

Written Answers to Questions

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Friday 23 March 2012

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

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 23 March 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Fuel Costs

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much their Department, and its agencies, have spent on fuel in each of the last five years.

(AQW 8095/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): Expenditure on fuel by our Department is set out in the following table. Information is not available for the financial year 2007-08.

OFMDFM

Year	Fuel Costs
2008-09	£2,000.00
2009-10	£2,107.00
2010-11	£2,222.86

The figures above cover fuel spent on the minibus in use at the Maze/Long Kesh site. The Department commenced leasing the minibus late in 2007. Fuel costs for the initial period January 08 to March 08 where minimal.

Northern Ireland Bureau

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether there are any plans to extend the representation of the Northern Ireland Bureau to the Far East.

(AQW 8473/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We have asked officials to prepare a draft paper by the end of March which sets out proposals for strengthening our profile overseas including a proposed visit to China later in the year. The key objectives of that Strategy will be to accelerate inward investment, to promote tourism and to encourage more overseas students to study here.

Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report

Ms Ritchie asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report.

(AQW 9134/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Work such as this contributes to assessing our progress as we move out of conflict.

We already have come a long way as a society and the collective effort at a political, community and individual level must be commended. The report itself highlights the stability of the political institutions and the decrease there has been in the level of violence. However, we know that there is still work to do.

We remain committed to tackling the root causes of division and to building a united community. We also remain committed to publishing an agreed Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy. The cross party working group continues to meet on a weekly basis to finalise the strategy.

Photographers Selected to Accompany Ministers on Ministerial Visits

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how photographers are selected to accompany Ministers on Ministerial visits.

(AQW 9210/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: In line with public procurement requirements, a contract is in place to provide photographic services. Following a competition administered by the Central Procurement Directorate six photographers were appointed to undertake work on behalf of the NICS. Under the terms of this contract the appointed photographers are invited to submit a tender for each assignment before being selected.

In the event that none of the photographers on the contract are able to undertake an assignment, other photographers may be appointed in line with normal procurement guidance.

Photographic Services

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why it is necessary for their Department to contract out photographic services; and whether this an established practice or a new approach.

(AQW 9356/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The use of contracted photographers has been standard practice over many years and provides a high quality record of key Ministerial announcements and events. All photographic appointments are made in line with procurement guidance to ensure value for money.

While departmental staff regularly take their own photographs for 'in-house' activities and events, there are occasions where the services of professional photographers with the ability to deliver high quality images to the media are required.

Project 5873

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the duration of the contract under Project 5873; and, in addition to its basic cost price, whether selected photographers will be paid to travel abroad with Executive Ministers, with all their expenses paid.

(AQW 9486/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The contract is for an initial period of one year, with the option to extend by three further periods of one year each. The cost price is calculated on the basis of these extensions being taken up.

The contract is for photographic assignments within Northern Ireland.

Joint Public Services College

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how the Desertcreat Training College Project Team is working with the Strategic Investment Board in relation to tender contracts for the Joint Public Services College.

(AQO 1609/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since December 2008, an adviser from the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) has been the Programme Manager for the Joint Public Services Training

Centre. He reports to a Programme Board chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable and is responsible for delivering all aspects of the programme. He directs a Programme Team staffed by members of the participating organisations. SIB appointed another adviser to be the project's Procurement Manager and its Legal Director provides further support. Health Estates and the Central Procurement Directorate, as a Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE), are providing advice, as are other staff in SIB as required – for example on the implementation of Social Clauses in procurement.

NICS Live Event in April 2012

Ms Ritchie asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will ask the Head of the Civil Service to review the fee structure for the NICS Live event in April 2012, to ensure that small and medium sized businesses are not excluded.

(AQO 1527/11-15)

Mr P Robison and Mr M McGuinness: The NICS Live event is owned by Dods, a political information, publishing, events and communications organisation. The event is being run at no direct cost to the Civil Service and the fee structure for the event is set by Dods as it is bearing all the financial risks.

They have offered a partnership to the NICS to inform the content of the event and ensure the seminars, workshops and speakers all support the Programme for Government agenda. Civil Servants will attend for free.

Dods is solely responsible for arranging and negotiating sponsorship, advertising and exhibitions. There is a range of different sponsorship options to suit small and medium size businesses and they can also attend as delegates.

