communication her Department has had with the EU Commission, over the past year, on present and future energy provision, competition and prices in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 7009/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has engaged with the EU Commission on a number of energy policy and legislative issues over the past year to develop greater energy market integration and competitiveness.

Oil Exploration in Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the oil exploration in Carrickfergus.

(AQW 7086/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Licensee, Infrastrata plc, commissioned a seismic survey over the licence area which was completed in November 2011. When the seismic data processing has been completed the data will be interpreted, and integrated with existing geological and geophysical data, in order to identify any potential exploration drilling targets. The company website contains further useful information on the exploration programme, available at the following address:

http://www.infrastrata.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=184&Itemid=101

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether Tamboran has finished its desktop study on hydraulic fracturing in Co Fermanagh, and is seeking to proceed with the drilling process in a shorter timeframe than had been previously outlined.

(AQW 7343/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tamboran Resources Pty Ltd issued a press release on 1st February 2012 announcing that it had completed the “first part of its analysis to determine the feasibility of shale gas exploration in Northern Ireland” and that it planned to publish the full analysis by the end of this year.

This analysis is only one part of the work programme, for years 1 – 3 of the licence, that the company needs to complete before it can submit an application for permission to drill an exploration well. Details of the work programme are available in the PL2/10 licence document, which can be downloaded from the DETI website at www.detini.gov.uk/deti-energy-index/minerals-and-petroleum/petroleum_licensing_2.htm. The additional work will include a 12 month baseline environmental assessment with studies on groundwater, air quality, noise levels and seismic activity. When the company has completed these studies it will publish the findings in early 2013 and then outline its intentions as to how it will proceed to the next stage which would involve applying for permission to drill.

The timescale outlined above is consistent with my statement in the Assembly debate of 6th December 2011 that “it is unlikely that an application will come to the Department for at least another 12 to 18 months”.

Department of the Environment

Car Wash Regulations

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for his assessment of the adequacy of the regulations around car wash facilities; (ii) whether his Department has any plans to review the regulations; and (iii) what action his Department has taken to explore developments in other jurisdictions in relation to car wash regulations.

(AQW 3822/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): Car wash facilities fall within the definition of development assigned by Article 11(1) of the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991 and therefore require planning permission from the Department.

In relation to car washes making a discharge to a storm sewer or directly to a waterway, Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Water Management Unit protects the water environment primarily through the administration, monitoring and enforcement of discharge consents, in accordance with the Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999.

Both the Planning Order and the Water Order empower the Department to take enforcement action should a car wash development fail to comply with the requirements of either. The statutory framework outlined seems adequate to control planning and the operation of car wash developments.

In relation to the regulation of car wash developments, I have asked officials to advise of the law and practice in other jurisdictions and shall review the matter.

NIEA has worked with the Environment Agency in England and Wales, and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency to produce Pollution Prevention Guideline 13 (PPG 13) ‘Vehicle washing and cleaning’. PPG 13 details the statutory requirements for vehicle wash operators and highlights best practice measures to prevent such developments causing pollution in the water environment. PPG 13 can be viewed and downloaded from the following web address:

<http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/PDF/PMH00307BMDX-E-E.pdf>

Spend in the West Belfast Constituency

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of the Environment to detail his Department's, and its arm's-length bodies', spend in the West Belfast constituency in each of the last three years; and the proposed spend for each year until 2015.

(AQW 5263/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department pays grants to third parties as well as payments to suppliers of goods and services located within the West Belfast constituency. Records of spend are not kept at constituency level and therefore a manual analysis of all individual payments would have to be undertaken which may not result in the necessary information being identified to answer this question.

However, to identify examples of grants and goods/services within the West Belfast constituency, an analysis based on postcodes rather than the constituency boundary, has been conducted. Whilst this may broadly capture grants to third parties and payments to suppliers within the constituency, it does not reflect the actual expenditure that is likely to be spent in the constituency. There may be suppliers located in the West Belfast constituency who have been paid for services/supplies which are provided or delivered outside the consistency. Likewise there is likely to be third parties and suppliers who receive funding outside the West Belfast constituency but deliver services within the constituency. In light of this a postcode analysis is likely to produce inaccurate data.

Despite this, a manual exercise has been conducted on some of the larger payments to help identify examples of grants and payments to suppliers of goods and services delivered within the West Belfast constituency from 2008-09 to 2011-12. For information, these are set out in the table below:

Grants/funding	Purpose	£			
		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Belfast Hills Partnership	Grants for conservation of Belfast Hills	81,384	89,560	70,130	40,000
Colin Glen Trust	Provision of funding to support Colin Glen Park	175,000	157,901	171,832	175,000
St Colemans' Parish Church	Listed building grant			20,410	
Clonard Monastery	Listed building grant	65,230		81,785	50,000
Goods & Services					
Belfast Media Group	Advertising Services		58,703	69,915	63,000
Island Cleaning Services	Provision of cleaning services	337,994	307,035	242,823	180,000

Department's Information Service

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the current (i) number; and (ii) annual cost of staff employed in his Department's Information Service.

(AQW 5351/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The number of staff employed in the Department's Press Office is 7, of which 5 are EIS staff and 2 administrative staff with total salary costs of £260,000.

There are other functions which technically come under the heading of DOE Communications, but they don't interact with the media. These can be summarised as follows:

- 7 staff in e communications whose work includes DOE Internet, Intranet, and NI Direct Franchises

- 6 staff in marketing and design whose work includes advertising, exhibitions, conferences, design and print and numerous events for the public to enjoy our built and natural heritage including, for example, European Heritage Open Days
- 2 staff in education and interpretation whose work includes developing eco schools and living history information
- 1 member of staff on rethink waste, a dedicated strategy to reduce waste and improve recycling rates
- 2 administration staff

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment what has been the total spend on hospitality by his Department in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6360/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The table below provides the expenditure on hospitality by the Department for the years 2006/07 to 2010/11.

Business Area	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £
Department (excluding agencies)	29,420	44,732	40,166	42,287	15,497
Northern Ireland Environment Agency	23,419	29,529	41,218	31,635	10,652
Planning Service	15,002	30,739	27,616	19,078	6,454
Driver and Vehicle Agency	19,011	8,238	10,996	9,009	2,353
Total	86,852	113,238	119,996	102,009	34,956

The significant reduction in hospitality expenditure, of almost 66% between 2009/10 and 2010/11, is in response to the difficult financial position the Department has continued to face, mainly due to the dramatic and significant fall in planning application income. My Department has critically reviewed, and continues to explore, all opportunities for minimising spend whilst protecting the delivery of frontline services.

I have put in place procedures, where I receive on a quarterly basis, updates on spend such as hospitality, conferences, accommodation, etc., to ensure these costs are kept to a minimum. This has allowed me to reallocate resources to support frontline services and provide essential grant funding to non government organisations.

Confidence in the Planning System

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to improve public confidence in the planning system, following a Friends of the Earth survey which showed that four out of five respondents described the current system as poor or very poor.

(AQW 6526/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I believe in the radical reform of planning across a range of levels to update its approach in ways that have not been addressed in recent times.

Survey evidence on the planning service can be diverse revealing good levels of satisfaction in the contents of the FOE survey, which assessed the opinion of people who work with the service. Nonetheless, there are good opportunities for improvement.

I am working on a number of fronts to reform and remodel the planning system so that it supports the future economic and social development needs of Northern Ireland in a way which results in improved confidence from all users and protects the enormous assets of our built and natural heritage.

The reform to the planning system contained within the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 will result in a modernised system with quicker local development plans, faster decisions on planning applications, faster and fairer appeals and tougher and simpler enforcement. It will also enhance the rights and opportunities of all those who wish to become involved in the planning process when planning powers transfer to local government. In advance of the transfer of powers to councils I am bringing forward a Bill that will accelerate the implementation of a number of those reforms, to be administered by the Department. These will include the development of a Statement of Community Involvement setting out opportunities for interested parties to become involved in development management and other planning control issues and a requirement that developers engage in pre-application community involvement in advance of submitting an application for major developments. Higher penalties for a number of offences are also included.

In parallel, the Department is bringing forward a number of administrative reforms which will speed up the processing of applications (including major applications) such as an extension to the streamlined planning application scheme with local councils, measures to ensure quicker responses from consultees and on a voluntary basis pre-application community consultation on key developments.

In addition, the Department is undertaking a revision of planning policy which will result in more strategic, simpler and shorter policy and a new complaints procedure has been introduced designed to make the process of complaining easier and more user-friendly for members of the public.

As an example of leaving no stone unturned, I have a series of interventions involving representatives of the renewable industry (including anaerobic digestion) to identify how the planning service can be improved; there is an operational review of PPS21; a group looking at planning, business and the economy, etc. I believe this is a gear change from previous times and should result in a planning service better fit for purpose.

Transfer of Powers to District Councils

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to improve the transparency and accountability of the planning system during the transfer of powers to district councils.

(AQW 6527/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am working on a number of fronts to reform and remodel the planning system including measures which will improve the transparency and accountability of the system.

The reforms contained within the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 will enhance the rights and opportunities of all those who wish to become involved in the planning process when planning powers transfer to local government. In advance of the transfer of powers to councils I am bringing forward a Bill in the Assembly that will accelerate the implementation of a number of those reforms, to be administered by the Department. These will include the development of a Statement of Community Involvement, setting out opportunities for interested parties to become involved in development management and other planning control issues, and a requirement on developers to engage in pre-application community involvement in advance of submitting an application for major developments.

The local government reform programme, will see the transfer of planning functions to councils and place the majority of planning decisions in the hands of locally elected and locally accountable politicians. It will also introduce new governance arrangements for councils and a new ethical standards regime for councillors. The proposed governance arrangements will provide a system of checks and balances to protect the interests of minorities in the council area. The ethical standards regime will include the introduction of a mandatory Code of Conduct for councillors with supporting mechanisms for investigation, adjudication and appeals. The Code will include a section on planning matters.

Following the transfer of functions the Department will have an oversight role to ensure that the district councils are properly discharging their planning functions. They will include powers to intervene in the local development plan process, or to call-in applications for the Department's determination. The Department will also retain powers to take enforcement action and to confirm council orders such as revocation or discontinuance orders. The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 also introduces new audit powers for the Department to conduct an assessment of a council's performance. The assessment may cover a council's performance of its planning functions in general or of a particular function.

The new Planning Portal contributes to the transparency of the planning system as it allows the public and other interested parties to view all planning applications that are under consideration by the Department online. The portal has improved the quality of information held in relation to these applications and introduced a consistent auditable approach for the processing of applications.

All of these combined measures will improve transparency and accountability of the Planning System.

Enforcement Process

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what plans his Department has to speed up the enforcement process when building work is started before planning permission is granted.

(AQW 6609/11-15)

Mr Attwood: It is clearly unsatisfactory that anyone should carry out development requiring planning permission, without first submitting an application and paying the appropriate fee. There are occasions where the few behave as if they can act with licence and go around the planning system. That will not be tolerated in my tenure as Minister.

The Department has a general discretion to take enforcement action when it regards it as expedient to do so, having regard to the provisions of the development plan and any other material consideration. It is however, important to note that enforcement action may be held in abeyance while a planning application or appeal is being determined depending on the degree of harm and nature and scale of the breach.

In order to strengthen and simplify the enforcement process, I have brought forward a number of key reforms from The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. These reforms include an increase in fines for offences relating to listed buildings and trees and the introduction of a standardised 5 year time limit for taking enforcement action against breaches of planning control allowing for a more efficient system and greater clarity in dealing with breaches of planning control.

The Act includes additional powers in relation to Fixed Penalty Notices and multiple fees for retrospective planning applications which, when enacted, will strengthen enforcement even more.

In addition, following the publication of the Criminal Justice Inspectorate (CJI) follow-up review of inspection recommendations, officials have been instructed to take forward a number of interventions and initiatives to further enhance the delivery of enforcement activities across the full range of the Department's functions, which include for example,

- A statement of intent/common aim will be incorporated into the Departmental Business Plans to reflect the priority give by the Department to Enforcement;
- An Enforcement Best Practice Group which will meet quarterly to reinforce the priority of enforcement within the Department and to discuss and promote best practice will be established;
- Quarterly enforcement statistics will be prepared for my consideration;
- A compliance and enforcement annual report outlining the work of all business areas will be produced;
- Further guidance will be produced in relation to the documentation of the Department's rationale for a decision when it is considered not expedient to take Enforcement Action.

- The Department will continue to ensure that targeted training for enforcement staff is identified delivered and reviewed in order to further enhance skills, on an agency basis.

I believe that enforcement – particularly for serious environmental and planning issues including crimes – needs to be to be escalated. I am assessing how to do this and have sent out a strong message to my staff that more robust enforcement is an essential element of a balanced planning system.

Taxi Meters

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the use of taxi meters; and whether there are any changes planned.

(AQW 6620/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Currently only taxis licensed as Belfast Public Hire (BPH) are required to be fitted with taxi meters and work to a regulated taxi fare. There are no requirements for Restricted Public Hire (RPH) or Private Hire (PH) taxis to be fitted with taxi meters as there is no fare regulation for these classes of taxi. However, I am aware that many RPH and PH taxis, particularly in Belfast, use taxi meters to calculate the fares charged.

The Taxi Act (Northern Ireland) 2008 gives the Department the powers to introduce a Northern Ireland wide regulated taxi fare and, as part of this, to require all taxis to have taxi meters fitted.

The Department is currently consulting on proposals for new regulations to introduce this requirement. The consultation closes on 17 February 2012 and once the responses have been collated and assessed I will make my decisions as to how and when to bring forward changes to the current taximeter requirements.

Motorcycle Test

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of the Environment, if a person has received a date for the final part of their motorcycle test prior to the introduction of the new regulations on 1 February 2012, and the test is cancelled, for a reason outside the applicant's control, and the new date is after 1 February 2012, whether the person will be able to complete the test under the old regulations.

(AQW 6699/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In February 2011 the Department introduced legislation which requires all learner moped and motorcycle riders to complete a compulsory basic training (CBT) course before being permitted to ride unaccompanied on public roads. The legislation also requires learner riders to produce a valid CBT certificate to the examiner before the start of the practical off-road and on-road moped or motorcycle test.

The legislation took effect on 21 February 2011 for all new moped and motorcycle riders. Those riders who had provisional moped or motorcycle entitlement which pre-dated the introduction of the legislation were given an additional 12 months to pass their moped or motorcycle test, or to complete CBT. This additional 12 month period is drawing to a close, and riders who have not passed their on-road test by 20 February 2012 will have to complete CBT.

The legislation does not permit any further flexibility beyond the 12 months already offered, therefore a person who has not passed all parts of the moped or motorcycle test by 20 February 2012, will have to comply with the CBT requirement thereafter, if they are to continue to ride unaccompanied on the road.

Where a candidate has booked an on-road motorcycle test for a date before 20 February 2012, and that test is cancelled by the Agency, every effort will be made to offer an alternative date before 20 February 2012; the Agency intends to reserve some test slots to cover this eventuality.

Anticipating an increase in demand for motorcycle tests towards the end of the extra 12 month period, DVA has put in place measures to accommodate additional testing requirements where possible. Statistics show that the Agency has already delivered 25% more off-road and 40% more on-road motorcycle tests between April and December 2011 than during the same period in 2010.

DVA has striven to ensure that all learner motorcyclists have been made fully aware of the new legislation through:

- letters sent in November 2010 to registered keepers of motorcycles with a cylinder capacity of 125cc and below;
- letters sent in January 2012 to candidates who have attempted part of their practical motorcycle test, but who have not yet passed all parts;
- press releases issued in November 2010 and February 2011;
- CBT leaflets, which have been included with all provisional licences issued since 21 February 2011;
- editorials in Irish Road Racer magazine;
- leaflets distributed during 2010-2011 at provincial motorcycle shows;
- leaflets distributed to Education and Library Boards, theory test centres, motor tax offices and motorcycle accessory shops;
- social media channels; and
- The NI Direct website, which provides information relating to CBT training and how to book a test once a CBT certificate has been obtained.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Former Department Employees

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, for each of the last three years, to detail (i) the number of former employees of his Department who have, since leaving their positions, been re-employed on a part-time or consultancy basis by his Department; (ii) the applicable amounts of remuneration in each case; and (iii) the agency within the Department by which they were re-employed. **(AQW 6026/11-15)**

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The number of former employees of DFP who have, since leaving their positions, been re-employed on a part-time or consultancy basis by the Department is 5. The applicable amounts of remuneration in each case and the agencies within the Department by which they were re-employed are provided in the following table.

Staff Member	Remuneration			Business Area / Agency
	2009	2010	2011	
1	£11,400	£7,435	£9,100	DFP Core
2	£3,125	£0	£0	DFP Core
3	£20,985	£24,316	£25,934	LPS
4	£1,886	£0	£0	NISRA
5	£2,400	£2,400	£0	NISRA

Mortgage Arrears

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of people currently in mortgage arrears; and the value of the arrears, broken down by constituency. **(AQW 6159/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: The Department of Finance and Personnel does not hold information on debt and mortgage arrears.

Debt Arrears

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of people currently in debt arrears; and the value of the arrears, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6161/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Department of Finance and Personnel does not hold information on debt and mortgage arrears.

Percentage of the Population in Work

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of people; (ii) the percentage of the population who are in work; and (iii) the percentage of the total working population, and the number of people, who are (a) self-employed; (b) employed on a full-time basis; and (c) employed on a part-time basis, broken down by district council area.

(AQW 6581/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Estimates of the numbers in employment by district council area are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS), Local Area Database, with the most recent data available for January – December 2010.

Please note that LFS estimates at District Council Area level are based on relatively small sample sizes and are subject to a higher degree of sampling variability. They should, therefore, be treated with caution.

The requested breakdown of employment by District Council Area is shown in Table 1

TABLE 1: BREAKDOWN OF EMPLOYMENT BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

LGD	Total population¹	In work^{2,3}							
		Total in work	% of total population in work	Total self-employed	% of working population self-employed	Total employed full-time	% of working population employed full-time	Total employed part-time	% of working population employed part-time
Antrim	52,000	26,000	49.9%	4,000	13.9%	18,000	70.3%	8,000	29.7%
Ardara	78,000	32,000	41.3%	6,000	20.2%	24,000	73.8%	8,000	26.2%
Armagh	58,000	27,000	46.8%	4,000	14.6%	21,000	78.3%	6,000	21.7%
Ballymena	63,000	24,000	37.9%	3,000	14.2%	18,000	74.4%	6,000	25.6%
Ballymoney	31,000	14,000	45.1%	2,000	13.6%	10,000	76.2%	3,000	23.8%
Banbridge	48,000	26,000	53.5%	4,000	14.2%	18,000	69.2%	8,000	30.8%
Belfast	266,000	113,000	42.3%	13,000	11.3%	86,000	76.3%	27,000	23.7%
Carrickfergus	40,000	21,000	52.4%	2,000	9.6%	15,000	71.4%	6,000	28.6%
Castlereagh	66,000	31,000	46.5%	3,000	9.1%	24,000	76.6%	7,000	23.4%
Coleraine	56,000	23,000	40.6%	5,000	20.0%	18,000	78.9%	5,000	21.1%
Cookstown	36,000	17,000	46.7%	4,000	23.5%	15,000	87.1%	2,000	12.9%
Craigavon	93,000	43,000	46.3%	7,000	15.5%	35,000	80.9%	8,000	19.1%
Derry	107,000	41,000	38.2%	5,000	13.1%	30,000	73.4%	11,000	26.6%
Down	69,000	31,000	44.8%	7,000	21.2%	24,000	77.5%	7,000	22.5%
Dungannon	57,000	24,000	41.4%	5,000	20.6%	20,000	82.7%	4,000	17.3%
Fermanagh	62,000	28,000	45.0%	7,000	24.3%	24,000	87.6%	3,000	12.4%
Larne	31,000	14,000	44.3%	4,000	26.7%	11,000	76.2%	3,000	23.8%

LGD	Total population ¹	In work ^{2,3}						% of working population employed part-time	
		Total in work	% of total population in work	Total self-employed	% of working population self-employed	Total employed full-time	% of working population employed full-time		Total employed part-time
Limavady	33,000	14,000	41.8%	2,000	13.8%	12,000	85.1%	2,000	14.9%
Lisburn	115,000	51,000	44.3%	6,000	11.7%	37,000	73.3%	13,000	26.7%
Magherafelt	44,000	20,000	45.9%	4,000	21.8%	16,000	79.6%	4,000	20.4%
Moyle	17,000	8,000	48.2%	3,000	38.7%	7,000	87.3%	1,000	12.7%
Newry and Mourne	99,000	39,000	39.9%	10,000	24.5%	31,000	79.2%	8,000	20.8%
Newtownabbey	83,000	34,000	41.3%	4,000	11.1%	25,000	74.1%	9,000	25.9%
North Down	79,000	37,000	46.7%	6,000	15.3%	28,000	76.0%	9,000	24.0%
Omagh	51,000	21,000	40.6%	5,000	26.1%	17,000	79.3%	4,000	20.7%
Strabane	40,000	13,000	32.4%	1,000	9.9%	10,000	78.0%	3,000	22.0%
Northern Ireland	1,776,000	771,000	43.4%	124,000	16.1%	591,000	77.0%	176,000	23.0%

Notes:

- 1 Population is sourced from 2010 Labour Force Survey (LFS), Local Area Database.
- 2 All data based on 'in work' are derived from the 2010 LFS, Local Area Database.
- 3 For the purpose of this request, all LFS data are derived from those who are in employment. Usually, NISRA would refer to those aged 16-64 as the working age population when deriving such data from the LFS.