We have spoken to Dods who would be very happy to speak directly to any small and medium sized businesses regarding NICS Live. Dods are quite willing to establish a specific small and medium sized business zone within NICS Live as they have done previously at the Civil Service Live event held in London. If the Member would like to provide the contact details of any small and medium sized businesses who may be interested in attending the NICS Live event we will pass their details directly through to Dods

NICS Live 2012 is free to all Civil Servants and we have negotiated for a number of voluntary organisations to attend for free; however the Civil Service is not responsible for setting delegate fees or sponsorship costs.

This year's event follows the very successful event held in 2010. The theme is the Programme for Government and the event will provide an opportunity to focus on how the NICS can better support Ministers and the Executive in the delivery of quality, cost effective public services.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Broadband Fund

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the number of consumers who have benefited from the funding that her Department provided for the Broadband Fund.

(AQW 8770/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): As you know the provision of broadband is the remit of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment, however to date DARD contributed some £2.554million (£1.564million + £990,000) to DETI's project to provide next generation broadband services to 85% of businesses by 2011. The DARD contribution funded fibre upgrades to some 204 cabinets across the north. In total some £19.8million has been provided to upgrade 1,265 cabinets which has in turn, stimulated BT to upgrade further cabinets. By the end of March 2012 some 2,649 cabinets in urban and rural areas across the north will have been upgraded

and BT estimate that 89% of telephones lines will be connected to a fibre upgraded cabinet. Figures on the number of connections on each cabinet are not recorded. However the number of businesses serviced by cabinets upgraded with DARD's funds is estimated to be in the region of 3000 businesses.

The DETI remit is very focused on businesses and going forward any further DARD commitments of funding will be aimed wider at all rural dwellers.

Wild Animals: Banned in Circuses

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is aware of the recent announcement that wild animals will be banned in circuses in England; and if she intends to introduce a similar ban.

(AQW 9192/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I have read the Minister of State for Agriculture and Food, Jim Paice's Written Ministerial Statement on 1 March 2012 and I have noted that he is proposing to ban travelling circuses from using performing wild animals in circuses on ethical grounds, rather than welfare grounds. I am also aware that in the interim Defra has opened a consultation on 1 March 2012, seeking views on a proposed licensing scheme that would promote and safeguard the welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses in England.

My priorities on animal welfare over the coming period will continue to be the roll-out of the new provisions in the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, including new subordinate legislation on the welfare of farmed animals, dog breeding establishments, permitted procedures and the tail docking of dogs. Continuing to provide advice and guidance to support Councils during the first year of their new animal welfare enforcement role in relation to other (non-farmed) animals, which starts next month, is also a key priority.

At this time, I have no plans to introduce a ban on animals in circuses. However, I can assure you that I intend to take the time to assess the available evidence and give the issue detailed consideration. I will also take advice on the legal implications and on the proportionality of the options open to me so that the welfare of animals in circuses is fully protected. I will also need to consider the required legislative framework to support each option.

I would want to examine developments in the south of Ireland as well as England, Scotland and Wales and engage with stakeholders, including circus operators and their representatives, to ensure that their views are properly considered. In addition, I would wish to take into account developments in Europe, particularly in relation to the proposed new EU Animal Welfare Strategy for 2012 - 2015.

While we have no circuses based in the north, there are a number of circuses registered in the south, some of which regularly travel here. My Department has an agreed protocol with the Department of Agriculture,

Food and the Marine in the south which provides for an inspection of animals from these registered circuses before moving back to the south.

Funding to Agricultural Shows

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much funding her Department has given to agricultural shows in each of the last five years.

(AQW 9202/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The table below lists the total funding provided by my Department to agricultural shows in each of the last five years:

2007	£5,000
2008	£5,275

2009	£5,000
2010	£5,000
2011	£6,000

Surgical Removal of Vocal Chords from Dogs

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what legislation is in place to regulate the surgical removal of vocal chords from dogs; and for her assessment of this legislation.
(AQW 9238/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 only a veterinary surgeon can remove the vocal chords from a dog. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) view is that de-voicing of dogs is unacceptable and if it cannot be justified by the veterinary surgeon as being undertaken for the purpose of medical treatment, then it would almost certainly be considered by the RCVS to be disgraceful conduct by a veterinary surgeon and subject to disciplinary proceedings.