Youth Unemployment

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the £1 billion announced by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in Westminster to address youth unemployment under the Youth Contract has a Barnett consequential; and if so, whether he can confirm the exact amount.

(AQW 6585/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Department of Work and Pensions received a Resource DEL allocation of £942.7 million in respect of the Youth Contract. This was offset by an assumed Resource DEL saving of £65 million, resulting in a net addition of £877.7 million over the three years from 2012-13 to 2014-15.

Northern Ireland received a Barnett consequential on both the allocation and savings, resulting in a net addition of £26.5 million to the Northern Ireland Block over the three year period.

Barnett consequentials are unhypothecated and, as such, it is for the Executive to determine how any such funding is to be used within Northern Ireland.

Guidelines for Public Sector Procurement of Minor Works

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what advice his Department has given to Departments, and their arm's-length bodies, on the guidelines for public sector procurement of minor works, taking account of the deteriorating economic conditions.

(AQW 6711/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) has been working closely with other Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs) to reduce the burden of the procurement process on local contractors.

For minor works contracts valued below £30,000, CoPEs have agreed that Constructionline, the UK's register of construction related contractors and consultants pre-qualified to work by public sector clients, may be used to generate the list of firms to be invited to tender. This enables the direct selection of contractors without the need for them to complete a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire, thereby reducing the administrative burden on those interested in tendering.

CPD has also been in discussion with the construction industry on a simplified process for all under threshold contracts, valued at less than £ 4.3 million. Discussions are at an advanced stage and I expect to see simplified procedures established for these contracts in the near future.

Public Procurement for Tenders for Minor Works

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what discussions he has had with his Executive colleagues to ensure that small architecture, engineering and surveying companies, with a track record in public works, continue to have a reasonable chance of winning tenders for minor works through public procurement.

(AQW 6712/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I have not discussed this specific issue with my Executive colleagues. However, my officials in the Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) have been working closely with other Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs) to reduce the burden of the procurement process on local consultants. For example, CoPEs are committed to reduce the costs to firms submitting a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) by ensuring that PQQs are consistent, proportionate to the size and complexity of the project, and structured to make it easy for firms with the required capacity and capability to complete them.

For construction consultancy services valued below £5,000, which may be particularly suitable for small practices, CPD and the other CoPEs have agreed that Constructionline, the UK's register of construction related contractors and consultants pre-qualified to work for public sector clients, may be used to generate the list of practices to be invited to tender. This obviates the need for them to complete a PQQ, reducing the administrative burden on all practices and increasing the likelihood of small practices being shortlisted.

To further assist small practices, CPD has proposed that the value of contracts that can be tendered using Constructionline is increased to £30,000.

CPD has also established a small working group, including representatives from the Professional College of the Construction Industry Group for Northern Ireland, to simplify the procurement of all construction service contracts. Discussions with the group are at an advanced stage on under EU threshold contracts, valued at less than £ 113,000.

Public Procurement for Tenders for Minor Works

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline (i) the minimum turnover requirements for companies competing through public procurement for tenders for minor works; and (ii) how the minimum requirements have been adjusted since 2007/8 to take account of changes to economic conditions.

(AQW 6713/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There are no minimum turnover requirements for minor works contracts. The financial standing of firms seeking to tender for Government construction contracts in Northern Ireland is assessed by Constructionline, the UK's register of construction related contractors and consultants pre-qualified to work for public sector clients. The methodology used by Constructionline is set by the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) in London and is based on a number of factors, including turnover and asset value.

Constructionline calculates what is known as a notation or category value for each contractor, which is the maximum contract value (in terms of annual spend) that the contractor should be considered for. So for a minor works contract of £X value, all companies with a Constructionline notation or category value of £X or greater will be considered to have met the minimum financial requirements.

Constructionline reviews its notations on receipt of contractors' annual accounts or if it is alerted to changes in a firm's circumstances. This may result in an adjustment to the category value and therefore the value of contract for which the firm may tender. However there is no specific adjustment to take account of general economic conditions.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many businesses might benefit from the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme in the (i) Coleraine; (ii) Limavady; (iii) Portrush; (iv) Portstewart; (v) Garvagh; and (vi) Kilrea areas.

(AQW 6714/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of non-domestic properties in the listed areas that might benefit from the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme is not available as data is collated at District Council and Ward level only.

The table attached indicates the number of properties in each Ward within the District Council areas of Coleraine and Limavady that are currently benefiting from the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme as at 15th January 2012 and an estimate of the additional number which are likely to benefit under the enhanced Small Business Rate Relief Scheme (which will be introduced on 1st April 2012, subject to Assembly approval).

NUMBER OF PROPERTIES CURRENTLY RECEIVING SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF AND THE ESTIMATED NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL PROPERTIES LIKELY TO BE ENTITLED UNDER THE EXPANDED SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEME

Ward/District Council Name	Properties Currently Entitled under Existing SBRR Scheme	Estimated Additional Properties under Expanded SBRR Scheme
Agivey	35	10
Atlantic	10	*
Ballysally	9	*
Castlerock	36	10
Central	196	152
Churchland	24	*
Crossglebe	15	11
Dundooan	81	31
Dunluce	42	*
Garvagh	50	24
Hopefield	8	*
Kilrea	67	32
Knocklynn	13	*
Macosquin	27	7
Mount Sandel	50	30
Portstewart	55	33
Ringsend	24	15
Royal Portrush	94	45
Strand	*	*
The Cuts	*	7
The Highlands	13	6
University	5	*
Upper Glenshane	9	*
Waterside	36	22
Coleraine Total	906	458
Aghanloo	56	26
Ballykelly	25	12
Coolessan	7	*
Dungiven	68	33
Enagh	*	*
Feeny	15	9

Ward/District Council Name	Properties Currently Entitled under Existing SBRR Scheme	Estimated Additional Properties under Expanded SBRR Scheme
Forest	17	*
Glack	9	*
Gresteel	30	11
Greystone	*	*
Magilligan	38	12
Rathbrady	*	11
Roeside	108	73
Limavady Total	377	214

* 5 properties or less

Baseline Figure for Unemployment

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the baseline figure for unemployment; and from where this information was obtained.

(AQW 6733/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Official estimates of unemployment for Northern Ireland are sourced from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) which is conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The LFS uses internationally accepted definitions of labour market status in line with EU regulations.

The most recent LFS figures for the period September - November 2011 estimated the Northern Ireland seasonally adjusted unemployment rate at 6.8% (59,000 persons). Please note, that there is an associated degree of sampling variation around such survey based estimates.

For information, Claimant Count figures sourced from administrative records of those persons claiming Job Seekers Allowance and National Insurance Credits are also published each month by NISRA. There were

an estimated 60,700 persons (seasonally adjusted) claiming such unemployment related benefit in December 2011.

The LFS estimate is used as the lead measure of unemployment as it is consistent with international definitions.

Unoccupied Dwellings

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of unoccupied dwellings in each ward in the South Belfast constituency.

(AQW 6822/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of unoccupied dwellings is not available at Constituency level as data is collated at District Council and Ward level only. The latest figures available, as at 15th January 2012, indicate that the number of unoccupied dwellings within Belfast City and Castlereagh Borough Councils were 7,511 and 893 respectively. The tables attached indicate the number of unoccupied dwellings for each ward area within the two Councils.

UNOCCUPIED DWELLINGS IN BELFAST CITY COUNCIL AS AT 15TH JANUARY 2012

	Domestic
Andersonstown	54
Ardoyne	56
Ballyhackamore	156
Ballymacarrett	121
Ballynafeigh	337
Ballysillan	77
Beechmount	181
Bellevue	146
Belmont	88
Blackstaff	173
Bloomfield	147
Botanic	644
Castleview	90
Cavehill	68
Cherryvalley	114
Chichester Park	120
Cliftonville	55
Clonard	92
Crumlin	117
Duncairn	594
Falls	212
Falls Park	68
Finaghy	49
Fortwilliam	112
Glen Road	64
Glencairn	55
Glencolin	60
Highfield	57
Island	372
Knock	63
Ladybrook	71
Legoniel	134
Malone	205

	Domestic
Musgrave	65
New Lodge	44
Orangefield	106
Ravenhill	117
Rosetta	195
Shaftesbury	321
Shankill	74
Stormont	132
Stranmillis	191
Sydenham	110
The Mount	153
Upper Malone	78
Upper Springfield	20
Waterworks	202
Whiterock	33
Windsor	443
Woodstock	164
Woodvale	111
Total	7,511

UNOCCUPIED DWELLINGS IN CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL AS AT 15TH JANUARY 2012

	Domestic
Ballyhanwood	43
Beechill	41
Cairnshill	47
Carrowreagh	70
Carryduff East	42
Carryduff West	40
Cregagh	26
Downshire	28
Dundonald	63
Enler	23
Galwally	25
Gilnahirk	40

	Domestic
Grahams Bridge	39
Hillfoot	28
Knockbracken	22
Lisnasharragh	25
Lower Braniel	34
Minnowburn	30
Moneyreagh	70
Newtownbreda	69
Tullycarnet	30
Upper Braniel	27
Wynchurch	31
Total	893

Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) any financial recovery by Departments, following the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, as extended by the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002; and (ii) the payments made by Departments by reason of claims under the legislation.

(AQW 6872/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Department of Finance and Personnel made no financial recoveries or payments under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, as extended by the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002, in the last financial year, which ran from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Details of financial payments under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998, as extended by the Late Payment of Commercial Debts Regulations 2002, are published in the Annual Report to the departmental Resource Accounts.

This response is provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only and the Member should contact individual departments for their information.

Vacant Residential Properties

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of vacant residential properties in each ward, in the Foyle constituency.

(AQW 6882/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of vacant residential properties is not available at Constituency level as data is collated at District Council and Ward level only. The table overleaf indicates the number of vacant residential properties for each ward within Derry City Council as at 22nd January 2012.

VACANT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN DERRY CITY COUNCIL AS AT 22ND JANUARY 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Altnagelvin	45
Ballynashallog	38
Banagier	66
Beechwood	22
Brandywell	11
Carn Hill	11
Caw	22
Claudy	46
Clondermot	23
Creggan Central	26
Creggan South	14
Crevagh	36
Culmore	38
Ebrington	83
Eglinton	83
Enagh	81
Foyle Springs	17
Hollymount	65
Kilfennan	33
Lisnagelvin	25
New Buildings	27
Pennyburn	33
Rosemount	109
Shantallow East	17
Shantallow West	117
Springtown	12
Strand	186
The Diamond	92
Victoria	86
Westland	36
Total	1,500

Vacant Residential Properties

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of vacant residential properties; (ii) any targets his Department has in relation to the number of vacant residential properties; and (iii) the measures his Department is taking to ensure that these dwellings are occupied.

(AQW 6886/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As at 22nd January 2012 there were 40,889 vacant residential properties in Northern Ireland.

My Department does not have any targets in relation to the number of vacant residential properties. This is a matter for individual property owners.

While the market for house sales is not as buoyant as I would wish, the rental market is increasingly buoyant. My Department has recently implemented rating of empty homes which should encourage more property owners to make better use of these properties and increase the supply of affordable housing.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the implementation of the Cycle To Work scheme across the Civil Service.

(AQW 6950/11-15)

Mr Wilson: We are making good progress and would hope to implement the Cycle to Work scheme in the Civil Service in late Spring.

Rating of Empty Homes Scheme

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many applications for rate relief exemptions have been received since the introduction of the Rating of Empty Homes Scheme in the (i) Ballymoney; (ii) Ballymena; and (iii) Moyle council areas.

(AQW 6997/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Rating of empty homes was introduced on 1st October 2011, the date that the Rates (Unoccupied Hereditaments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 came into effect. From this date to 26th January 2012, applications for rate relief exemptions from Rating of Empty Homes in the Ballymoney, Ballymena and Moyle Council areas are:

- (i) Ballymoney 14
- (ii) Ballymena 30
- (iii) Moyle 26

Sports and Recreation Rate Relief Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the criteria used to determine an organisation's eligibility for an amateur status qualification under the Sports and Recreation Rate Relief Scheme.

(AQW 7022/11-15)

Mr Wilson: An organisation would be considered to be amateur for the purpose of deciding eligibility for sport and recreation rate relief, if it is a non profit making organisation and does not pay its members to engage in recreation for reward. Payment is permitted in cases where a person is employed to coach members of an organisation who are preparing to engage in recreation otherwise than for reward.

Sports and Recreation Rate Relief Scheme

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the criteria used to determine an organisation's eligibility for Sports and Recreation Rate Relief.

(AQW 7023/11-15)

Mr Wilson: An organisation's eligibility for Sport and Recreation relief is determined under Article 31 of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977. This states that the organisation must be used for the purposes of a prescribed recreation, must be non-profit making and must not employ persons to engage in recreation for reward except for the instruction of persons who are preparing to engage in recreation otherwise than for reward.

The list of prescribed recreations is set out in the Schedule to the Rates (Recreational Hereditaments) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007 (S.R. 2007 No. 72). This can be found at

(http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2007/72/pdfs/nisr_20070072_en.pdf).

An organisation which meets the criteria set out in Article 31 of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 must engage in a sport which appears on this list of prescribed recreations in order to avail of 80 % rate relief on any premises from which it operates.

Funding Allocated to the Public Prosecution Service

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the level of funding allocated to the Public Prosecution Service in the January Monitoring Round to meet the pressures arising from a High Court case.

(AQW 7032/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The tables accompanying my statement to the Assembly on 17 January 2012 confirmed an allocation of £2.6 million to the Public Prosecution Service to meet the pressures arising from a High Court case.

The issue relates to a breach of contract case taken against the NIO and the Department of Finance and Personnel by 53 lawyers employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service. In December 2011, the parties agreed to settle. The terms of the settlement remain to be finalised. 22 of the lawyers are employed by the Public Prosecution Service and the allocation of resources is to enable it to meet its liabilities arising from the settlement and other related employment costs.

Retired Civil Servants

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of civil servants who retired at Pay Band 3 in each of the last five years; and (ii) the average pension received.

(AQW 7122/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The number of civil servants who retired at Pay Band 3 in each of the last five years and the average pension received cannot be provided by Civil Service Pensions as Pay Band 3 retirees cannot be specifically identified due to the overlap of Pay Bands 1, 2, and 3.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked inister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 7135/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I have submitted my proposals for primary legislation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Rates Relief for Community Amateur Sports Clubs

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline his Department's responsibilities in relation to rates relief for Community Amateur Sports Clubs; and what action he intends to take to examine these rates.

(AQW 7144/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As you will recall, the issue of a review of rates relief for Community Amateur Sports Clubs was the subject of a No Named Day motion in November of last year. During this debate I indicated that I would be happy to examine the level of relief afforded to amateur sports clubs but that such a review should form part of a more extensive review of the needs of that sector, including the full range of options for providing support.

It is worth noting, however, that Community Amateur Sports Clubs are but one type of amateur sports club. It is an official designation conferred by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and although some clubs in Northern Ireland are registered to take advantage of tax concessions, most clubs do not avail of this because of the restrictions it places on them. The same is the case for clubs that are set up as charities. The picture, therefore, is a complex one.

Whilst my Department has responsibility for rates and any associated sport and recreational relief I take the view that a root and branch review of the whole issue should be led by DCAL as the Department with responsibility for leisure, and therefore best placed to assess which type of clubs are most in need of support. The review should include the issue of exclusive clubs versus more open clubs, treatment of clubs with bar and restaurant facilities and last but not least consideration of alternative ways of providing support outside the rating system.

To this end I have written to the Culture, Arts and Leisure Minister, Caral Ni Chuilin, MLA, and her officials are currently looking at this issue. You may wish to write to her, or her Department, to enquire about progress.

Business Services Transformation Programme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the projected savings, and the areas in which the savings will be made, as identified by his Department during its consideration and subsequent approval of the business case for the implementation of the Business Services Transformation Programme.

(AQW 7148/11-15)

Mr Wilson: DHSSPS submitted the Business Services Transformation Programme outline business case to DFP in September 2009. The programme was granted approval in February 2010. The business case identifies revenue savings over ten years of approximately £155 million as a result of changes to staffing and procurement arrangements and through reduced absenteeism. The Health Minister can update you on progress if required.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Funding for Trade Unions

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of funding his Department allocated to each trade union in the (i) 2000/01; (ii) 2005/06; and (iii) 2010/11 financial years.

(AQW 6468/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Whilst funding was not directly allocated to Trade Unions by my Department or its Arms Length Bodies, the estimated annual cost to my Department and its Arms Length Bodies resulting from the involvement of staff in accredited trade union activities for 2010/11 is set out in the table below.

2010/11	Total
NIPSA	£321,600
Unison	£809,652
UNITE	£113,187
RCN	£366,761
FDA	£4,000
GMB	£1,186
Total	£1,616,386

In addition the Beeches Management Centre incurred £77,149 in servicing communications with Trade Unions in the HSC.

Information for 2000/01 and 2005/06 is only available at disproportionate cost.

Satellite Navigation System Used by the Ambulance Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) which satellite navigation system is used by the Ambulance Service; (ii) how often the system is updated to take account of new housing developments; and (iii) what back-up, to the system, is used by ambulance staff.

(AQW 6484/11-15)

Mr Poots: It should be noted that satellite navigation systems are used by NIAS to supplement the information provided by a 999 caller and the local knowledge of crews of the area in which they operate.

- (i) NIAS uses an integrated satellite navigation and mobile data transfer terminal called a Siemens VDO MS5200 Pro Sat Nav.
- (ii) NIAS is in discussions with the supplier to agree the cost for updating the satellite navigation system, the current map date used by NIAS is dated 2008.
- (iii) In the event of the failure of the satellite navigation in the ambulance response vehicle, back-up communications enable ambulance control staff with access to mapping data to provide instructions and directions to the personnel in the ambulance.

Neo-Natal Services

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what neo-natal services will be available at the new hospital in Enniskillen.

(AQW 6616/11-15)

Mr Poots: The existing service at the Neonatal Unit in the Erne Hospital will transfer to the new acute hospital for the South West and will be located beside the Maternity Unit. Currently fully trained neonatal nurses and midwives support a team of paediatric consultants who provide 24-hour on-call cover for this unit and this service will continue in the new hospital.

Premature Births and Neo-Natal Beds

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last three years, to detail the number of (i) premature births; and (ii) neo-natal beds, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 6617/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of premature births in each of the last three years by Health and Social Care Trust:

HSC Trust	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Belfast	539	520	590
Northern	295	267	250
South Eastern	233	270	247
Southern	*	*	256
Western	364	284	323

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

* Southern HSC Trust have stated that they are unable to provide information for 2008/09 and 2009/10 as the NIMATS system has only been in place in Craigavon Area Hospital for deliveries from April 2010.

The average number of neo-natal beds available in each of the last three years by Health and Social Care Trust:

HSC Trust	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Belfast	27	31	31
Northern	16	16	16
South Eastern	*	13	13
Southern	21	21	21
Western	24	24	24

Source: Health and Social Care Trusts

* South Eastern HSC Trust have stated that information is not available for 2008/09.

Information in the answer has been supplied by each of the five Health and Social Care Trusts and as such has not been validated by the Department.

Local Commissioning Groups

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the five Local Commissioning Groups since their introduction.

(AQW 6665/11-15)

Mr Poots: The five Local Commissioning Groups continue to engage with service users, carers, the community and voluntary sectors and the wider public, to assist them in the development of their local priorities to meet local needs. As local committees of the Health and Social Care Board, the LCGs are well placed to lead the commissioning agenda in their respective areas.

Local Commissioning Groups will have an important role to play in driving forward change and innovation, and in particular responding to the proposals set out in the Review of Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland "Transforming Your Care" through the development of population plans for their local areas, involving their respective Health and Social Care Trusts.

Renal Unit at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 320/11-15, for an update on the provision of a renal unit at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine.

(AQW 6667/11-15)

Mr Poots: The commissioning of Health and Social Care Services to meet the needs of the population of Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), working in close partnership with the Public Health Agency.

The Board has advised that work is continuing, to consider regional demand for all forms of dialysis and its implications for future planning. This approach will take into account the improved survival rates that occur when patients receive live kidney transplants. This includes consideration of the need for the development of additional capacity where this is an appropriate response to patient needs.

Bed Blockers

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the financial pressures that bed blockers place on his budget; and what preventative measures his Department is putting in place to address this issue.

(AQW 6763/11-15)

Mr Poots: Delayed discharges are defined as any care managed patient or patient awaiting a care management assessment remaining in hospital after the time they are deemed medically fit for discharge. It is estimated that in 2011 delayed discharges cost the health service in the region of £10 million.

My Department continues to work with the HSC to develop and expand the range of care services available in the community, such as promoting “re-ablement” programmes and encouraging people to manage their own care through Direct Payments. The Regional Access Criteria for Domiciliary Care were introduced to provide for greater transparency and harmonisation in the process of identifying and prioritising need.

Locum Doctors

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total (i) number; and (ii) cost of locum doctors used by the Health Service in each of the last five years, broken down by (a) Health and Social Care Trust area; and (b) hospital.

(AQW 6773/11-15)

Mr Poots: (i) The total number of locum doctors used by the Health Service in Northern Ireland can only be provided at disproportionate cost as this is not currently captured by Trust internal information systems and would require a time consuming manual exercise.

(ii) (a) Details of the cost of locum doctors in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust, is set out in the table below.

HSC Trust	*2011-12 £m	2010-11 £m	2009-10 £m	2008-09 £m	2007-08 £m
Belfast HSC Trust	7.6	7.4	8.1	7.4	6.5
Northern HSC Trust	3.7	6.0	8.1	7.6	4.7
South Eastern HSC Trust	2.4	2.3	2.7	3.1	2.2
Western HSC Trust	5.7	9.0	7.0	5.2	4.7
Southern HSC Trust	2.5	4.4	4.9	4.7	2.9
Total	21.9	29.1	30.8	28.0	21.0

* Part year data available from 01 April 2011 – 31 December 2011.

(ii) (b) Details of the cost of locum doctors, in each of the last five years, broken down by hospital is set out in the table below. The South Eastern Trust has been unable to provide 2007-08 figures by hospital.

	2011/12 to 30 Dec 2011	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Hospital	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Belfast HSC Trust					
Royal Victoria	3.3	3.2	3.1	3.7	3.5
Belfast City	1.9	1.6	2.0	0.8	0.6
Greenpark	1.2	1.5	1.7	1.7	1.6
Community	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.1
Mater	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	0.7
BHSCT Total	7.6	7.4	8.1	7.4	6.5
Northern HSC Trust					
Antrim	1.7	2.5	3.8	4.1	2.5
Braid Valley	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0
Causeway	1.6	2.5	2.5	1.3	0.9
Holywell	0.3	0.5	0.3	0.3	0.2
Mid Ulster	0.2	0.5	1.2	0.8	0.8
Moyle	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.1
Whiteabbey	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.3
NHSCT Total	3.7	6.0	8.1	7.6	4.7
South Eastern HSC Trust					
Ulster	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.5	
Lagan Valley	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	
Downe	0.6	0.6	0.8	1.0	
SEHSCT Total	2.4	2.3	2.7	3.1	2.2
Western HSC Trust					
Altnagelvin	2.3	3.5	2.3	1.7	1.2
Erne Hospital	2.0	3.8	3.2	1.9	2.1
Tyrone County Hospital	0.8	0.3	0.1	0.7	0.7
Lakeview Hospital	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Gransha/ T & F Hospital	0.3	0.8	0.4	0.3	0.3
Other; Community Services	0.2	0.5	0.9	0.5	0.2
WHSCT Total	5.7	9.0	7.0	5.2	4.7

	2011/12 to 30 Dec 2011	2010/11	2009/10	2008/09	2007/08
Hospital	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums	Total Locums
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Southern HSC Trust					
Craigavon Area	1.3	1.9	2.3	2.3	1.9
Daisy Hill	0.8	2.1	1.8	1.6	0.5
St Luke's	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0
Community Medical/Other	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.8	0.5
SHSCT Total	2.5	4.4	4.9	4.7	2.9
Total	21.9	29.1	30.8	28.0	21.0

Acute Beds

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many acute beds are provided under the present configuration of major acute provision, broken down by hospital.

(AQW 6790/11-15)

Mr Poots: The average number of beds available under the acute services programme of care during 2010/11 is shown in the table below.

Hospital	Average Available Beds
Altnagelvin Area	396.6
Antrim	399.1
Ards	12.0
Banbridge	0.0
Bangor	20.0
Belfast City	434.7
Braid Valley	4.8
Causeway	176.0
Craigavon Area	360.0
Daisy Hill	160.0
Dalriada	32.4
Downe	50.6
Erne	149.3
Forster Green	22.6
Lagan Valley	76.8
Lurgan	17.0

Hospital	Average Available Beds
Mater Infirmorum	205.6
Mid Ulster	75.5
Moyle	18.0
Musgrave Park	160.4
NI Cancer Centre	85.6
RBHSC	97.3
Robinson Memorial	25.0
Royal Maternity	45.1
Royal Victoria	595.0
South Tyrone	0.0
Thompson House	35.0
Tyrone County	32.6
Ulster	395.2
Whiteabbey	31.6

Source: KH03a Departmental Return

Medical Research

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the level of funding provided by his Department for medical research at each university, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6793/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below summarises the level of funding provided by my Department for medical research at each university, in each of the last three years.

	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	Total
QUB	3,770,108	2,812,955	2,606,868	9,189,931
UU	1,117,388	805,317	1,050,264	2,972,969
Total	4,887,496	3,618,272	3,657,132	12,162,900

Funding Packages

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people assessed for (i) nursing care; (ii) residential care; and (iii) domiciliary care are currently awaiting a funding package to address their needs, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 6854/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is assumed that this question refers to the number of people who are currently waiting in either a community or hospital setting for a nursing, residential or domiciliary care package, where the main reason for the delay is a lack of funding; although, it is not possible to break this information down by the type of care package.

With this in mind, there were no persons waiting in a community setting for a nursing, residential or domiciliary care package due to a lack of funding on 31 December 2011.

With regards to those waiting in a hospital setting, information is not available on the number of people currently waiting for a nursing, residential or domiciliary care package, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, information is available on the number of patients discharged from an acute hospital setting during December 2011, who waited longer than the agreed maximum waiting time for a nursing, residential or domiciliary care package due to a lack of funding. This information is detailed by HSC Trust in Table 1 overleaf.

Table 1

HSC Trust	Number of patients
Belfast	0
Northern	2
South Eastern	0
Southern	0
Western	8
Northern Ireland	10

Source: Admissions & Discharges Universe

Organophosphate Poisoning

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with organophosphate poisoning in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 6856/11-15)

Mr Poots: During the ten year period from 1st April 2001 to 31st March 2011, there were a total of seven admissions to hospital where a diagnosis of organophosphate poisoning was recorded. It should be noted that this may be unrepresentative of the true number of people that have had organophosphate poisoning due to the generic nature of the symptoms of this condition.

Promoting Healthy Eating

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to promote healthy eating.

(AQW 6864/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has led the development of a Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022: A Fitter Future for All which in December 2011 was agreed by the Executive for launch. The Framework includes short, medium and long term outcomes specific to food and nutrition which aim to address the issue of overweight and obesity throughout the life course of the population. I anticipate that the delivery of these outcomes will have a beneficial impact on the population and encourage and promote a healthier balanced diet.

In addition, my Department participates in the UK-wide Healthy Start Scheme which supports low-income, nutritionally vulnerable pregnant women and young families through the provision of vouchers which can be spent on products including milk, fresh and frozen fruit and vegetables. The Scheme provides information on a range of issues including advice on healthy eating.

The Public Health Agency recognises the importance of good nutrition at all ages and its role in promoting good health and preventing conditions such as; obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. It is currently undertaking a range of actions to promote healthy eating including programmes such as Cook It and RAFAEL to help develop skills, knowledge and access to healthier foods. The Public Health Agency will also lead on the implementation of the Obesity Prevention Framework, following on from existing work they have undertaken for the previous Fit Futures Implementation Plan.

Removal of Breast Implants

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the removal of breast implants, what criteria his Department has set to allow removal under the Health Service.

(AQW 6880/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Chief Medical Officer has written to General Practitioners and hospital doctors (HSS(MD)/2/2012), on 13 January, outlining the advice for women with implants who may present to them with concerns. As part of the consultation with their doctor, patients are being asked to complete a pro forma which will be forwarded to the HSCB. This will assist in determining the likely demand for follow up services.

The HSCB are developing a range of scenarios to accommodate women who, following consultation with their doctor, may benefit from further follow up.

Nursing and Residential Care Homes

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of patients currently in (i) nursing homes; and (ii) residential care homes, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 6930/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of patients receiving nursing home care packages and residential care packages at 31 December 2011 in each Health and Social Care Trust is presented in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: CARE PACKAGES IN EFFECT AT 31 DECEMBER 2011

HSC Trust	Nursing Home Care	Residential Care	Total
Belfast	1,716	1,098	2,814
Northern	1,997	961	2,958
South Eastern	1,486	872	2,358
Southern	1,629	517	2,146
Western	1,319	689	2,008
Northern Ireland	8,147	4,137	12,284

Source: Community Information CC7 Return

Recruitment Drive by the Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 6127/11-15, to detail the religious background of the appointees in each of the five geographic areas.

(AQW 6938/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is shown in the table below.

NIFRS Command Areas	Protestant	Catholic	Other
Northern	3	2	
Southern	9	7	2
Eastern	1	2	1
Western	3	7	

Recruitment Drive by the Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 6128/11-15, in relation to the Practical Aptitude Test, to detail the religious background of those candidates who (i) attended; (ii) failed; (iii) appealed; (iv) were re-tested; and (v) were successful.
(AQW 6940/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is shown in the table below.

Test Stage / Result	Protestant	Catholic	Other	Total
Attended	315	285	64	664
Failed	171	161	40	372
Appealed	32	31	4	67
Appealed/Re-Tested	19	22	3	44
Successful	16	18	3	37

Subsequent to AQW 6128/11-15, the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has advised of a change in the number of candidates who attended and who failed due to a candidate's being counted twice.

Illegal Advertising of Abortion Services in Northern Ireland

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps are being taken against the illegal advertising of abortion services in Northern Ireland.
(AQW 6946/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is my Department's responsibility to provide for the health and social care needs of the people of Northern Ireland.

Responsibility for the enforcement of the criminal law lies with the Department of Justice.

Waiting List for a Nursing Home Place

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are on the waiting list for a place at a nursing home in the Foyle constituency.
(AQW 6955/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available centrally within the DHSSPS, and in reply to a request for these figures, the Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust advised my Department that within Foyle (parliamentary) constituency as at the 25th January 2012, 7 clients were waiting for a place at a nursing home and 9 nursing home beds were vacant at this date.

The Western HSC Trust further indicated that of the 7 clients awaiting a nursing home bed, 6 were waiting for one week and 1 was waiting for three weeks. Five of the 7 clients had been assessed as requiring a dementia nursing home placement and the remaining 2 clients were waiting on a general nursing home placement of their choice.

The Western HSC Trust are working proactively with all 7 clients and their families/carers to agree their first choice of nursing home.

Nursing Home Beds Available in the Foyle Constituency

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many nursing home beds are available in the Foyle constituency.
(AQW 6956/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available centrally within the DHSSPS, and in reply to a request for these figures, the Western Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust advised my Department that within Foyle (parliamentary) constituency as at the 25th January 2012, 7 clients were waiting for a place at a nursing home and 9 nursing home beds were vacant at this date.

The Western HSC Trust further indicated that of the 7 clients awaiting a nursing home bed, 6 were waiting for one week and 1 was waiting for three weeks. Five of the 7 clients had been assessed as requiring a dementia nursing home placement and the remaining 2 clients were waiting on a general nursing home placement of their choice.

The Western HSC Trust are working proactively with all 7 clients and their families/carers to agree their first choice of nursing home.

Community Pharmacy Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the outcome of the judicial review on community pharmacy funding, when withdrawn funding will be reinstated.

(AQW 6973/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Justice Treacy made his judgement on the Judicial Review, brought by Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland against the changes to pharmacy remuneration made by the Department and the HSC Board on 21 December 2011. However, the full written judgement was not issued until 10 January 2012 and the date for a Final Order has just been set for Thursday 7 February. The outcome of the remedies hearing will help to inform discussions with CPNI and will have a significant impact on the way forward.

I have agreed to meet CPNI representatives to discuss the way forward but the original date of 30 January has had to be rescheduled, after the Final Order.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made on the key objective to raise the profile of Northern Ireland's capacity for clinical trials through participation in emerging EU infrastructure networks, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 7011/11-15)

Mr Poots: Across the EU clinical research infrastructure has developed at different rates in different countries, with the UK, including Northern Ireland, being at the forefront. Our Northern Ireland Clinical Research Network (NICRN) and Northern Ireland Cancer Clinical Trials Network (NICTN) are excellent examples and to-date almost 20,000 patients with a wide range of illnesses have been facilitated to access potentially beneficial new treatments. Some £2M annually is provided through the HSC R&D Fund to maintain these networks. The networks enable clinical researchers to compete for funding - whether from Government (including the EU), research councils, charities or industry to undertake trials of potential new treatments.

The principal EU-funded clinical trials infrastructure activity is ECRIN – European Clinical Research Infrastructure Network – which is co-ordinated from France. ECRIN aims to make Europe a single area for clinical studies, taking advantage of its population size. Discussions have taken place between DHSSPS and the ECRIN Co-ordinator about closer collaboration with NICRN on transnational European clinical trials. ECRIN has applied for inclusion under the European Research Infrastructures Consortium initiative (ERIC) to enable its future development. The outcome from the application is awaited.

Other disease-specific networks also operate across Europe. An early success was for one of Northern Ireland's strongest research areas, in Respiratory Disease. In June 2011 the group competed successfully for membership of the European Cystic Fibrosis Society Clinical Trials Network, achieving the highest possible score against the selection criteria. Participation in this network enables Belfast-based clinical researchers to be involved in the strategic development of this important European

initiative and to benefit from funding provided for training and development. To-date the Belfast group has attracted £110k in funding for three separate European clinical trials in cystic fibrosis and lung cancer.

Meanwhile, Northern Ireland based clinical researchers continue to develop applications for funding – such applications typically taking several years to come to fruition. DHSSPS is committed to maintaining support for our local networks without which clinical trials funding cannot be attracted to the province.

Trade Union Duties

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of full-time equivalent staff, in his Department or its arm's-length bodies, who carried out trade union duties, during trade union facility time, in (i) 2000/01; (ii) 2005/06; and (iii) 2010/11, broken down by trade union.

(AQW 7019/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is one full-time equivalent staff engaged in trade union duties in my Department. The information in relation to arm's length bodies is not held centrally and could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.

Waiting List for a Nursing Home Place

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are on the waiting list for a place at a nursing home in the North Down constituency.

(AQW 7025/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available centrally within the DHSSPS, and in reply to a request for these figures, the South Eastern Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust advised my Department that within North Down (parliamentary) constituency as at 27th January 2012, 3 clients were waiting for a place at a nursing home.

The South Eastern HSC Trust further indicated that all 3 clients were receiving a domiciliary care package at this date. Of the 3 clients, 1 was waiting for an Elderly Mentally Infirm (EMI) nursing home place without a third party top-up and 2 were waiting for an EMI nursing home place in a specific home of choice. No client was waiting for funding for a nursing home place.

Proposed Model on Shared Services

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 6412/11-15, to detail the projected savings to be made, broken down by (i) the new I.T. system; and (ii) the overall shared services model.

(AQW 7042/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Business Services Transformation Programme business case, approved by DFP in February 2010, did not distinguish between savings from systems implementation and savings from reconfigured shared services. That position, reflecting the closely interdependent nature of the two elements of the Programme, remains.

Occupational Therapy Assessments

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the average waiting time for an occupational therapy assessment; (ii) how long it takes to complete an assessment, following an initial consultation; (iii) how many people are awaiting an assessment; and (iv) what procedures are in place to speed up the process for priority cases.

(AQW 7119/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information is not available centrally within the DHSSPS and was requested directly from the Health & Social Care Board (HSCB). The Board has replied to each part of your question as outlined below.

- (i) Waiting times from referral to treatment by an occupational therapist is available by aggregate time bands only. As of 6th January 2012, the median waiting time from referral to treatment was six to nine weeks.
- (ii) An assessment of need commences at the first consultation and the time required to complete these varies dependent on a range of factors including, the patient's health, complexity and proposed outcomes; for example, aids, appliance, adaptations to housing, wheelchairs and terminal care. Figures relating to timescales for completed assessments are not available.
- (iii) At 6th January 2012, 6,320 patients were awaiting occupational therapy in Northern Ireland. Of these, 1,777 (28%) were waiting more than nine weeks. This information is detailed by HSC Trust in Table 1 below.
- (iv)

TABLE 1

HSC Trust	Waiting time from referral to treatment for Occupational Therapy (by weeks waiting) ¹					Total
	0-3 weeks	>3 to 6 weeks	>6 to 9 weeks	> 9 to 13 weeks	>13 weeks	
Belfast	294	451	427	421	73	1,666
Northern	434	442	258	42	0	1,176
South Eastern	277	289	252	253	210	1,281
Southern	215	282	186	133	196	1,012
Western	191	276	269	208	241	1,185
Northern Ireland	1,411	1,740	1,392	1,057	720	6,320

Source: Health and Social Care Board

1 Position at 06/01/12.

Figures provided by the HSC Board have not been validated by DHSSPS.

- (v) Delivery plans have been agreed with Trusts to undertake additional activity to reduce waiting times for all AHP services treatment by March 2012, and Trusts are expected to achieve a nine week maximum waiting time for occupational therapy services by end of March.

All Trusts triage and prioritise new referrals to ensure that those with greatest clinical need are seen as quickly as possible. All referrals are processed in chronological order within both routine and priority categories.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked inister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 7136/11-15)

Mr Poots: I submitted my proposals for primary legislation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 15th December 2011.

Jobs Lost in the South Down Constituency

Mr W Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many (i) Health Service jobs; and (ii) Civil Service jobs within his Department, have been lost in each of the last ten years in the South Down constituency, broken down by (i) department; and (ii) area.

(AQW 7137/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Details of job losses in the Health Service are not available in the format requested. Job losses in the health economy in the last four years have been a direct result of the RPA reforms. Under these reforms 1,700 administrative posts were removed from the health economy across Northern Ireland. The RPA reforms were designed primarily to ensure that administrative structures and procedures are fit for purpose and that resources are maximised for frontline services. Developments in frontline services are dependent upon the reinvestment of £49 million RPA savings.
- (ii) There are no DHSSPS civil service staff employed in the South Down Constituency.

Doctors and Nurses: Professional Misconduct

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many doctors and nurses have been struck off in each of the last ten years because of professional misconduct.

(AQW 7138/11-15)

Mr Poots: The regulation of healthcare professionals in the UK is delivered through regulatory bodies. The General Medical Council (GMC) is the regulatory body for doctors and the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) regulates nurses and midwives.

The number of doctors and nurses and midwives in Northern Ireland struck off for professional misconduct in each of the last ten years is shown in the table below.

Year	Doctors	Nurses and Midwives
2001	Numbers not available	Numbers not available
2002	Numbers not available	3
2003	Numbers not available	2
2004	1	1
2005	1	2
2006	1	1
2007	1	8
2008	0	8
2009	5	2
2010	2	6

Business Services Transformation Programme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Equality Impact Assessment that was carried out on the Business Services Transformation Programme.

(AQW 7149/11-15)

Mr Poots: It would not be appropriate for me to make an assessment at this juncture, as the consultation on the Business Services Transformation Programme proposals and EQIA is not yet complete.

New Hospital in Enniskillen

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the range of services that will be provided in the new hospital in Enniskillen; and how this compares to the services currently provided at the Erne Hospital, Enniskillen.