The Welfare of Animals Act 1972 makes it an offence for anyone to subject any animal (other than a fish, bird or reptile) to any operation which involves interference with sensitive tissue or bone structure of the animal, without the use of an anaesthetic.

Once Section 5 of the new Welfare of Animals Act 2011 is commenced in April these powers will be strengthened as it will be an offence for a Lay Person to undertake a Prohibited Procedure which includes the removal of vocal chords from a dog. The 2011 Act also increases the maximum penalty on summary conviction to imprisonment for such an offence from 3 months to 6 months and/or a £5000 fine and on conviction on indictment to 2 years imprisonment and / or an unlimited fine.

I am satisfied that the legislation that we have in place is sufficient to protect dogs from the unnecessary removal of their vocal chords.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the Common Agricultural Policy could be reformed to meet the needs of small businesses.
(AQW 9249/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Common Agricultural Policy proposals for the 2014-2020 period include a number of measures to support micro, small and medium sized enterprises in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sector. Substantial income support for family farms, nearly all of which could be classified as small and medium sized enterprises, will continue post 2013 in the form of direct payments under Pillar I. The Pillar II proposals have a greater emphasis on innovation, knowledge transfer, training and co-operation, as well continued support for new business start-up (with a particular focus on young farmers), development of small farms, farm diversification and support for existing rural businesses.
My Department

is continuing to work to secure a well funded, simplified and flexible CAP which can be tailored to meet local industry requirements.

Single Farm Payment

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the changes to the Single Farm Payment if the proposed reform of the Common Agricultural Policy is adopted, including the costs involved.
(AQW 9250/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The proposals for the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) published by the EU Commission on 12 October 2011 would result in major changes to the system of farm support. Firstly, the Single Farm Payment would be replaced by a number of payments, including a basic payment, a

'greening' payment, a top-up payment for new young entrants and a small farmer payment. In addition, there are options to introduce coupled payments and payments for Areas of Natural Constraint. These proposed changes, if agreed, would inevitably increase the complexity of the direct payments system.

Another feature of the current proposals is a move away from historically based payments towards a flat rate payment regime, which would lead to a major redistribution of support among claimants.

There would undoubtedly be additional administration costs arising from these changes, but as these are initial proposals which will undoubtedly be modified during the negotiations, I have not attempted to estimate the additional costs of administration at this stage. However, the EU Commission's Impact Assessment of the proposed reform of CAP suggests that administration costs could rise by 15%. A number of Member States have suggested this may be an underestimate and I would share that concern.

Deregulation of the Agricultural Sector

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the deregulation of the agricultural sector.

(AQW 9251/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: It is not an objective of my Department to deregulate the agricultural sector. It is vitally important for everyone that an appropriate level of regulation is in place which protects the public, protects our reputation as a food producing region and allows businesses to grow.

The purpose of the ongoing work on better regulations is to review the current most burdensome regulations with the aim being to simplify where possible and ultimately to reduce the overall administrative burden to the agri-food sector.

The NI Agri-Food Better Regulation and Simplification Review and the subsequent Better Regulation Action Plan are key steps in identifying the most costly areas of administration and setting about reducing their impact on businesses within this very important sector. I am also keen to ensure that the administrative burden created by future new or revised regulations is minimised.

Certificates for Meat Exportation to China

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what representations she has made to Westminster regarding the equality of access to export certificates for meat exportation to China.

(AQW 9252/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Along with our pork exporters I welcomed the recent agreement of a health certificate to facilitate the export of pork from pigs born, reared and slaughtered in the north. My officials are currently working with interested Food Business Operators to help them attain the required premises approval to enable them to export to China.

During negotiations of the certificate my officials worked with their Defra colleagues to get agreement from the Chinese authorities to allow the export of pork derived from pigs of southern origin, however the Chinese insisted upon the Britain and north of Ireland only clause. This is the same position in the south where only pork derived from pigs of southern origin may be exported.

In order to open this export market to all pork derived from pigs slaughtered in the north I have asked my Defra and DAFM counterparts, as well as Ministerial Colleagues, to consider if they can provide any assistance in reopening negotiations. I am awaiting their advice.