(AQW 7156/11-15)

Mr Poots: The new South West Acute Hospital will provide the range of services currently delivered from the Erne Hospital. These are Accident and Emergency, Medical and Surgical Assessment, GP out of hours, Critical Care, Maternity and Neonatal, children's ward and outpatients, children's centre, surgical ward and theatres, day surgery, elective surgery, gynaecology, diagnostics, inpatients, outpatients, clinical investigations, women's health, mental health liaison, Allied Health Professionals, social services, ambulatory unit, pharmacy, pathology and support services.

Some services have recently been introduced to the Erne Hospital in preparation for transition to the new acute hospital. These are the Medical and Surgical Assessment unit, MRI services, renal dialysis, heart failure/Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary disease and diabetic chronic disease management services

Graves Disease

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people have been diagnosed with Graves Disease in each of the last three years.

(AQW 7170/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of admissions to hospital with a primary diagnosis of Graves Disease, in each of the last years is shown in the table below.

Financial Year	Number of Admissions
2008/09	19
2009/10	17
2010/11	15

Source:- Hospital Inpatients System (HIS)

Deaths and discharges are used as an approximation of admissions. It should be noted that these figures do not represent individuals as a person may be admitted to hospital more than once in a year or across a number of years.

Students Studying Medical or Dental Graduate Entry Courses

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why students studying medical or dental graduate entry courses in England, or elsewhere, are not entitled to a Health Service bursary to assist them with their tuition fees and living costs.

(AQW 7209/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department provides financial support to Northern Ireland domiciled undergraduate medical and dental students entering year five of study.

Northern Ireland domiciled graduates undertaking further third level study are not eligible for a maintenance grant or tuition fee support. However, they can apply to their local Education & Library Board for a maintenance loan and supplementary grants where applicable.

Not awarding additional financial support to graduates is based on the principle that limited resources should be targeted at undergraduate level to assist eligible students to achieve a primary degree. Any change to this policy would have significant cost implications and in the current financial climate could not be justified.

Female Prisoners who Have Given Birth

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many female prisoners have given birth whilst either on remand or while serving a sentence in each of the last five years; and what provision is made for these women and their babies in the prison system.

(AQW 7231/11-15)

Mr Poots: Two female prisoners gave birth whilst in custody in 2008. Both babies were delivered in hospital as planned.

During a pregnancy, female prisoners will have access to midwifery services and are able to attend outpatient appointments. In the later stages of pregnancy, domiciliary visits are facilitated. Once the baby is born, the NI Prison Service provides appropriate facilities for mother and child. Both mother and child will be visited by midwifery and health visitor services, as necessary.

Cleaning of Hospitals

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the monthly and annual process for the cleaning of hospitals within the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 7273/11-15)

Mr Poots: The key component of environmental cleanliness is a risk-based analysis of functional areas (rooms, buildings and usage) and elements (surfaces, fixtures, equipment or fittings). Functional areas are then defined as Low Risk, Moderate Risk, High Risk or Very High Risk. Cleaning frequencies are then determined for environment, equipment, buildings and fixtures. Typically, frequencies are expressed as daily or weekly as a minimum requirement but may be cleaned additionally as needed. A series of daily checks, walk-arounds, departmental audits and managerial audits are also carried out based on guidance in the DHSSPS Cleanliness Matters Strategy and the Regional Hospital Hygiene & Cleanliness Standards and Audit Tool.

Mephedrone Consumption

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last five years, to detail the number of (i) deaths as a result of mephedrone consumption; and (ii) hospital admissions as a result of a patient having taken mephedrone.

(AQW 7334/11-15)

Mr Poots: Over the five year period between 2006 and 2010, there has been one death registered in Northern Ireland due to drug poisoning where mephedrone was mentioned on the death certificate in 2010. Data for 2011 will not be available until April 2012.

This information has been provided by the General Register Office for Northern Ireland and has not been validated by the Department.

Information is not available on the number of hospital admissions as a result of a patient having taken mephedrone.

Department of Justice

People Convicted of Rape or Sexual Assault

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many people were convicted of rape or sexual assault in each of the last ten years and served a prison sentence; and how many of these people refused to participate in counselling or programmes during their sentence, designed to address their behaviour or to raise awareness of the impact of their actions on their victims, and were subsequently released.

(AQW 6441/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Northern Ireland Prison Service data of this nature is only available for the last six years. Records show that a total of 640 people were convicted and served a prison sentence for rape or sexual offences during the period 1 January 2006 – 31 December 2011.

Prisoners given a custodial sentence recorded as Rape (Common Law) or Rape (Child), and other sexual offences are detailed in the table below:

TOTAL NUMBERS 2006 - 2011

Calendar Year	Total number of persons convicted for a sexual offence
2006	87
2007	99
2008	109
2009	109
2010	113
2011	123

NIPS records show that out of the 640 offenders, seven, who accepted responsibility for their actions but refused to participate in the Sex Offenders Treatment Programme (SOTP) were subsequently released. However, this figure does not include those deemed to be in 'complete denial' of their offence as participants must accept some responsibility for their offence(s) before they can undertake and benefit from the programme.

The new public protection sentences available to the courts under the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 places a greater onus on offenders to address their offending behaviour prior to release. The Parole Commissioners for Northern Ireland consider the release of those offenders given an Extended Custodial Sentence (ECS), Indeterminate Custodial Sentence (ICS) or a life sentence. In the case of an ICS or a life sentence, the Parole Commissioners must be satisfied that it is no longer necessary for the protection of the public from serious harm that the person remain in prison.

Robert Black's Trial in Armagh: Legal Costs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the legal aid costs associated with Robert Black's trial in Armagh, including those of David Spens QC; and (ii) the expenses claimed, including accomodation and transport, by solicitors and counsel during the run-up and duration of this trial. **(AQW 6507/11-15)**

Mr Ford: To date payments of £232.29 (inc VAT) have been issued in respect of advice given under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Payments of £1,107.18 (inc VAT) have been issued in respect of proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

As there was a change of counsel in this case, a transfer has taken place from the initial senior counsel and fees due to the first senior counsel have been paid. The total amount paid in respect of this first counsel was £39,841.20 (inc VAT). In addition the solicitor has received an interim payment of £307,308.00 (inc VAT)

Bills from the legal representatives who completed the trial, including Mr Spens QC, have not yet been assessed by the Taxing Master. Information in respect of these fees, or any accommodation or travel costs, is therefore unavailable at this time.

Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast

Mr McCartney asked Minister of Justice to detail the total number of civil servants in his Department who live in the Foyle constituency and travel to work in the Greater Belfast area; and the total cost to his Department of subsidising the travel.

(AQW 6517/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total number of civil servants in the Department of Justice who live in the Foyle constituency and travel to work in the Greater Belfast area is five. During the period January – 30 November 2011 the total cost for subsidising their travel in my Department was £1,747.22.

Alderwood Centre for Sex Offenders

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) for his assessment of the courses that are held at the Alderwood Centre for sex offenders; (ii) how many people took part in these courses in each of the last three years; (iii) how many people completed the course; and how many course participants have since been convicted of (a) an offence of a sexual nature; and (b) any other offence.

(AQW 6579/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) The core programme for sexual offenders at the Alderwood Centre is the Ministry of Justice accredited Community Sex Offender Groupwork Programme (CSOGP). The programme is delivered by accredited Probation Officers. Other programmes delivered for sexual offenders within the Alderwood Centre include internet programmes, a programme for those with learning difficulties and an intervention for young adults who sexually offend.

There is empirical evidence to support the success of the CSOGP in achieving lower reconviction rates. Evaluation of the CSOGP, incorporating Northern Ireland statistics, found that in a 3 year period treated offenders were up to 3 times less likely to be reconvicted of a sexual offence than a matched control group. The CSOGP was also found to be effective in reducing the likelihood of future violent offences demonstrating the programme achieves its aims in promoting pro-social behaviour and addressing the anti-social lifestyle of some offenders.

- (ii) During the period 2009-2011, 256 individuals took part in a Community Sex Offender Groupwork Programme (CSOGP) as detailed in the table below

Year	Completed	Non Completion	Ongoing	Total Participants over 2009-11
2009	39	9	0	48
2010	72	22	0	94
2011	44	15	55	114
	155	46	55	256

- (iii) A total of 210 have successfully completed or remain on the programme. While data on the effectiveness of the course was contributed to the national study, which confirmed that treated offenders were significantly less likely to be reconvicted than those who did not undergo the course, details of reconviction rates of individuals who have completed the course are not currently available.

Offence of Causing Death by Careless Driving

Mr Allister asked Minister of Justice, since the introduction of the offence of 'causing death by careless driving', how many people have been processed through the courts on such a charge; and how many (i) pleaded guilty; (ii) were convicted; and (iii) were acquitted.

(AQW 6590/11-15)

Mr Ford: Causing Death by Careless Driving was introduced in Northern Ireland under Article 11A, Road Traffic Act 1988, by virtue of Article 52 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order, 2008. It only applies to offences committed after 16th July 2008.

For the three calendar years since this offence was created:

In 2009, 1 individual was convicted of this offence and received a sentence of 18 months' imprisonment, suspended for three years.

In 2010, 1 individual was convicted of this offence and received a sentence of 240 hours Community Service.

In 2011, 3 individuals were convicted of this offence. Two were disqualified from driving for one year and the third received a sentence of 20 months' imprisonment.

This offence is only one aspect of the law relating to serious driving offences. For example, in 2008, 14 persons were convicted of Causing Death or GBI by Dangerous Driving and received custodial sentences ranging from 8 years to 4 months. During the same period, one person was convicted of Causing Death or GBI by Driving Carelessly with excess alcohol (4 months imprisonment).

Offence of Causing Death by Careless Driving

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many people convicted by a jury of 'causing death by careless driving' have received an immediate custodial sentence; and how many people who have pleaded guilty to this offence have received an immediate custodial sentence.

(AQW 6591/11-15)

Mr Ford: Causing Death by Careless Driving was introduced in Northern Ireland under Article 11A, Road Traffic Act 1988, by virtue of Article 52 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order, 2008. It only applies to offences committed after 16th July 2008.

For the three calendar years since this offence was created:

In 2009, 1 individual was convicted of this offence and received a sentence of 18 months' imprisonment, suspended for three years.

In 2010, 1 individual was convicted of this offence and received a sentence of 240 hours Community Service.

In 2011, 3 individuals were convicted of this offence. Two were disqualified from driving for one year and the third received a sentence of 20 months' imprisonment.

This offence is only one aspect of the law relating to serious driving offences. For example, in 2008, 14 persons were convicted of Causing Death or GBI by Dangerous Driving and received custodial sentences ranging from 8 years to 4 months. During the same period, one person was convicted of Causing Death or GBI by Driving Carelessly with excess alcohol (4 months imprisonment).

Convictions for Animal Cruelty

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions for animal cruelty have been secured in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6599/11-15)

Mr Ford: Animal cruelty offences span a number of statutes. During the period in question offences were prosecuted under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

The table below gives the number of convictions for the calendar years 2004 to 2008 (the latest year for which figures are currently available).

Number of convictions for animal cruelty, 2004-2008

Year	Number of convictions
2004	19
2005	24
2006	17
2007	21
2008	17

Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

Data for 2004-2006 should not be directly compared with data from 2007 to 2008 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what plans he has to tackle anti-social behaviour further.
(AQW 6663/11-15)

Mr Ford: In Northern Ireland we have adopted a multi-agency partnership to tackle anti-social behaviour which uses a graduated approach of prevention, intervention and enforcement to tackle anti-social behaviour. This approach has contributed to a reduction of over 20% in the incidences of anti-social behaviour across Northern Ireland since 2008 and a reduction of over 37% in the North Down constituency.

My plans to further tackle anti-social behaviour will build on the success of this approach with a greater focus on prevention and early intervention by working in partnership.

In the coming months these plans will include the introduction of a new executive strategy 'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities' which will set out the strategic direction for reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and fear of crime in Northern Ireland over the next five years.

The new strategy will emphasise the importance of collaborative working and securing the commitment of key stakeholders including other Government Departments in addressing wider social issues which are a factor in crime and anti-social behaviour.

The launch of the new Policing and Community Safety Partnerships will have a pivotal role in the operational delivery of the new Community Safety Strategy, in the development of partnership working at a local level and in supporting communities to identify solutions to issues of local concern.

Finally, Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland has commenced an inspection on how the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland addresses anti-social behaviour with a view to publishing a final report in spring 2012. I await the outcome of this inspection and will consider any recommendations arising from it.

Prisoners: Christmas Leave

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many of the prisoners who were granted Christmas leave are serving sentences for violent crime; and were their victims informed of their temporary release.
(AQW 6678/11-15)

Mr Ford: Seventy three prisoners who are serving sentences for violent crimes comprising of offences against the person, sexual offences and robbery, were granted leave over the Christmas period.

Fifty six of these prisoners were released under the Christmas Home Leave Scheme. The other 17 were granted leave as part of their participation on a pre-release programme.

In each case where victims or family members of victims are registered with the Prisoner Release Victim Information (Northern Ireland) Scheme 2003 (PRVIS) and, where they have opted to receive details of temporary release, each registered person was advised in advance that the prisoner had been granted a period of leave over Christmas 2011.

AccessNI Checks

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the average length of time taken to process an AccessNI check in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6692/11-15)

Mr Ford: AccessNI began processing disclosures on 1st April 2008. Records were not kept for average turnaround times during 2008/09.

AccessNI's published target times are:

- Enhanced Disclosures – To deliver 90% of correctly completed applications within 4 weeks of receipt;
- Standard Disclosures - To deliver 90% of correctly completed applications within 2 weeks of receipt; and
- Basic Disclosures - To deliver 90% of correctly completed applications within 2 weeks of receipt.

Average days to deliver were:

	1 April 2009- 31 March 2010	1 April 2010 - 31 March 2011	1 April 2011 – 31 December 2011
Basic	7.3	5.4	6.2
Enhanced	15.5	13.9	20.2
Standard	7.6	6	6.6

AccessNI publishes estimated average turnaround times for all types of disclosures each week on the Department of Justice website.

Garda Síochana: Summonses

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Justice whether the Garda Síochana has the legal right to deliver summonses to citizens of the Irish Republic on behalf of the PSNI.

(AQW 6701/11-15)

Mr Ford: Summonses issued under the law of Northern Ireland can be recognised by other countries. The Crime (International Co-operation) Act 2003 provides the basis in law for the service of Northern Ireland summonses outside the UK. In the Republic of Ireland, the Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) Act 2008 provides for the legitimate service of such summonses. Northern Ireland summonses are issued by the Public Prosecution Service by post in the first instance and followed up if there is no response via the UK Central Authority who may forward it on to the Irish authorities. It is a matter for the Irish authorities as to whether or not service is then effected by the Garda Síochana.

Prevention of Crime and Re-Offending

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Justice what percentage of his Department's budget is directed towards the prevention of crime and re-offending.

(AQW 6702/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department's mission is "Building a fair, just and safer community".

A key aspect of this is the prevention of crime and re-offending. This is delivered through a number of areas of the Department including, for example, the Safer Communities Directorate, Police Service of NI, Probation Board for NI, NI Prison Service and Youth Justice Agency.

Therefore, while it is clear that much of the Department's spending is set against these priorities, because of the difficulties of definition and the nature of the budget heads used, it would not be meaningful to apportion the Department's budget against the headings described.

Community Groups

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department provides a forum for community groups who have plans and ideas around crime prevention; and if not, to whom should they present their proposals. **(AQW 6703/11-15)**

Mr Ford: There is no specific forum for community groups to present their plans and ideas on crime prevention to the Department.

My Department does, however, fund Community Safety Partnerships in each of the 26 council areas across Northern Ireland. Each Partnership is responsible for carrying out an audit in their local area, including liaison with local community groups, to identify community safety issues. The Partnership is also responsible for developing an Action Plan to address these issues and help reduce, and prevent crime.

Community Safety Partnerships are normally comprised of local political representatives, statutory partners, and a variety of community and voluntary representatives as deemed appropriate by the local partnership. Examples include Women's Aid, local churches, and Drugs and Alcohol groups. A substantial number of Action Plan projects are delivered on behalf of the Partnership through local community and voluntary groups. In many areas Partnerships also work closely with Anti-Social Behaviour Fora and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes. It is hoped that the PCSPs, which will be established in April, will build on this good work, and ensure that the views of the community continue to be represented.

It is also worth highlighting my Department is currently developing a Community Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland, 'Building Safer, Shared and Confident Communities'. The development of this Strategy is being informed by the comprehensive consultation which took place between January and March of last year, during which 125 formal written responses were received, and 48 consultation meetings hosted with local groups, in addition to 12 public engagement events, which attracted over 300 attendees.

Legal Aid for Brian Shivers and Colin Duffy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) for an up to date breakdown of the legal aid provided for (a) Brian Shivers; and (b) Colin Duffy; (ii) how many solicitors companies and counsel were instructed; and (iii) for an estimate of the final figures.

(AQW 6765/11-15)

Mr Ford: A breakdown of the criminal legal aid fees paid to date is provided in the table below. However, there are a number of bills outstanding at this stage and the overall bill will be significantly higher.

FEES PAID TO DATE

	PACE Fees*	Solicitor Fees	Junior Counsel Fees	Senior Counsel Fees
Shivers	£1682.89 (inc VAT of £254.51)	£21,245.69 (including disbursements and VAT of £3,340.95)	£108.60 (including VAT) NB: One payment was made to Counsel who was not VAT registered	Not yet determined
Duffy	£3,802.81 (inc VAT of £468.73)	£13,079.18 (including VAT of £2,154.86 and disbursements)	£1,411.62 (including VAT of £235.27)	£2,482.27 (including VAT of £413.71)

* These are fees paid for advice given at the police station under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act.

Brian Shivers was granted a legal aid certificate to cover representation by solicitor, junior counsel and senior counsel at the Crown Court. The same firm of solicitors represented the defendant throughout the trial. One junior counsel represented the defendant at the Magistrates' Court. A different junior counsel attended for an application only at the Crown Court. For the main Crown Court proceedings one senior and one junior counsel represented Mr Shivers (the junior counsel was a different representative from the junior counsel who attended for the application at the Crown Court and the junior who represented the defendant at the Magistrates' Court). During the course of the trial the defence team was replaced by, and the case was completed by, different senior and junior counsel. Not all claims have yet been determined.

Colin Duffy was granted a legal aid certificate to cover representation by solicitor, junior counsel and senior counsel at the Crown Court. Subsequently he transferred his instructions from the initial firm to a different firm of solicitors. At the Magistrates' Court the initial legal aid certificate was granted to cover one junior counsel. However, a second certificate was subsequently issued to cover junior and senior counsel. At this stage a different junior counsel was engaged. The junior counsel and senior counsel who were engaged at the conclusion of the Magistrates' Court proceedings continued to represent the defendant throughout the Crown Court trial.

It is not possible to provide an accurate estimate of the total cost of this case at this stage as a number of claims for payment remain outstanding.

National Offender Management Scheme

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department makes any direct financial contribution to the National Offender Management Scheme, and, if so, to provide details.

(AQW 6769/11-15)

Mr Ford: I refer the member to the reply I gave in AQW5520/11 on 21 December 2011.

Special Supervision Unit at Maghaberry Prison

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what is the annual cost of running the Special Supervision Unit at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 6771/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Special Supervision Unit has been renamed the Care and Supervision Unit at Maghaberry Prison. The annual running cost of the Unit is £1,070,976.

Mental Capacity Bill

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Justice, at what stage is the introduction of the Mental Capacity Bill; and when it will go out for public consultation.

(AQW 6816/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials are currently in discussion with those in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety about the potential for joint legislation on mental capacity. I would hope shortly to be in a position to advise Members on the plans and timetable.

Mental Capacity Bill

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Justice why it is necessary for his Department to bring forward a Mental Capacity Bill, in addition to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety's Mental Health Bill.

(AQW 6820/11-15)

Mr Ford: My officials are currently in discussion with those in the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety about the potential for joint legislation on mental capacity. I would hope shortly to be in a position to advise Members on the plans and timetable.

Bench Warrants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many Bench Warrants, including European Arrest Warrants, are outstanding for people wanted for murder; and how many of these warrants were issued (i) between one and five years ago; (ii) between five and ten years ago; (iii) between ten and fifteen years ago; (iv) between fifteen and twenty years ago; and (v) more than twenty years ago.

(AQW 6826/11-15)

Mr Ford: As of 25 January 2012, there is currently one outstanding Arrest Warrant (Magistrates' Court) for a defendant charged with murder, issued between one and five years ago.

There are no outstanding European Arrest Warrants relating to a charge of murder.

Case Number 11/142258

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to case number 11/142258 which was moved from Londonderry Magistrates Court to Magherafelt Magistrates Court, (i) why, given the nature of the charges, there are no bail conditions attached; (ii) whether it is routine for no bail conditions to be attached to charges of this nature, and if so, would he consider amending legislation to ensure that bail is set; and (iii) why the hearing was transferred from Londonderry to Magherafelt.

(AQW 6827/11-15)

Mr Ford: The proceedings in respect of case number 11/142258 were initiated by way of a summons issued by the Public Prosecution Service and there was therefore no requirement for the defendant to enter into bail. It is a matter for the Police or the Director of Public Prosecutions to decide whether criminal proceedings are initiated by a charge sheet or a summons.

The Member may be aware that the Northern Ireland Law Commission is currently undertaking a review of the law on bail in criminal proceedings which may create new legislation. I expect to receive the Commission's legislative proposals in the Spring.

The decision to transfer the proceedings to Magherafelt is a judicial matter and not something upon which I can comment.

Disqualified Drivers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 5841/11-15, how many disqualified drivers have applied to have their disqualification removed in each of the last three years; and how many were successful.

(AQW 6829/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below provides the number and outcome of dealt with applications to restore a driving licence for each of the last three full years for which final data is available.

APPLICATIONS TO RESTORE A DRIVING LICENCE

Year	Outcome						Total
	Granted	Refused	Disqualification Reduced	Dismissed	Withdrawn	No Order Made	
2008	44	5	1	0	4	0	54
2009	53	16	0	5	11	0	85
2010	56	19	0	3	5	4	87
Total	153	40	1	8	20	4	226

Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre Site in Missile

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what work has been carried out at the former Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre site in Missile in the last twelve months; and for what reasons.

(AQW 6840/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service has been giving consideration to contingency arrangements to deal with the rise in the prison population.

As part of the examination of Lisnevin a small amount of internal clearance work took place to facilitate an inspection of the buildings.

Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether his Department has any plans to house women prisoners from Hydebank Young Offender Centre at the former Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre in Millisle.

(AQW 6841/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently no such plans.

Ethnicity Monitoring of the Criminal Justice System

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice whether he will introduce ethnicity monitoring of the criminal justice system, which mirrors Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 for England and Wales, in order to safeguard against the discrimination of individuals on the basis of their ethnicity.

(AQW 6877/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department works with the PSNI and other partners at regional level and locally through Community Safety Partnerships to address hate crime and encourage reporting.

The new Community Safety Strategy will include a commitment to tackling hate crime in partnership, and a key element will be around building confidence in the justice agencies and encouraging reporting of hate crimes.

Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 (the 1991 Act) gives the Secretary of State the ability to publish information to support improved performance of the criminal justice system in a number of areas. This includes “facilitating” the avoidance of any discrimination against anyone on the grounds of their race or gender. It does not create any system for monitoring ethnicity in the criminal justice system. As administrative mechanisms already exist which allow for the sharing of relevant operational information across the justice system in Northern Ireland, I have no plans to replicate Section 95 of the 1991 Act.

Legislation to Tackle Fuel Smuggling

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice what legislation he plans to introduce to tackle fuel smuggling. **(AQW 6895/11-15)**

Mr Ford: The principal offence connected with fuel fraud is evasion of duty which is an excepted matter that falls to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC). The most relevant provision is contained in section 170 of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (1979 c2). HMRC have confirmed that there are no plans to amend this provision or to seek additional legislation at present, but the matter is kept under review.

I am considering adding the offence in section 170 to those which may be referred to the Court of Appeal, with the leave of the Court, by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) under Part IV of the Criminal Justice Act (1988 c.33), where it appears to the DPP that the sentencing of a person in a proceeding in the Crown Court has been unduly lenient.

I would also note the decision by the Lord Chief Justice, following consultation, to include “duty evasion and smuggling” as an area where sentencing guidance will be developed as part of his Programme of Action on Sentencing.

Appeals to the County Court

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many appeals to the County Court, from the Small Claims Court, have been subject to (i) a full fee of £175; (ii) a reduced fee; and (iii) no fee, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6903/11-15)

Mr Ford: Details of the number of appeals from the Small Claims Court to the County Court were not centrally recorded prior to January 2008. Consequently full year figures are only available from 2008 onwards. Since September 2007 the fee to lodge an appeal in a small claims case has been £150, prior to this date the fee was £175.

The table below sets out the number of small claims appeals and the respective fees paid for each of the past four years.

Year	Number of small claims appeals lodged	Number of appeals lodged where full fee paid	Number of appeals lodged where reduced fee paid	Number of appeals lodged where no fee paid
2008	4	3	0	1
2009	6	5	0	1
2010	3	3	0	0
2011	4	1	0	3
Total	17	12	0	5

16 of the 17 appeals lodged were in Form 130 of the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) 1981, the case papers in the remaining case are unavailable.

Closure of Courthouses

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the reasons why the five courthouses proposed for closure were selected, given that at least one courthouse with a lower usage than these five will remain open.

(AQW 6905/11-15)

Mr Ford: The proposal to close Hearing Centres at five venues was based on several factors. These include courtroom utilisation, fitness for purpose of the building, the ability to transfer business to a suitable venue with minimal disruption, the availability of suitable public transport between court venues and the travel time between court venues.

Appeals to the County Court

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many appeals from the Small Claims Court to the County Court, in each of the last five years, were initiated after receipt of (i) form 130 of the County Court rules; and (ii) a request in a letter.

(AQW 6909/11-15)

Mr Ford: Details of the number of appeals from the Small Claims Court to the County Court were not centrally recorded prior to January 2008. Consequently full year figures are only available from 2008 onwards. Since September 2007 the fee to lodge an appeal in a small claims case has been £150, prior to this date the fee was £175.

The table below sets out the number of small claims appeals and the respective fees paid for each of the past four years.

Year	Number of small claims appeals lodged	Number of appeals lodged where full fee paid	Number of appeals lodged where reduced fee paid	Number of appeals lodged where no fee paid
2008	4	3	0	1
2009	6	5	0	1
2010	3	3	0	0
2011	4	1	0	3
Total	17	12	0	5

16 of the 17 appeals lodged were in Form 130 of the County Court Rules (Northern Ireland) 1981, the case papers in the remaining case are unavailable.

Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Justice to detail the remuneration package of the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, including details of salary and other payments, with the exception of mileage claims.

(AQW 6911/11-15)

Mr Ford: The remuneration package for the Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board is £58,606 per annum. The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Policing Board has informed me that all special Responsibility Allowances previously payable ceased upon the reconstitution of the Policing Board on 24 May 2011.

Vice-Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Justice to detail the remuneration package of the Vice-Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, including details of salary and other payments, with the exception of mileage claims.

(AQW 6912/11-15)

Mr Ford: The remuneration package of the Vice-Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board is £43,954 per annum. The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Policing Board has informed me that all special Responsibility Allowances previously payable ceased upon the reconstitution of the Policing Board on 24 May 2011.

Independent Members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Justice to detail the basic allowance and other payments, with the exception of mileage, which are paid to independent members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

(AQW 6913/11-15)

Mr Ford: The remuneration package for the Independent Members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board is £19,437 per annum. The Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Policing Board has informed me that all special Responsibility Allowances previously payable ceased upon the reconstitution of the Policing Board on 24 May 2011.

Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Independent Members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Justice how the current remuneration packages for the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and independent members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board, compares with the Police Authorities in (i) Surrey; (ii) Lancashire; (iii) Cheshire; (iv) Gwent; and (v) Strathclyde.

(AQW 6916/11-15)

Mr Ford: I would not draw a comparison with Police Authorities in Great Britain, given that the Policing Architecture here is different in many respects. Nor is there a single model of Police Authorities in GB and I am not accountable to the Assembly for arrangements in other jurisdictions.

Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice to detail the cost of the Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme broken down by (i) payments to members; and (ii) administration costs; and whether any balance was transferred to the Policing Fund.

(AQW 6917/11-15)

Mr Ford: The cost of the Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme to date, broken down to show payments to members and administration costs, is detailed in the table below:

	£
Payments to members (net)	12,448,784.34
Administration costs	213,621.93
HMRC (tax and national insurance)	6,893,826.09
Total payments to date	19,556,232.36

The treatment of the balance has not yet been determined.

Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Justice whether he will publish the results of the inquiry into the security breach that occurred when the details of the payments due under the Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme were delivered.

(AQW 6921/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Justice Committee was notified on 1 November 2011 that I had received the report on the investigation, which I commissioned on the 22 August 2011, into the Part Time Reserve (PTR) Gratuity Scheme data breach.

The investigation examined the circumstances which led to the breach and reviewed the information security and access arrangements at the Northern Ireland Police Fund.

The Report concludes that plain, non window envelopes, should have been used and a PO Box style return address included. In addition, it finds that while it is evident from the investigation of both the circumstances and overall security arrangements and procedures of the Northern Ireland Police Fund that it has robust arrangements in place this lapse has had significant implications. Principal amongst these is that it has caused a number of former members of the PTR to have heightened concern about their security.

The Report's recommendations are essentially about proper handling procedures. The recommendations include: a review of the use of window envelopes across the Department, its Agencies and Arms Length Bodies; the circulation of advice on the use of such envelopes; and that the general guidance on handling protectively marked material should be reviewed and re-circulated.

Conviction of Brian Shivers

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice, following the conviction of Brian Shivers and the public declaration that he may have a terminal illness, whether he can give any assurance that there will be no early release if such a request were to be made.

(AQW 6947/11-15)

Mr Ford: No such request has been made in relation to Brian Shivers, and I am unable to give any assurance in relation to how any such request would be responded to.

Article 7 of the Life Sentences (Northern Ireland) Order 2001 provides that the Department of Justice may at any time release a life prisoner on licence if it is satisfied that exceptional grounds exist which justify the prisoner's release on compassionate grounds. The Department must consult with the Parole Commissioners before releasing a prisoner on such grounds unless the circumstances of the case render it impracticable.

Criminal Justice System

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice what agencies and organisations constitute the criminal justice system; and to whom and how they are accountable.

(AQW 6962/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no formal definition of what constitutes the criminal justice system. The table below lists those criminal justice organisations, (with the exception of the Attorney General's Office as the principal legal advisor to the Executive), that are currently represented on the Criminal Justice Board.

Organisation	Accountable to
Department of Justice (DOJ)	The Minister of Justice and to the Assembly. As Accounting Officer for the DOJ, the Permanent Secretary is accountable to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly.

Organisation	Accountable to
NI Courts and Tribunals Service (NICTS)	As an Agency within a Directorate of the Department of Justice, the NICTS is accountable to the Minister of Justice and the Assembly. The NICTS Accounting Officer is accountable to the Permanent Secretary for the DOJ and through him to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly.
NI Prison Service (NIPS)	As an Executive Agency of the Department of Justice, the Director of NIPS is accountable to the Minister of Justice and to the Assembly. As Accounting Officer for NIPS, the Director General is accountable to the Permanent Secretary for the DOJ and through him to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly. The Director General reports to the Secretary of State on national security-related matters.
Probation Board for Northern Ireland (PBNI)	As a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Justice, the PBNI is accountable to the Minister of Justice and to the Assembly. As Accounting Officer the Director of PBNI is accountable to the Permanent Secretary of the DOJ and through him to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly.
Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)	The Chief Constable is accountable to the Policing Board for the delivery of the functions of the Police Service, as outlined in the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000. As Accounting Officer for the PSNI, the Chief Constable is accountable to the Permanent Secretary of the DOJ for the manner in which he discharges his responsibilities as Accounting Officer and, through him to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly. The Chief Constable reports to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in respect of the delivery of national security-related objectives, in line with the St Andrews Agreement.
Public Prosecution Service NI (PPSNI)	The PPSNI is a Non-Ministerial Government Department. By virtue of section 42 of the Justice (NI) Act 2002, the functions of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) shall be exercised by him independently of any other person. The DPP is appointed by the Attorney General and has a consultative relationship with him and a consultative relationship with the Advocate General in relation to reserved matters. The DPP is Accounting Officer to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly; accountability to the Assembly covers finance and administrative matters.

Organisation	Accountable to
Youth Justice Agency (YJA)	As an Executive Agency of the Department of Justice, the YJA is accountable to the Minister of Justice and to the Assembly. As Accounting Officer, the Chief Executive of YJA is accountable to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Justice and through him to the Public Accounts Committee of the Assembly.

Convictions for Arson

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions for arson were secured in (i) Belfast; and (ii) the rest of Northern Ireland in the last two years; and whether he has any plans to review the sentencing guidelines for arson.

(AQW 6976/11-15)

Mr Ford: Arson offences may be prosecuted under Section 1 of the Vagrancy Act 1898, Article 3(1) and (3) of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 and Article 60(1) of the Magistrates Courts (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The table below gives the number of convictions for arson for the calendar years 2007 to 2008 (the latest year for which figures are currently available). The table states the convictions in the Belfast Court division and the other court divisions.

Number of convictions for arson, 2007-2008

Year	Belfast	Outside Belfast	Total
2007	17	47	64
2008	7	54	61

Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

The maximum sentence available for the offence of arson under Article 3 of the Criminal Damage (Northern Ireland) Order 1977 is life imprisonment on conviction on indictment. This offence was also considered in the review of the sentencing framework legislated for in the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 which introduced public protection sentences. Its inclusion in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Order as a specified violent offence means it can attract an indeterminate or extended public protection sentence. I have no current plans to amend this legislation.

Sentencing decisions, within the legislative framework, are a matter for the judiciary, taking account of all the factors pertaining in individual cases. Last year, the Lord Chief Justice, following public consultation, announced a Programme of Action on Sentencing, detailing areas where fresh sentencing guidance for the judiciary would be developed. Arson is not included in the list of initial areas for attention, though there is a commitment to consult every two years on issues of public concern for possible inclusion in subsequent Programmes.

Bench Warrants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many Bench Warrants, including European Arrest Warrants, are outstanding for people wanted for sexual offences; and how many of these were issued (i) between one and five years ago; (ii) between five and ten years ago; (iii) between ten and fifteen years ago; (iv) between fifteen and twenty years ago; and (v) more than twenty years ago.

(AQW 6979/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below sets out the number of outstanding Bench Warrants (Crown Court) and Arrest Warrants (Magistrates' Court and Youth Court) issued in relation to defendants charged with one or more sexual offences as of 25 January 2012.

Warrant Issued	Number Outstanding¹
Under 1 year	14
1 to 5 years	20
5 to 10 years	17
10 to 15 years	5
15 to 20 years	0
Over 20 years	2
Total	58

1 Represents 55 defendants

There is currently one European Arrest Warrant outstanding for a defendant charged with a sexual offence which issued less than one year ago.

Kilcooley Education and Enforcement Programme Substance Awareness For Everyone Initiative

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to roll out the Kilcooley Education and Enforcement Programme Substance Awareness For Everyone initiative to other areas of North Down. **(AQW 7052/11-15)**

Mr Ford: I refer the member to AQW/6946/10 and my response of 7 June 2010. I confirm that my Department's position remains unchanged.

Barry Johnston

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether, upon his release from custody, Barry Johnston was classed as rehabilitated and fit to reside in the community by the Prison Service, the Parole Board and the other relevant agencies.

(AQW 7057/11-15)

Mr Ford: As Mr Johnston was originally sentenced prior to the introduction of the Criminal Justice Order (NI) 2008 his case was not subject to consideration of risk by the Parole Commissioners. As he had reached the end of his sentence, there was no control over his release date regardless of issues of rehabilitation and fitness to reside in the community.

The 2008 Order made available indeterminate and extended custodial sentences where certain offenders present a significant risk of serious harm.

The executive summary of the PPANI Strategic Management Board response to the serious case review in respect of Barry Johnston is available on the PPANI website. The summary provides information in relation to the assessment, carried out by the agencies, of the risk posed by the offender. This multi-agency assessment and development of a risk management plan would have taken into account information from the Prison Service in relation to engagement with rehabilitative programmes.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 7102/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have submitted my proposals for primary legislation to the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Department for Regional Development

Portadown Railway Station

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the plans to upgrade Portadown Railway Station.

(AQW 6282/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): The approvals process for a project to upgrade Portadown Railway Station is now complete. Translink will now be able to proceed with the project and arrange for work on site to commence as soon as possible.

When completed the scheme will provide step-free, and thus Disability Discrimination Act compliant, access to the station from the main pedestrian entrance at Obin Street as well as providing step-free access to the island platform.

In addition, a new entrance atrium will be constructed at Obin Street which will include lift access and a new footbridge, also with lift access, connecting the island platform back to the main station. The existing subway will be closed. The outside of the station and the passenger facilities will also receive a major facelift which will change the whole image of the station.

Missing or Damaged Road Signage in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans there are to replace missing or damaged road signage in North Down in 2012.

(AQW 6475/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it identifies any damaged or missing road signs in North Down during its regular cyclical safety inspections. Any defects identified are programmed for replacement.

Roads Service acknowledges there is currently a backlog of work in this area, however, additional resources have been targeted to address the issue.

A6 Road from Derry to the M22 Motorway

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development when the dualling of the A6 road from Derry to the M22 motorway will be completed.

(AQW 6499/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will be aware of the issues surrounding the funding of the A5 and A8 schemes, which, undoubtedly, will have a significant impact on my Department's budget allocation. When funding is confirmed, I will review the spending priorities across my Department, including the impact on the Strategic Roads Programme. This will include the progression of schemes, such as dualling of the A6. In addition, spending beyond the current budget period will be determined by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021, which is currently published for consultation.

In the meantime, development work on the A6 proposals will press ahead, with draft statutory orders having been published, along with an Environmental Statement, in December 2011, for the Londonderry to Dungiven section of the road. Public Exhibitions associated with these statutory orders were held across several venues during the latter half of January 2012 and it is likely that a public inquiry will be necessary.

You may also be aware that the Notice of Intention to Proceed and the Direction Order were published in March 2011 for dualling the remaining single carriageway between Randalstown and Castledawson.

A local public inquiry is scheduled to be held in February 2012, for amendments to the Bells Hill Road and Annaghmore Road Junctions, as part of the progression of this scheme.

The timing of construction of these projects will be dependent on the outcome of the Public Inquiries and the availability of funding, taking account of other priorities.

Rail Station in Portrush

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development what provision is being made to prepare the rail station in Portrush for the anticipated visitor numbers for the Irish Open Golf Competition.

(AQW 6512/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In recognition of the importance to Northern Ireland of this major event and in response to local demands, Translink has established an in-house working group to oversee the organisation's plans to support the Irish Open at Portrush. Members of the group will include staff who have had considerable experience in providing transportation for recent, successful major events. Translink will be reviewing its bus and train services in order to cater for the large number of people expected to be attending the event.

As part of its preparations for this prestigious event, Translink is considering how facilities at Portrush Station might be improved. As well as carrying out a general tidy-up, power washing and repainting exercise, Translink is planning to refurbish the existing platform canopy and a capital project is already in hand.

Car Parks Revenue

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development how much revenue was collected in car parks, on days when parking charges were not applicable, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 6536/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that revenue from Roads Service's charged car parks is not collected or reconciled on a daily basis and therefore the information requested is not readily available. Outside of charged hours, payment may be made to a Pay and Display machine in a Roads Service car park in order to purchase a Pay and Display ticket which will take effect from the time charging recommences.

20mph Zones

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to increase the number of 20mph zones, or if he has any plans to legislate for a reduction in the speed limit for urban restricted streets.

(AQW 6546/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that its speed management policy encourages the further roll out of 20 mph zones and 20 mph speed limits in residential areas and in urban locations, where there is a high number of vulnerable road users present.

The Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy to 2020 contains Action Measures that replicate Roads Service policy. It also contains a commitment to pilot four schemes that will provide 20 mph limits without additional self enforcing engineering measures, such as road humps. However, fulfilment of these commitments will be subject to sufficient funding being made available, and agreement by the PSNI to enforcement.

I can advise the Member that when assessing a road for the potential to introduce a 20 mph speed limit, many factors are considered, including the mean speed, collision history, streetscape, community support, function and demographics. Given the differing characteristics of specific roads in terms their suitability for the application of a reduced speed limit, I have concluded that there would be no advantage in legislating for a blanket speed reduction in urban streets.

Replacement Buses

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development how the additional £3 million allocated in the January 2012 Monitoring Round for replacement buses will benefit North Antrim; and how many new buses will be allocated to the constituency.

(AQW 6626/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The additional £3m that has been allocated the January 2012 Monitoring Round for replacement buses will mean that my Department will be providing in total over £12m towards the purchase of 79 new buses. The new additions to the bus fleet will be allocated across the network to replace older vehicles. However Translink advises that it is not possible, at this stage, to provide exact details of where the new buses will be deployed.

Road Schemes in North Antrim

Mr Frew asked the Minister for Regional Development how the additional £3 million and £4 million for carriageway and footway refurbishment and roads structural maintenance respectively will benefit North Antrim; and to detail the schemes in North Antrim that will now proceed this year that would not have proceeded otherwise.

(AQW 6627/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that additional funding of £1,265,000 will be used to complete the following schemes in North Antrim:-

Ballymena Area (within North Antrim)

- B93 Dunminning Road - carriageway resurfacing - £110,000; and
- B94 Knockan Road - carriageway resurfacing - £100,000.

Ballymena Total - £210,000

Ballymoney Area

- A26 Frosses Road - carriageway resurfacing - £275,000;
- B62 Ballybogey Road - carriageway resurfacing - £300,000;
- B16 Kilraughts Road - carriageway resurfacing - £45,000;
- small-scale carriageway overlays/resurfacing - various locations- £80,000; and
- footway resurfacing - various locations - £50,000.

Ballymoney Total - £750,000

Moyle Area

- A2 Loughareema Road, Cushendun, - carriageway resurfacing - £160,000;
- small-scale carriageway resurfacing - £75,000; and
- footway resurfacing - various locations - £70,000.

Moyle Total - £305,000

Traffic Congestion in Holywood Town Centre

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to address traffic congestion in Holywood town centre.

(AQW 6664/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service routinely considers issues that are raised or requests received from members of the public or their representatives. Officials are presently considering a request to amend the existing traffic signal arrangement at the junction of High Street with Church

Road, as well as reviewing on-street parking/waiting restrictions at several locations within Hollywood town centre.

Penalty Charge Notices

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the revenue raised by his Department through the payment of penalty charge notices in each of the last five years; (ii) the total amount paid by his Department to the company charged with enforcing parking restrictions in each of the last five years; and (iii) the difference between the two figures for each year.

(AQW 6669/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Decriminalised Parking Enforcement was introduced in Northern Ireland at end-October 2006. Details of the revenue from payment of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), the amount paid to the service provider for enforcing parking restrictions and the difference between the two figures for each of the last five financial years is provided in the table below:

	2006/07 (£M)	2007/08 (£M)	2008/09 (£M)	2009/10 (£M)	2010/11 (£M)
Payments to Service Provider	2.4	7.0	8.5	8.9	9.3
PCN Income	2.0	6.0	5.2	4.8	4.5
Difference	0.4	1.0	3.3	4.1	4.8

Payments to the Service Provider are in relation to parking enforcement services and car-park management services. Revenue generated by the payment of PCNs is used, along with income from car-parking and other charges, to supplement the overall financing of Roads Service by Central Government.

A26 between Glarryford and Coleraine

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the traffic accident rates on the A26 between Glarryford and Coleraine, in the last five years, will be taken into account when assessing the need for the dualling of this road.

(AQW 6690/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that all the accident data currently available from the PSNI, in relation to the A26 Glarryford to the A44 Drones Road junction, has been used in the scheme assessment for the project.

The Investment Delivery Plan (IDP) for Roads, published in 2008, identifies the dualling of both the A26 between Glarryford and the A44 Drones Road junction, and the dualling of the A26 between Coleraine and Ballymoney, during the Plan period 2008–2018.

In addition, spending beyond the current budget period will be determined by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021, which is currently published for consultation.

Dualling of the Buncrana Road in Derry

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Regional Development when the dualling of the Buncrana Road in Derry will begin; and what is the estimated date of completion.

(AQW 6725/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that construction of the Buncrana Road improvement schemes, which are expected to take approximately 30 months to complete, is unlikely to start during the current budget period.

In addition, spending beyond the current budget period will be determined by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-2021, which is currently published for consultation.

Resurfacing Plans for the Holywood Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what road resurfacing plans his Department has for the Holywood area, in light of any reallocation of A5 funding.

(AQW 6760/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you are aware, the Irish Government has recently indicated it is unable to part fund the A5 and A8 projects as originally envisaged and this will undoubtedly affect the funding available to my Department.

Difficult choices will have to be made over the next few years to deliver the best possible services and when funding is confirmed, I will review spending priorities across my Department, including the impact of Budget 2010, with a view to exploring opportunities to bring forward schemes, such as those within the Holywood area.

Congestion on the M1 Between Junction 7 and the Westlink

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the actions his Department plans to take to tackle congestion on the M1, between Junction 7 and the Westlink.

(AQW 6762/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is well aware of the congested traffic conditions on the M1 during the morning peak period, and particularly from junction 7 (Sprucefield) to the Westlink. This part of the motorway is constantly monitored by staff in the Traffic Information and Control Centre.

At present, drivers may avail of the option of using the Sprucefield Park and Ride site. This has the benefit of a much shorter journey time and also leads to a reduction in the number of vehicles which contribute to the congestion.

Roads Service has also commissioned consultants to undertake a Feasibility Study into how the motorway hard shoulders may be used to mitigate the effects of congestion, either by implementing a controlled motorway, which will open the hard shoulder on occasions for all traffic to use, or alternatively, make more use of the hard shoulders to further benefit public transport. The consultants study is currently being considered, however, progression of any scheme would be dependent upon the availability of funding.

Clamping by Private Car Park Operators

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the use of clamping by private car park operators.

(AQW 6764/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service, through its parking enforcement contract with NSL, uses vehicle clamping and removals as an effective method of recovering debt relating to unpaid Penalty Charge Notices.

My Department has no authority or responsibility for any other vehicle clamping activities by private car park operators or for any parking enforcement activity on private land.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development what progress has been made with the key objective to seek trans-European transport networks and INTERREG for inter-regional co-operation funding to enhance the road network and share best practice, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6782/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that on 10 January 2012, the European Commission launched the 'call' for proposals under the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) annual programme, making €200 million available to co-finance projects in the specific priority areas, for example:

- Priority 1: Promote the development of an integrated and multi-modal transport system;
- Priority 3: Accelerate/facilitate the implementation of TEN-T projects; and
- Priority 5: Support to the long term implementation of the TEN-T network, in particular development of corridors that shall enable a coordinated implementation of the network.

My Department intends to submit an application for funding for Road Schemes along the TEN-T Priority Axis, subject to meeting the relevant criteria.

Road Service officials further advise that the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) issued a 'call' on 3 January 2012, across all themes of the INTERREG IVA programme. Officials intend to make an application for funding towards a number of minor road improvement schemes along the border with the Republic of Ireland.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development how he is using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to obtain support for a feasibility study for the Belfast to Dublin rail upgrade, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6783/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials in my Department are continually exploring the EU policies, networks and programmes in order to maximise the EU funding for public transport projects.

In relation to a possible upgrade of the Belfast to Dublin railway services, Translink advises that a Project Initiation Document is being finalised. Before submitting it to the Department Translink will seek the comments of Irish Rail. Upon receipt, officials will consider what EU funding opportunities are available to support the completion of a Feasibility Study for this project.

Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development how he is using EU policies, networks and programmes to achieve the key objective to support the water industry's uptake of EU funding to improve resource efficiency, energy efficiency and the increased use of renewable energy and sustainability, as detailed in 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12'.

(AQW 6785/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Executive's strategy 'Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12' has been developed in close cooperation with the European Commission President Barroso's Northern Ireland Task Force. The objective of supporting the water industry in improving its sustainability is underpinned by the priorities within DRD Social and Environmental Guidance for Water and Sewerage Services (2010-13). DRD also assists Northern Ireland Water (NIW) in identifying potential funding opportunities through EU programmes such as the European Commission's 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) and the INTERREG IVA Programme.

I have been advised by NIW that it is currently working on two projects: the Agricultural Need for Sustainable Willow Effluent Recycling (ANSWER); and the Advanced Technologies for Water Resource Management (ATWARM) projects.

The ANSWER Project 002991, is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (INTERREG IVA Programme) and is being coordinated by the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI). The total project budget is £2,063,001. The NIW element is £424,334.

ATWARM is a Marie Curie Initial Training Network funded by the FP7 People Programme. The objective of the project is to enhance the career prospects of 16 young researchers by providing them with technical knowledge, multidisciplinary skills and business aptitudes that will contribute to the security of water quality and quantity for future generations within the EU. Through this initiative NIW has obtained a post-PhD Student to work in the area of carbon accounting and management for a three year period. The value of the grant is £159,057.

Belfast to Londonderry Railway Line

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the passenger numbers for the Belfast to Londonderry railway line in each of the last five years.

(AQW 6786/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Passenger numbers for the Belfast to Londonderry railway line in each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
000's	1,021	1,175	1,402	1,311	1,477

Grit and Salt Boxes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many additional grit or salt boxes have been provided in the (i) North Down; and (ii) Ards Borough Council areas in this financial year to date.

(AQW 6791/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During the current winter period to date, My Department's Roads Service has provided 17 additional salt bins in the North Down Borough Council area and 4 additional salt bins in the Ards Borough Council area.

Grit Boxes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many additional grit boxes will be provided in the (i) North Down; and (ii) Ards Borough Council areas in each of the next three years.

(AQW 6792/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: When considering a request for a salt bin, my Department's Roads Service will carry out an objective evaluation which encompasses a criteria based scoring system and takes account of various factors including traffic volume, road gradient, geometry, alternative routes and other community related factors, such as schools and hospitals. This approach ensures that salt bins are strategically sited on lightly trafficked roads and at specific locations agreed to by residents.

There are no limits placed on the number of salt bins which may be provided. However, a salt bin will not normally be provided within 100 metres of an existing salt bin. As new salt bins are usually provided in response to requests from members of the public and subject to the availability of a suitable location, Roads Service is unable to predict the number of additional salt bins that will be provided in the next three years.

Dualling the A26 from Glarryford to Drones Road Junction

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what the current projected cost is of dualling the A26 from Glarryford to Drones Road junction.

(AQW 6798/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the current projected cost of dualling the A26 between Glarryford and the A44 Drones Road is in the range of £50 - £70 Million.

Legislative Proposals

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 4123/11-15, when his Department will submit its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

(AQW 6813/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department submitted its legislative proposals to the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 15 December 2011.

Enterprise Train Service from Belfast to Dublin

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the passenger numbers for the Enterprise train service from Belfast to Dublin for each of the last five years.

(AQW 6838/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Passenger numbers for the Enterprise train service from Belfast to Dublin for each of the last five years are as follows:

Year	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
000's	862,000	883,000	834,000	706,000	747,000

Ballysallagh Road at Craigtlet

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to resurface the Ballysallagh Road at Craigtlet.

(AQW 6842/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that carriageway resurfacing and drainage works are planned for B170 Ballysallagh Road, Bangor from the Ballybarnes Road to the junction with the A2 Belfast Road.

Work is currently at the planning stage, which includes developing appropriate temporary traffic management measures and consulting with the property owners affected by the scheme.

A5 Road Project: Funding

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding, which was originally allocated to the A5 road project, has been reallocated for use by the Roads Service in North Down.

(AQW 6843/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As you are aware, the Irish Government has deferred the provision of further funding for progression of the A5 and A8 schemes, and in this regard will now provide £25 million per annum in 2015 and 2016 towards the projects. At the North South Ministerial Council Plenary (NSMC) Meeting held on 18 November 2011, the relevant Departments were tasked with preparing a new funding and implementation plan for the A5 and A8 projects to be agreed at the next NSMC Transport meeting, with endorsement at the next NSMC Plenary meeting.

This process is still on-going and has not yet reached a conclusion and in that regard, I have held discussions with the Minister of Finance and expect to have further discussions with Ministerial colleagues, with a view to reaching a conclusion as swiftly as possible. As Roads Minister, I am keen to give clarity to the Construction industry.

My Department's allocation for the current financial year has, however, enabled me to make additional finance available to Roads Service for both capital and routine maintenance. This has allowed Roads Service to significantly increase its maintenance activities. For example, North Down has benefited from a two-fold increase in the maintenance budget from 2010/11, which has enabled additional resurfacing schemes to be brought forward.

Capital Budget

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his Department's capital budget broken down by the amount allocated to (i) each objective; and (ii) each spending area up to, and including, the 2014-15 financial year.

(AQW 6869/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The following table details the Department's capital budget broken down by the amount allocated to (i) each objective; and (ii) each spending area up to, and including, the 2014-15 financial year.

2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Objective and Spending Area	£m	£m	£m
Objective A			
Roads *	155.9	235.5	385.4
Transport	107.5	47.7	13.4
EU Structural Funds	0.3	0.1	0.1
Total Objective A	263.8	283.3	398.9
Objective B			
Water and Sewerage	189.0	147.6	151.3
Total Objective B	189.0	147.6	151.3
Total	452.8	430.9	550.2

Note: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Objective A: Supporting the economy by planning, developing and maintaining safe and sustainable transportation networks, promoting airport and harbour services, addressing regional imbalance in infrastructure and shaping the long-term future of the region.

Objective B: Contributing to the health and well being of the community and the protection of the environment by maintaining and developing the policy and regulatory environment which facilitates the provision of sustainable, high quality water and sewerage services.

*At the North South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Plenary Meeting held on Friday 18 November 2011, it was noted that provision of further funding by the Irish Government, for progression of the A5 and A8 projects, is being deferred and that, in this regard, the Irish Government will provide £25 million per annum in 2015 and 2016 towards the project.

A new funding and implementation plan is now being prepared for the two projects, for agreement at the next NSMC Transport meeting, with endorsement at the next NSMC Plenary meeting. This process will, undoubtedly, affect the funding available to the Department for Regional Development and, therefore potentially, delivery of the Strategic Roads Programme.

When the funding is confirmed, I intend to review the spending priorities across my Department.

Resurfacing of Castlemara Drive in Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development when the resurfacing of Castlemara Drive in Carrickfergus will be rescheduled.

(AQW 6951/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is aware that Northern Ireland Water (NIW) is presently completing further minor repair work as part of a water main renewal scheme in Castlemara Drive.

When NIW has completed its works, Roads Service will assess the condition of the carriageway and, if necessary, consider the inclusion of Castlemara Drive in a future resurfacing programme. This assessment will be carried out during the 2012/13 financial year.

Ballymoney Railway Station

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail any further capital works that are planned for Ballymoney Railway Station.

(AQW 6975/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is providing funding of £940,000 towards a project to construct a new footbridge at Ballymoney Railway Station. The project is being part funded by Sustrans who are providing funding of £425,000.

The project will deliver:

- 1 a new footbridge over the station, providing Disability Discrimination Act compliant access to the platforms as well as a cycleway/footpath providing a safe route across the railway.
- 2 the Closure of Fairhill pedestrian crossing near to the platform end (with 500 users per day).
- 3 an increase in parking spaces to a total of 60.

The project is scheduled to be completed by August 2012.

Magilligan-Greencastle Ferry Service

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 6239/11-15, when he will amend the legislation to allow his Department to part fund the Magilligan-Greencastle Ferry Service, in conjunction with the Irish Government.

(AQW 7058/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As I explained in my answer on 25 January 2012, my Department was not involved in setting up the Magilligan to Greencastle ferry service. This was a commercial initiative of the Councils in Limavady and Donegal. I have no plans to amend legislation so as to make my Department responsible for such a ferry service.

Dedicated Cycle Paths

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development to list all the dedicated cycle paths, which are separate from a road or pavement, that have been provided in the last five years; and the dedicated paths that will be provided over the next five years.

(AQW 7074/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Road Service has advised that it has not provided any dedicated cycle paths. However, it has provided cycle paths that are shared between pedestrians and cyclists, which include those on the National Cycle Network for Northern Ireland. Information on completed and proposed cycle path schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

I would further advise that a map showing the on-road and off-road sections of the National Cycle Network for Northern Ireland can be accessed at the following web address: <http://www.cycleni.com/national-cycle-network/>

With regard to the provision of cycle paths over the next five years, I can advise that the detailed budget for subsequent years has not yet been finalised and it is therefore not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

It remains Roads Service's intention to continue to implement, in so far as resources permit, the cycling infrastructure as set out in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) and the Regional Transport Strategy, which will complement the existing National Cycle Network. However as I am sure you are aware, Capital budgets for the period 2011 - 2015 are under pressure and my Department is faced with the difficult task of maximising output from the limited resources available and as such it is not possible to continue to fund all functions to at same level as in previous years.

Status of Larne Within the Regional Development Strategy

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development what further consideration has been given to the status of Larne within the Regional Development Strategy; and when Larne will be reaffirmed as a hub and gateway within the strategy.

(AQW 7371/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Larne is recognised as a Main Hub and Gateway in the extant Shaping Our Future Regional: Development Strategy published in 2001. A public consultation on the 10-year review of the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) commenced on 6 January 2011 and ended on 31 March 2011. The responses to this consultation, including those received in respect of the status of Larne, have helped shape the way forward in the final revised RDS.

DRD is in the process of finalising the revised RDS having considered the overall response to the public consultation and comments from Executive colleagues. It is my intention to make an announcement on the publication of the revised RDS in the very near future.

Department for Social Development

Housing Waiting List

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 6060/11-15, in relation to social housing, to detail (i) the number of (a) properties; (b) vacant properties; and (c) derelict properties in each Housing Executive district office area; and (ii) the number of applicants currently on the housing waiting list as a percentage of the number of social housing properties in each Housing Executive district office area.

(AQW 6624/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not categorise vacant properties as derelict. Vacant properties are categorised as awaiting relet, undergoing repairs, decanting, pending sale/demolition and illegally occupied.

The table attached details the total number of properties, the total number vacant and the number of applicants on the waiting list as a percentage of the total number of Housing Executive properties by District office area.

NIHE District Office	Total Number of Properties	Number of *Vacant Properties	No of Applicants on W/List as % of total number of NIHE properties in each District
East Belfast	3,470	128	52.4
North Belfast	6,300	281	38.1
Shankill	3,583	210	24.7
South Belfast	4,445	265	54.9

NIHE District Office	Total Number of Properties	Number of *Vacant Properties	No of Applicants on W/List as % of total number of NIHE properties in each District
West Belfast	5,120	73	52.5
Belfast	22,918	957	44.7
Antrim	2,396	21	41.2
Ballycastle	827	11	39.3
Ballymena	2,776	130	54.4
Ballymoney	1,472	16	32.2
Carrickfergus	1,925	19	52.3
Coleraine	3,070	37	42.3
Larne	1,453	158	37.2
Newtownabbey 1	2,231	135	38.1
Newtownabbey 2	2,155	19	42.4
North East	18,305	546	43.2
Armagh	3,080	37	26.3
Banbridge	1,795	26	36.7
Dungannon	1,790	20	57.0
Fermanagh	2,020	17	43.0
Lurgan	2,663	116	44.6
Newry	1,947	28	95.4
Portadown	1,613	27	47.2
South	14,908	271	48.0
Bangor	2,695	76	69.7
Castlereagh	3,754	87	38.2
Downpatrick	2,396	20	55.7
Lisburn Antrim Street	4,373	51	46.8
Lisburn Dairyfarm	1,874	20	31.6
Newtownards	3,907	73	44.5
South East	18,999	327	47.5
Collon Terrace	2,394	16	42.2
Cookstown	1,049	5	39.6
Limavady	1,464	13	31.7
Magherafelt	1,299	13	39.6

NIHE District Office	Total Number of Properties	Number of *Vacant Properties	No of Applicants on W/List as % of total number of NIHE properties in each District
Omagh	1,821	32	32.8
Strabane	2,207	21	29.5
Waterloo Place	2,259	17	45.2
Waterside	2,435	24	39.9
West	14,928	141	37.8
Outside NI	Nil	Nil	N/A
Total	90,058	2,242	44.4

* Vacant properties are categorised as awaiting relet, undergoing repairs, decanting, pending sale/demolition and illegally occupied.

Anti-Social Behaviour: Reported to the Housing Executive

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many cases of anti-social behaviour were reported to the Housing Executive in the North Down area in each of the last two years.

(AQW 6674/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the Member to the answer I provided to him in AQW 6450/11-15 on 25 January 2012.

Flats in Suffolk Road, Belfast

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 1934/11-15, for an update on the upgrade of the flats in Suffolk Road, Belfast.

(AQW 6729/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The flats located on the Suffolk Road, Belfast are included in a window replacement scheme which is currently on site. They are also included in a heating replacement scheme which was originally programmed to start in November 2011. This scheme was delayed as Phoenix Gas had to lay additional mains and they were unable to start this work until early January 2012. The Housing Executive understands that this work has now been completed and Phoenix Gas has started working on laying individual connections to the properties.

The Housing Executive hope that the heating replacement scheme will commence in May 2012 but this will be dependent on Phoenix Gas completing their work and funding being available.

Flats at the End of Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development whether the Housing Executive has any plans to upgrade the flats at the end of Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast.

(AQW 6730/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advised that they do not have any flats at the end of Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast. However, they originally had a major improvement scheme in the programme for the Doon Road maisonettes. This scheme did not go ahead due to a lack of available funding. The Housing Executive is currently considering several options to improve these maisonettes and they hope to make a decision by March this year.

Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what progress has been made in providing Housing Executive properties with double glazing, as outlined in the Programme for Government; (ii) which companies will carry out the work; and (iii) whether there is sufficient capacity and provision in the double glazing industry to complete the work.

(AQW 6749/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive is working to identify any properties which still require double glazing and once this information is available, as required in the draft Programme for Government, by March 2012 it will prepare a programme for the installation of glazing to all Housing Executive homes by the end of 2015.

The Housing Executive has had discussions with contractors, manufacturers and suppliers with respect to their capacity to support the proposed double glazing programme have been positive. It is not anticipated that capacity and provision will be problematic.

Community Centres

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development whether there are any grants available to enable communities to share costs with councils to create community centres.

(AQW 6766/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are no specific grants available from my Department or arms length bodies to enable communities to share costs with councils to create community centres. However, through the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund and the Modernisation Fund Capital programme my Department has shared costs with councils, primarily in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas to develop and improve community centres and facilities.

National Cap on Housing Benefit

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many claimants are effected by the new national cap on Housing Benefit.

(AQW 6794/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Welfare Reform Bill, which includes the proposed benefit cap, is still currently progressing through Westminster. Corresponding provisions for the introduction of a benefit cap in Northern Ireland may be included in a Northern Ireland Welfare Reform Bill which, subject to Executive approval, I intend to introduce to the Assembly later this year. Statisticians in both the Department for Social Development and the Department for Work and Pensions are currently modeling the implications of the different policy proposals contained within the Welfare Reform Bill; this will include the number of people who could be affected by any proposed benefit cap.

I should explain that the coalition Government is proposing to introduce a cap on the amount of benefit a claimant can receive of £26,000 per year after tax and national insurance or £35,000 per year before Tax and national insurance. This equates to £500 net a week. It is based on average earned income. The principle behind the introduction of a cap is that people on benefits should not receive more in social security benefits than is earned by those who are working and paying their taxes. It is also very important to recognise that those entitled to working tax credit, as well as households with someone receiving disability living allowance, are excluded from the benefit cap.

Work Capability Assessments

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have attended Work Capability Assessments, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 6795/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since its introduction in October 2008 54,048 Work Capability Assessments have been completed. The breakdown of completed Work Capability Assessments by parliamentary constituency is not available due to limitations in the information systems.

Unoccupied Social Housing Properties

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of unoccupied social housing properties in each ward in the South Belfast constituency.

(AQW 6823/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested for Housing Executive properties as they do not routinely collate information on a constituency basis. However, they have advised that they have 265 vacant properties in their South Belfast District Office area.

The table below details the number of Housing Association unoccupied social housing properties in each ward in the South Belfast constituency: -

Ward	Number of unoccupied social housing properties
Newtownbreda	2
Windsor	9
Ballynafeigh	28
Botanic	24
Shaftesbury	19
Stranmillis	2
Ravenhill	22
Woodstock	4

ATOS Healthcare Personalised Summary Statement

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development when a customer should receive an ATOS Healthcare Personalised Summary Statement, following a Work Capability Assessment.

(AQW 6835/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In November 2010, Professor Malcolm Harrington's Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment recommended that a Personalised Summary Statement should be completed by the Health Care Professional and issued to customers following a face to face Work Capability Assessment.

However, in September 2011 Professor Harrington reviewed and changed this recommendation. It was decided not to issue the Personalised Summary Statement to customers although it was agreed that the Personalised Summary Statement would continue to be available to Decision Makers to help inform the decision making process.

Work Capability Assessments

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether ATOS Healthcare provides a mental function champion to encourage best practice amongst Healthcare practitioners who carry out Work Capability Assessments on people with mental, intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

(AQW 6836/11-15)

Mr McCausland: ATOS Healthcare assumed responsibility for providing medical assessments on behalf of the Social Security Agency in June 2011. ATOS have in place a Mental Function Champion who provides ongoing support and advice and specific training on mental health to all ATOS Healthcare

professionals who provide Work Capability Assessments to customers with mental, intellectual or cognitive disabilities.

Work Capability Assessments

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development whether there are any plans to audio record Work Capability Assessments that are carried out by ATOS Healthcare.

(AQW 6839/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are no plans at present to audio record Work Capability Assessments carried out by Atos Healthcare. The Department for Work and Pensions and Atos Healthcare recently piloted the audio recording of Work Capability Assessments. The results are currently being evaluated. The Social Security Agency will review the evidence from this pilot to inform future plans.

Work Capability Assessments

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the length of the initial training provided by ATOS Healthcare to healthcare practitioners carrying out Work Capability Assessments; (ii) the examination process at the end of the training; (iii) the standard to be achieved in the examination; and (iv) who, in Northern Ireland, approves the appointment of the practitioners.

(AQW 6845/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Atos Healthcare is responsible for training healthcare professionals employed in the delivery of Medical Support Services and specific details are set out below.

- (i) Healthcare professionals carrying out Work Capability Assessments receive training that is tailored to their particular profession. The initial training for doctors is eight days and for nurses is twenty four days.
- (ii) Healthcare professionals are required to complete a paper based examination at the end of their classroom training.
- (iii) The standard to be achieved is a minimum pass mark of 85%.
- (iv) The Social Security Agency's Health Assessment Advisor is responsible for the approval of healthcare professionals employed in the delivery of the Medical Support Services. Final approval is only given following successful completion of training and the attainment of audit standards and at the point when Atos Healthcare wishes to formally appoint the individuals.

ATOS Healthcare Induction Programme

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to list the study materials included in the ATOS Healthcare Induction Programme for healthcare practitioners.

(AQW 6847/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The study material included in the Atos Healthcare Induction Programme for healthcare professionals is listed below:

- (i) New Entrant Registered Medical Practitioner**
 - Registered Medical Practitioner New Entrant Revised Work Capability Assessment Limited Capability for Work/Limited Capability for Work Related Activity Academy Welcome
 - Disability Analysis for New Entrants and Introduction to Employment and Support Allowance and Revised Work Capability Assessment
 - Revised Work Capability Assessment Handbook
 - Business Continuity Plan
 - Logic integrated Medical Assessment Application Ergonomics Pre-Course Reading
 - Revised Work Capability Assessment Handbook

- Logic integrated Medical Assessment Work Capability Assessment Review Exam Application Technical Guide

Additional course material:

- Evidence Based Medicine Cardio respiratory Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Mental Health Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Musculoskeletal Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Neurological and Infections Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence based protocols for the disability analyst
- Employment and Support Allowance/Disability Living Allowance Learning Path Pack 2
- Mental Illness – Current Therapeutics and Management

(ii) New Entrant Registered Nurse

- Physical Examination precourse
- Revised Work Capability Assessment Handbook - ESA Amendment regs 2011 v 3 Final
- Introduction to Disability Analysis and Employment and Support Allowance for Registered Nurse New Entrants pre-course reading
- Registered Nurse New Entrant Employment and Support Allowance Limited Capability for Work/ Limited Capability for Work Related Activity Physical Examination pre-course reading
- Business Continuity Plan
- Logic integrated Medical Assessment Application Ergonomics Pre-course reading
- Employment Support Allowance/Disability Living Allowance Learning Path Pack 2
- Logic integrated Medical Assessment Work Capability Assessment Review Exam Application Technical Guide

Additional course material:

- Evidence Based Medicine Cardio respiratory Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Mental Health Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Musculoskeletal Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence Based Medicine Neurological and Infections Key Points and Examination Techniques
- Evidence based protocols for the disability analyst
- Mental Illness – Current Therapeutics and Management

Vacant Properties

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what action the Housing Executive is taking to recover vacant properties.

(AQW 6881/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are a number of ways the Housing Executive is acting to recover vacant properties. In order to drive the Empty Homes Strategy, I agreed to the establishment of a working group which includes the Housing Executive. The group was established in November 2011 and two pilot areas were selected: Fortwilliam Parade in North Belfast and the Newtownards Road in East Belfast. The aim of the pilot is to support homeowners in bringing properties back into use and evaluate the use of existing legislation and powers, such as vesting, loans and grants, to assist in the process. The work is ongoing and the Housing Executive is due to report on the effectiveness of interventions in early April.

The Housing Executive also has statutory powers to compulsorily purchase properties for redevelopment purposes and may seek to vest properties in areas identified for redevelopment, urban renewal or as part of agreed estate based strategies. Areas identified may include vacant properties but often include properties which are occupied.

In September 2010 the Housing Executive Board approved a limited stock transfer policy allowing, subject to a number of criteria, vacant Housing Executive dwellings located in regeneration areas and requiring rehabilitation works to be transferred to Housing Associations. To date there are 208 properties which have either been transferred or are in the process of being transferred to a nominated registered Housing Association.

Neighbourhood Renewal Projects

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of funding his Department has allocated to Neighbourhood Renewal Projects in (i) Portadown; (ii) Craigavon; and (iii) Lurgan in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6885/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is as follows:

NRA	Funding Allocated		
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Portadown	£422,036.60	£139,084.72	£527,252.89
Brownlow (Craigavon)	£1,214,377.52	£453,928.55	£1,011,992.54
Lurgan	£1,412,034.33	£829,059.90	£926,946.63

Housing for Service Personnel and Ex-Service Personnel

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of funding allocated by his Department for housing for service personnel and ex-service personnel, excluding those rehoused as a result of terrorist threats or attack, in the (i) Portadown; (ii) Craigavon; (iii) Banbridge; and (iv) Lurgan areas in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6889/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested. The Housing Executive does not have a specific fund to assist in the housing of either service personnel or ex-service personnel. A housing application that is received from either service or ex-service personnel is assessed in accordance with the general rules of the Housing Selection Scheme and information on whether a housing applicant is either service or ex-service personnel is not captured.

Rehousing Service Personnel and Ex-Service Personnel

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of funding allocated by his Department for rehousing service personnel and ex-service personnel as a result of terrorist threats or attack in the (i) Portadown; (ii) Craigavon; (iii) Banbridge; and (iv) Lurgan areas in each of the last three years.

(AQW 6890/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested. The Housing Executive does not have a specific fund to assist in the re-housing of either service personnel or ex-service personnel. A housing application that is received from either service or ex-service personnel is assessed in accordance with the general rules of the Housing Selection Scheme and information on whether a housing applicant is either service or ex-service personnel is not captured.

Owner occupiers in Northern Ireland may be entitled to assistance under the Special Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings Scheme. During the period 1 November 2008 to 31 October 2011 the Housing Executive purchased 44 properties which were owned by Security Force Personnel as follows:-

01/11/2008 – 31/10/2009: 11 properties at a total cost of £2.692m

01/11/2009 – 31/10/2010: 19 properties at a total cost of £4.032m

01/11/2010 – 31/10/2011: 14 properties at a total cost of £2.898m

The Housing Executive does not however provide information on SPED by towns or constituency on the basis of the confidentiality of the scheme.

Bangor Town Centre Master Plan

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how he intends to implement the Bangor Town Centre Master Plan.

(AQW 6904/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Bangor Town Centre masterplan was launched in July 2011. It identified a range of projects that should be taken forward within the town centre over the next fifteen years. North Down Borough Council has established a Project Board comprising the main public and private sector stakeholders to oversee the delivery of the masterplan proposals. The first meeting of the new Project Board is planned for February 2012. DSD will be represented on the Project Board and my Department is committed to working in partnership with others to take forward the proposals identified in the Masterplan.

People with Autism Transferred to Jobseekers Allowance from Employment and Support Allowance

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, following case reviews, how many people with autism have been transferred to Jobseekers Allowance from Employment and Support Allowance; and of these, how many have indicated that they wish to appeal the decision.

(AQW 6910/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not available. The Department does not hold the information that would allow us to determine how many customers with autism claiming Employment and Support Allowance have transferred to Jobseekers Allowance.

Installing Natural Gas in Housing Executive Properties

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development (i) whether there are any plans to install natural gas in Housing Executive properties in the West Winds area, Newtownards; and if so, to detail the number of homes that will have natural gas installed; and (ii) the cost involved.

(AQW 6928/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive currently owns 501 dwellings in the Westwinds Estate. However, this will reduce to 477 when the flats at Lysander Park are demolished. 295 properties already had gas central heating installed in heating replacement schemes and nine properties had oil central heating installed before gas was available. The remaining 173 properties, mainly flats, are scheduled to have gas heating installed in 2012/13 at an estimated cost of £1m, subject to funding being available. Phoenix Gas has advised that they will be commencing a metering programme within the next few months.

Housing Executive Houses: Sold to Tenants

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development how many Housing Executive houses were sold to tenants in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 6993/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The total number of Housing Executive properties sold to eligible tenants in the last three financial years is as follows:-

2008/09 – 54 properties

2009/10 – 272 properties

2010/11 – 249 properties

Energy Brokering Report-Feasibility Study

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Energy Brokering Report-Feasibility Study. **(AQW 7006/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is evaluating the feasibility of an energy brokering scheme and it has been working on procurement documents in relation to this. However, there remain a number of legal, regulatory and practical issues that need to be examined before embarking on such a project. The Housing Executive is looking at a similar scheme already in place in Dundee to establish if it is practical to do a similar project here, or to implement a modified version that it is more appropriate for its tenants.

Cheaper Energy for Tenants

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what progress has been made by the Housing Executive in securing cheaper energy for its tenants; and (ii) whether housing associations will be included in any bulk purchasing conducted by the Housing Executive. **(AQW 7007/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive is actively evaluating the feasibility of an energy brokering scheme in relation to discounted electricity for its tenants. However, there remain a number of legal, regulatory and practical issues that need to be examined before embarking on such a project. The Housing Executive is looking at a similar scheme already in place in Dundee to establish if it is practical to do a similar project here, or to implement a modified version that is more appropriate for its tenants. No decision has yet been made as to whether Housing Associations can take part in any scheme.

Repossessed Houses

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail how many properties previously owned by (i) the Housing Executive; and (ii) housing associations have been repossessed in each of the last four years, broken down by constituency. **(AQW 7044/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as once the statutory periods for refunding discount or offering the property for re-sale to the Housing Executive or Housing Associations under the House Sales Scheme has expired, these bodies no longer have a legal interest registered on the title documents of the property and would not be notified by the lenders pursuing repossession that such action is taking place.

Re-Buying Previous Housing Executive or Housing Association Owned Properties

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has considered re-buying previous Housing Executive or Housing Association owned properties that have been repossessed from private owners. **(AQW 7045/11-15)**

Mr McCausland: My focus at this time remains on preventing the repossession in the first instance. Our mortgage debt advice service specifically aims to help those home owners whose debts threaten

their ability to remain in their homes and I am pleased that even at this early stage, large numbers of people are benefitting from this service.

However, I am also aware of the blight that empty homes can cause in communities. If those empty homes, regardless of why they are empty, are in areas of housing need and can be brought back into meaningful use then we can support such acquisitions albeit by that stage it is already too late for the former home owner which is why I prefer to focus on prevention in the first instance.

PAYG Pilot Scheme for Domestic Heating Oil

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development, in relation to the pay as you go (PAYG) pilot scheme for domestic heating oil; (i) who owns the unused oil in domestic tanks equipped with the PAYG technology; and (ii) in the event of theft or other loss of the fuel, whether the supplier or consumer bears the risk.

(AQW 7049/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department is working together with the Housing Executive, Kingspan Renewables and Carillion Energy Services to develop a pilot Pay as You Go option for people who rely on oil to heat their homes. For the period of the pilot, Carillion Energy Services will monitor oil levels in each householder's tank, buy oil when required and will own any unused oil. The householder will purchase the oil in blocks of credit, like they do with electricity and gas. Theft is a risk, and this will be minimised by tamper-proofing and alarms.

Housing Executive Stock

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development what percentage of Housing Executive stock is currently empty.

(AQW 7087/11-15)

Mr McCausland: At the 31 December 2011 there were 2,242 vacant Housing Executive properties. This equates to 2.49% of their total stock. There are a number of reasons for a property being vacant such as awaiting relet, undergoing repairs, decanting purposes, pending sale/demolition and illegally occupied.

Construction Industry

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister for Social Development what action he has taken to support and underpin the construction industry; and what progress he has made on the establishment of a taskforce for the construction industry.

(AQW 7140/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Programme for Government committed my Department to delivering 8,000 new social and affordable homes in the next 4 years. This will be delivered with over £564m of grant from my Department that will be further complemented with private finance raised by Housing Associations in support of those targets. This direct financial support is significant given that for every £1 million invested in new house building, 12 jobs (7 direct and 5 indirect) are supported for a year.

The wider work of my Department in tackling Fuel Poverty and delivering high quality Public Realm and Environmental Improvement Schemes means we make a very significant contribution supporting the construction industry. However it is a responsibility that rests much wider than my own remit. For example, earlier this month I was one of 6 Executive Ministers who attended an All Party Working Group on the Construction Industry and alongside my Executive Colleagues we outlined the different contributions our respective Departments make in supporting the Industry. That meeting was useful in demonstrating not just our personal commitment, but the totality and cross cutting nature of our support and we agreed to meet again in that format in the coming months.

Fuel Allowance Initiative

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development, given the First Minister and deputy First Minister's announcement on the 8 December 2011 of a special payment of £75, through the Fuel Allowance Initiative, for people in receipt of Income Support, Employment Support Allowance and Job Seekers Allowance, to outline (i) when the payments will begin; and (ii) how potential recipients will be identified.

(AQW 7143/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My department was designated by OFMdFM to make a Fuel Allowance Payment to people in receipt of Pension Credit, Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance Income Based or Income Related Employment Support Allowance on one day in the qualifying week from 12 to 18 December 2011. The Social Security Agency is currently working with suppliers to correctly identify all eligible customers and ensure they are paid securely. The payments are being made by the Social Security Agency and will be paid in February 2012.

Business Improvement Districts

Mr F McCann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the workings of the proposed Business Improvement Districts; (ii) when they will be operational; and (iii) what resources will be available to the districts.

(AQW 7178/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) will assist towards the drive to regenerate and improve city and town centres in Northern Ireland, by allowing businesses within a defined area to vote for collective investment (through a levy paid by each business) to improve the commercial environment within their area.

Proposals will be developed by local business-led partnerships, usually in co-operation with the local council. All businesses within a potential BID area will have the opportunity to vote on the proposals before the levy is imposed.

- (ii) The proposals have been subjected to a public consultation exercise and I plan to have the Primary legislation, which will set out the broad parameters for BIDs, in place by the end of this year. This will be followed by secondary legislation and guidance from the Department. However, prospective BID areas do not have to wait until legislation is in place before starting to make their plans
- (iii) The BID levy revenue is the core funding for the BID area. It will be a matter for each business-led partnership to determine the amount of levy to be applied to each business and the overall resources available to spend in the BID area.

Move from Fortnightly to Monthly Benefit Payments

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for his assessment of the impact on claimants of the move from fortnightly to monthly benefit payments; and (ii) what discussions he has had with the Department of Work and Pensions on this issue.

(AQW 7210/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) A key element of the new Universal Credit is the introduction of a single monthly payment, which should better reflect the receipt of a salary and help prepare people for the transition off benefit into work. The change in the frequency of payment should also help customers move from more costly weekly and fortnightly budgeting. I recognise that the introduction of monthly payments will be a significant change for some customers and they may require support to make the adjustment to budgeting over a longer period of time. My Department is committed to ensuring that suitable support systems are in place for the introduction of Universal Credit so that those customers who

may experience difficulties with the transition will receive the help they need. Officials are currently actively engaged in considering the potential impact that the change in payment frequency will have in Northern Ireland and in identifying the support mechanisms that will be required.

- (ii) I have met with Lord Freud, the Department for Work and Pensions Minister for Welfare Reform, to discuss the Welfare Reform programme including the proposed introduction of Universal Credit. Officials from my Department are also represented on the Department for Work and Pensions Support and Exceptions Working Group. One of the issues being considered by this Group is the impact for customers of the change to monthly payment under Universal Credit. My officials are actively engaged with their Department for Work and Pensions counterparts as I seek to ensure the needs of vulnerable customers are taken into account.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Recording Equipment in Parliament Buildings

Mr Wells asked the Assembly Commission why it is not possible to switch off recording equipment whilst private meetings are being held in rooms 29 and 30 of Parliament Buildings.

(AQW 6587/11-15)

Mr McElduff (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): There is a range of recording equipment in Rooms 29 and 30, but it is only recording proceedings in the room when the “red button” on the committee table is pressed. If the red button is not pressed, the equipment is switched on but not recording proceedings. Apart from the red button, it is not advisable to switch off any other equipment in the room as it can cause damage to the system.

Assembly’s Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission, in light the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, whether the Commission will require the return of the Assembly’s portrait of Her Majesty so that it can be suitably displayed within Parliament Buildings.

(AQW 7197/11-15)

Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission was approached by a representative from Hillsborough Castle in 2006 requesting the loan of the Lydia de Burgh portrait of Her Majesty the Queen. I understand that the portrait initially hung in Her Majesty’s private chambers and is currently on display in the Candlestick Hall. Given that Hillsborough Castle is the Queens’ official residence in Northern Ireland and that the portrait was given on indefinite loan, the Commission has no plans to ask for it to be returned.

I do hope that the above information provides the detail that you sought, however should you require any supplementary information I would be very happy to assist with your enquiry.

Written Answers Index

Department for Regional Development	WA 384	Catholic Certificate of Religious Education	WA 318
20mph Zones	WA 385	Employment: Construction Sector	WA 320
A5 Road Project: Funding	WA 391	Funding for Trade Unions	WA 312
A6 Road from Derry to the M22 Motorway	WA 384	Job Training Initiatives	WA 317
A26 between Glarryford and Coleraine	WA 387	Legislative Programme	WA 319
Ballymoney Railway Station	WA 393	Liaison Officer from the Holylands area of Belfast	WA 312
Ballysallagh Road at Craigtanlet	WA 391	Non-Attendance Rates of Lecturers	WA 315
Belfast to Londonderry Railway Line	WA 390	North West Regional College: Governance	WA 321
Capital Budget	WA 392	Programme-led Apprenticeships	WA 320
Car Parks Revenue	WA 385	Reducing the Claimant Count	WA 317
Clamping by Private Car Park Operators	WA 388	St Mary's University College, Belfast	WA 319
Congestion on the M1 Between Junction 7 and the Westlink	WA 388	Supported Permitted Work	WA 318
Dedicated Cycle Paths	WA 393	Training for Success Programme	WA 314
Dualling of the Buncrana Road in Derry	WA 387	Unemployment	WA 320
Dualling the A26 from Glarryford to Drones Road Junction	WA 390	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 314
Enterprise Train Service from Belfast to Dublin	WA 391	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 315
Grit and Salt Boxes	WA 390	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 316
Grit Boxes	WA 390	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 316
Legislative Proposals	WA 391	Work Connect Programme	WA 318
Magilligan-Greencastle Ferry Service	WA 393	Workers who are Currently Employed at Kuehnie and Nagel	WA 318
Missing or Damaged Road Signage in North Down	WA 384	Department for Social Development	WA 394
Penalty Charge Notices	WA 387	Anti-Social Behaviour: Reported to the Housing Executive	WA 396
Portadown Railway Station	WA 384	ATOS Healthcare Induction Programme	WA 399
Rail Station in Portrush	WA 385	ATOS Healthcare Personalised Summary Statement	WA 398
Replacement Buses	WA 386	Bangor Town Centre Master Plan	WA 402
Resurfacing of Castlemara Drive in Carrickfergus	WA 392	Business Improvement Districts	WA 405
Resurfacing Plans for the Hollywood Area	WA 388	Cheaper Energy for Tenants	WA 403
Road Schemes in North Antrim	WA 386	Community Centres	WA 397
Status of Larne Within the Regional Development Strategy	WA 394	Construction Industry	WA 404
Traffic Congestion in Hollywood Town Centre	WA 386	Energy Brokering Report-Feasibility Study	WA 403
Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 388	Flats at the End of Lenadoon Avenue, Belfast	WA 396
Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 389	Flats in Suffolk Road, Belfast	WA 396
Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 389	Fuel Allowance Initiative	WA 405
Department for Employment and Learning	WA 312	Housing Executive Houses: Sold to Tenants	WA 402
0845 Numbers	WA 314	Housing Executive Properties: Double Glazing	WA 397
AccessNI Checks	WA 315	Housing Executive Stock	WA 404
Broadband: Students	WA 321		

Housing for Service Personnel and Ex-Service Personnel	WA 401	Potatoes Exported to the Republic of Ireland and the Russian Federation	WA 270
Housing Waiting List	WA 394	Prevention of Gorse Fires	WA 264
Installing Natural Gas in Housing Executive Properties	WA 402	Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund	WA 262
Move from Fortnightly to Monthly Benefit Payments	WA 405	Priority Axis 1, 2 and 3 of the European Fisheries Fund	WA 263
National Cap on Housing Benefit	WA 397	Recruitment Exercise for the General Board Members of the Agri-food and Biosciences Institute	WA 260
Neighbourhood Renewal Projects	WA 401	Restructuring the Fishing Fleet	WA 260
PAYG Pilot Scheme for Domestic Heating Oil	WA 404	Rural Investment Fund	WA 273
People with Autism Transferred to Jobseekers Allowance from Employment and Support Allowance	WA 402	Rural Poverty	WA 275
Re-Buying Previous Housing Executive or Housing Association Owned Properties	WA 403	Single Farm Payment Scheme	WA 266
Rehousing Service Personnel and Ex-Service Personnel	WA 401	Single Farm Payments: Inspections	WA 274
Reposessed Houses	WA 403	Southern Organisation for Action in Rural Areas	WA 264
Unoccupied Social Housing Properties	WA 398	Strategy for the Equine Industry	WA 270
Vacant Properties	WA 400		
Work Capability Assessments	WA 397	Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure	
Work Capability Assessments	WA 398		WA 276
Work Capability Assessments	WA 399	2012 Olympics: Training	WA 282
Work Capability Assessments	WA 399	Bag and Drift Net Operations off the County Antrim Coast	WA 276
		Bag and Drift Nets for Coastal Salmon Fishing	WA 280
Department of Agriculture and Rural Development	WA 260	Bag Nets for Salmon Fishing in Coastal Waters	WA 280
Administrative Burden on Farmers	WA 264	Boxing	WA 281
Animal Cruelty	WA 261	Conservation Legislation	WA 283
Assisted Rural Travel Scheme	WA 262	Cuireann Cumann Forbartha Charn Tóchair	WA 282
Bellarena/Magilligan Area	WA 260	DCAL: Legislation	WA 282
Bovine Tuberculosis	WA 275	Fish: Catch and Release	WA 280
Common Agricultural Policy	WA 272	Fisheries Act (Northern Ireland) 1966	WA 281
Common Agricultural Policy Reform	WA 269	Football: DCAL Funding	WA 283
Crimes of Animal Cruelty	WA 261	Gyms for Community Use	WA 276
DARD: Headquarters	WA 273	Monitoring of Nets	WA 281
DARD: Staff over Retirement Age	WA 274	Northern Ireland Mountain, Cave and Cliff Rescue Coordinating Committee	WA 279
Draft Groceries Code Adjudicator Bill	WA 269	Northern Ireland Mountain, Cliff and Cave Rescue Coordinating Committee	WA 277
Equine Sub-Group of the Rural Stakeholder Forum	WA 271	Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medals	WA 279
Fishing Gear Selectivity Trials	WA 260	Re-imaging Communities	WA 283
Flooding in Finaghy	WA 268	Review of Fishing	WA 276
Flooding in Finaghy	WA 268	Rory McLroy: US Open Golf Tournament	WA 281
Food Strategy Board	WA 274	Salmon and Inland Fisheries Forum	WA 280
Horse Passports	WA 272	Suicide	WA 282
Horses Redesignated from a Domestic to an Agricultural Animal	WA 271		
Horses Redesignated from a Domestic to an Agricultural Animal	WA 271	Department of Education	WA 284
Inspections for Farmers	WA 267	Accrued Money Held Within Schools	WA 290
INTERREG	WA 272	Administrative Staff in Each Education and Library Board	WA 294
Jobs and Growth in the Food Production Sector	WA 266		
Legislative Proposals	WA 267		

Area-Based Planning Process	WA 288	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	WA 321
Boards of Governors	WA 290	Applications to InvestNI for Funding for Hotels	WA 330
Carrick Primary School, Warrenpoint	WA 307	Broadband Enabling Technology	WA 325
DE: Budget	WA 310	Child Internet Safety	WA 325
Drug and Alcohol Abuse Among Young People	WA 293	Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast	WA 324
Early Years Strategy	WA 312	Claimant Count	WA 329
Educational Attainment in Disadvantaged Areas	WA 308	Electricity Generation	WA 323
Education and Skills Authority	WA 307	Energy Provision	WA 331
Education and Skills Authority	WA 311	Go for It Programme	WA 328
Entitlement Framework	WA 291	Hydraulic Fracturing	WA 323
Funding for Sentinus	WA 307	Hydraulic Fracturing	WA 332
Joint Efficiency Review: Stage One Report	WA 286	Investment Opportunities in the Far East	WA 326
Legislative Proposals	WA 308	InvestNI	WA 321
Lower Tier GCSEs	WA 284	Invitation to Tender for the Go for It Programme	WA 324
Middletown Centre for Autism's Building Integrated Project Team	WA 287	Jobs and Growth in the Food Production Sector	WA 330
New Builds for Corranry Primary School and Cornagague Primary School, Roslea	WA 308	Oil Exploration in Carrickfergus	WA 331
One-Year Funded Pre-School Places	WA 287	Profits Made by Wind Farm Developers	WA 324
Pre-School Education Facilities	WA 288	Reducing Levels of Poverty	WA 327
Pre-School Provision: Social Disadvantage	WA 311	Small Businesses	WA 326
Primary Schools: Reception Classes	WA 309	Third Energy Liberalisation Package	WA 330
Pupil Numbers Recommended in the Bain Report	WA 284	Titanic Signature Project	WA 329
Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June	WA 292	Ulster Bank Jobs	WA 331
Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June	WA 292	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 325
Pupils Whose Birthday Falls Between 15-30 June	WA 292	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 328
Recommendation by FSG McClure Watters	WA 291	Department of Finance and Personnel	WA 338
Religious Background of Pupils	WA 289	Baseline Figure for Unemployment	WA 345
School Inspections	WA 291	Business Services Transformation Programme	WA 352
School Principals	WA 290	Cycle to Work Scheme	WA 350
Schools: Employment Skills	WA 311	Debt Arrears	WA 339
Schools: Measurement of Disadvantage	WA 310	Former Department Employees	WA 338
Schools: Newbuilds	WA 310	Funding Allocated to the Public Prosecution Service	WA 351
Schools: New Builds	WA 289	Guidelines for Public Sector Procurement of Minor Works	WA 342
School Viability Audits	WA 309	Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998	WA 348
Staff in the Education and Library Boards	WA 288	Legislative Proposals	WA 351
Teacher Redundancies	WA 290	Mortgage Arrears	WA 338
Teachers from a Catholic Background	WA 308	Percentage of the Population in Work	WA 339
Teaching and Classroom Assistant Redundancies	WA 308	Public Procurement for Tenders for Minor Works	WA 342
Viability Audits	WA 287	Public Procurement for Tenders for Minor Works	WA 343

Rates Relief for Community Amateur Sports Clubs	WA 352	Satellite Navigation System Used by the Ambulance Service	WA 353
Rating of Empty Homes Scheme	WA 350	Students Studying Medical or Dental Graduate Entry Courses	WA 366
Retired Civil Servants	WA 351	Trade Union Duties	WA 363
Small Business Rate Relief Scheme	WA 343	Waiting List for a Nursing Home Place	WA 361
Sports and Recreation Rate Relief Scheme	WA 350	Waiting List for a Nursing Home Place	WA 363
Sports and Recreation Rate Relief Scheme	WA 351	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 362
Unoccupied Dwellings	WA 345		
Vacant Residential Properties	WA 348	Department of Justice	WA 367
Vacant Residential Properties	WA 350	AccessNI Checks	WA 372
Youth Unemployment	WA 342	Alderwood Centre for Sex Offenders	WA 369
		Anti-Social Behaviour	WA 371
Department of Health,		Appeals to the County Court	WA 377
Social Services and Public Safety	WA 352	Appeals to the County Court	WA 378
Acute Beds	WA 357	Barry Johnston	WA 383
Bed Blockers	WA 355	Bench Warrants	WA 375
Business Services Transformation Programme	WA 365	Bench Warrants	WA 382
Cleaning of Hospitals	WA 367	Case Number 11/142258	WA 375
Community Pharmacy Funding	WA 362	Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board	WA 378
Doctors and Nurses: Professional Misconduct	WA 365	Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Independent Members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board	WA 379
Female Prisoners who Have Given Birth	WA 367	Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast	WA 369
Funding for Trade Unions	WA 352	Closure of Courthouses	WA 378
Funding Packages	WA 358	Community Groups	WA 373
Graves Disease	WA 366	Conviction of Brian Shivers	WA 380
Illegal Advertising of Abortion Services in Northern Ireland	WA 361	Convictions for Animal Cruelty	WA 370
Jobs Lost in the South Down Constituency	WA 365	Convictions for Arson	WA 382
Legislative Proposals	WA 364	Criminal Justice System	WA 380
Local Commissioning Groups	WA 354	Disqualified Drivers	WA 376
Locum Doctors	WA 355	Ethnicity Monitoring of the Criminal Justice System	WA 376
Medical Research	WA 358	Garda Síochana: Summonses	WA 372
Mephedrone Consumption	WA 367	Independent Members of the Northern Ireland Policing Board	WA 379
Neo-Natal Services	WA 353	Kilcooley Education and Enforcement Programme Substance Awareness For Everyone Initiative	WA 383
New Hospital in Enniskillen	WA 366	Legal Aid for Brian Shivers and Colin Duffy	WA 373
Nursing and Residential Care Homes	WA 360	Legislation to Tackle Fuel Smuggling	WA 377
Nursing Home Beds Available in the Foyle Constituency	WA 361	Legislative Proposals	WA 383
Occupational Therapy Assessments	WA 363	Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre in Millisle	WA 376
Organophosphate Poisoning	WA 359	Lisnevin Juvenile Justice Centre Site in Missile	WA 376
Premature Births and Neo-Natal Beds	WA 353	Mental Capacity Bill	WA 375
Promoting Healthy Eating	WA 359	Mental Capacity Bill	WA 375
Proposed Model on Shared Services	WA 363	National Offender Management Scheme	WA 374
Recruitment Drive by the Fire and Rescue Service	WA 360		
Recruitment Drive by the Fire and Rescue Service	WA 361		
Removal of Breast Implants	WA 360		
Renal Unit at the Causeway Hospital, Coleraine	WA 354		

Offence of Causing Death by Careless Driving	WA 369	Draft Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy	WA 242
Offence of Causing Death by Careless Driving	WA 370	Ensuring that Organisations Demonstrate Value for Money	WA 258
People Convicted of Rape or Sexual Assault	WA 367	Executive's Strategic European Policy and Funding Arrangements	WA 242
Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme	WA 379	Foreign Direct Investment	WA 255
Police Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme	WA 380	Freezing Campaign Advertising	WA 240
Prevention of Crime and Re-Offending	WA 372	Funding Allocated to Bonfire Committees	WA 243
Prisoners: Christmas Leave	WA 371	Funding for Youth Work	WA 239
Robert Black's Trial in Armagh: Legal Costs	WA 368	Ministerial Sub-Committee for Children and Young People	WA 259
Special Supervision Unit at Maghaberry Prison	WA 374	One Plan in Londonderry	WA 240
Vice-Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Policing Board	WA 379	Programme for Government	WA 252
Department of the Environment	WA 332	Programme for Government	WA 257
Car Wash Regulations	WA 332	Racism Strategy	WA 247
Confidence in the Planning System	WA 334	Recent Figures for Child Poverty	WA 258
Department's Information Service	WA 333	Removal of Historical Executive Documents from the Northern Ireland Executive Website	WA 241
Enforcement Process	WA 336	Social Investment Fund	WA 249
Motorcycle Test	WA 337	Social Investment Fund	WA 249
Spend in the West Belfast Constituency	WA 333	Social Investment Fund	WA 251
Taxi Meters	WA 337	Social Investment Fund	WA 251
Total Spend on Hospitality	WA 334	Social Investment Fund	WA 255
Transfer of Powers to District Councils	WA 335	Social Investment Fund	WA 257
Northern Ireland Assembly Commission	WA 406	Social Investment Fund Community Plans	WA 250
Assembly's Portrait of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II	WA 406	Social Investment Fund for Children and Young People	WA 250
Recording Equipment in Parliament Buildings	WA 406	Spend in the West Belfast Constituency	WA 239
Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister	WA 239	Steering Groups Appointed under the Social Investment Fund Proposals	WA 251
10-year Strategy for Children and Young People	WA 247	The Civic Forum	WA 258
0845 Numbers	WA 247	Total Spend on Hospitality	WA 246
Administration Costs	WA 252	US Canadian Strategy	WA 241
All-Party Working Group on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration	WA 259	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 253
Archived Statements and Publications	WA 240	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 253
Archived Statements and Publications	WA 241	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 254
Asset Management Unit	WA 248	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 254
Childcare Strategy	WA 252	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 256
Child Internet Safety	WA 249	Winning in Europe: European Priorities 2011-12	WA 256
Children and Young People's Strategy	WA 249	Work Programme Developed after the Severe Weather in December 2010	WA 247
Civil Servants from the Foyle Constituency who Work in Greater Belfast	WA 248		
Crumlin Road Jail Project	WA 258		

Revised Written Answers

Friday 3 February 2012

(AQW 6128/11-15)

The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has advised that the recent recruitment competition comprised four stages:

multi stage fitness test; an assessment of the candidate's application form:

- a a Practical Aptitude Test (PAT); and an interview. Only the Practical Aptitude Test had an appeal process and the outcome of that process is set out below.

Number of candidates attending the PAT	664
Number of candidates who failed the PAT	372
Number of candidates who appealed	67
Number of candidates retested	44
Number of successful candidates after retest	37

(AQW 3975/11-15)

The answer provided in AQW 3975/11-15, mistakenly, did not include Robert Black's first journey to Northern Ireland from England, two pre trial court appearances, or the return journey back to England.

I enclose a table with a full breakdown of all the costs involved in transporting Robert Black to his court appearances in Northern Ireland. Additionally as his post sentence tariff hearing has now taken place the costs associated with this have also been included in the response

The table of figures below sets out, in chronological order, all of the costs associated with Robert Black's trial. The costs detailed in rows 2-6 and rows 34 were mistakenly not included in the original response to AQW 3975/11-15. The daily costs shown for transporting Mr Black to/from court are halved on those occasions when Mr Black shared a vehicle with other prisoners.

	Date	Venue	Purpose	Cost	Remarks
1	21/01/10	Belfast International Airport	Chartered Flight from England	Unknown	Paid for by NOMS
2	21/01/10	Belfast International Airport	NIPS Staff to collect from airport	£280.44	
3	22/01/10	Lisburn Magistrates Court	Preliminary Enquiry	£264.02	
4	26/02/10	Belfast Crown Court	Arraignment	£147.75	
5	14/04/10	Belfast International Airport	NIPS Staff Escort to England	£400.14	

	Date	Venue	Purpose	Cost	Remarks
6	14/04/10	Belfast International Airport	Chartered Flight to England	£2088.00	
7	08/09/11	Belfast International Airport	Chartered Flight from England	£5675.00	Paid for by NOMS
8	08/09/11	Belfast International Airport	NIPS Staff to collect from airport	£280.44	
9	19/09/11	Craigavon Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
10	20/09/11	Craigavon Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
11	21/09/11	Craigavon Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
12	22/09/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
13	26/09/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
14	27/09/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
15	28/09/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
16	29/09/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
17	03/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
18	04/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
19	06/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
20	07/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
21	10/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
22	11/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
23	12/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
24	13/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	

	Date	Venue	Purpose	Cost	Remarks
25	17/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
26	18/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
27	19/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
28	20/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
29	21/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
30	24/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
31	25/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£159.37	
32	26/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
33	27/10/11	Armagh Crown Court	Crown Court Trial	£318.74	
34	08/12/11	Belfast Crown Court	Crown Court Tariff Hearing	£147.75	
			Total Cost	£16295.82	



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