Poultry meat and other red meat export negotiations are taken forward under the auspices of the relevant export negotiation group. As a reserved matter Defra leads these Groups however both our industry and my officials have input to ensure our exporter's needs are reflected, where possible, in the negotiations. The priorities for the Groups are collectively set by the industry with China being considered a high priority for all meat.

Rural Development Projects and Community Based Initiatives in Co.Fermanagh

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the total spend by her Department on rural development projects and community based initiatives in Co.Fermanagh in (i) 2007/08; (ii) 2008/09; (iii) 2009/10; and (iv) 2010/11.

(AQW 9263/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The total spend by my Department on rural development projects and community-based initiatives in County Fermanagh was: £4,568,816 in 2007/08; £4,235,366 in 2008/09; £4,581,161 in 2009/10; and £4,966,256 in 2010/11. These figures do not include expenditure on joint or shared projects where it is not possible to separate out expenditure benefitting County Fermanagh alone.

A detailed breakdown is provided in the table below:

SPENDING ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AND COMMUNITY-BASED INITIATIVES IN COUNTY FERMANAGH IN (I) 2007/08; (II) 2008/09; (III) 2009/10; AND (IV) 2010/11

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Project				
Leader +	286815	30163	119058	0
Rural Challenge	0	0	0	22042
Rural Childcare	0	0	0	81179
Renewing Communities Pilot Scheme	64391	57838	0	0
Building Sustainable Prosperity	48828	37130	0	0
Community-based initiatives	63900	43285	78456	74184
Farm Family Options Skills	0	0	0	24236
Farm Family Options Mentoring	0	0	0	3108
Focus Farms	0	0	30319	49541
Processing and Marketing Grant (1.2)	0	0	481198	525160
Farm Modernisation Programme (1.3)	0	0	175909	37366
Countryside Management	3945870	3841455	3609839	3887306
Woodland Grant Scheme (capital payment)	82952	125413	40814	0
EU-funded	44912	68977	15688	0
Farm Woodland Premium Scheme (annual payment - current scheme)	20556	16174	15085	7175
EU-funded	10592	8592	8240	2583
Farm Woodland (annual payment - legacy scheme)	0	4920	2350	2350
EU-funded	0	1419	656	402
Axis 3	0	0	3551	249625
Total by year	4,568,816	4,235,366	4,581,161	4,966,256

Notes:

- (1) In 2007/08 and 2008/09 sums of £469,315 and £517,085 were spent respectively in border counties under Interreg IIIA. While County Fermanagh was one County benefitting from this expenditure it is not possible to separate out the Fermanagh-only spend. Therefore no allowance is made for this in the total spend.
- (2) Similarly, it is not possible to provide county-specific information for two agri-environment schemes, the Countryside Access Scheme and the Habitat Improvement Scheme, or for the new Organic Farming Scheme, and again no allowance is made for expenditure under these schemes in the total spend.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 7214/11-15, for her assessment of the impact that the proposed changes to the Common Agricultural Policy will have on the Executive's target of doubling the amount of woodland cover, and the impact on the financial support that is available to parties seeking to create woodland.

(AQW 9289/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Negotiations on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) post 2013 have a long way to go and I have already met the European Commission on CAP reform issues and further meetings are envisaged.

I welcome the Commission's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) proposals to increase support for establishment of woodland up to 100% of costs, that land eligible in 2008 and subsequently planted under the Woodland Grant Scheme remains eligible for Single Farm Payment, and that woodland on arable land can be included as Ecological Focus Areas. However, we do not have very much of that kind of land, and the Commission proposal to restrict the loss of permanent pasture on an individual farm holding to 5% is a significant challenge for woodland creation. I am also concerned that Commission proposals to exclude income foregone payments will make woodland planting options much less attractive.

Our aim to double the forest area requires a change from agricultural use at a rate of only 0.2% each year. In principle, that sounds achievable, but the Commission proposals for CAP reform make practical difficulties because of the small size of many farm holdings.

Rural Development Community Service

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the process and criteria used to select the areas chosen for delivery of the Rural Development Community Service; and why these areas were chosen.

(AQW 9294/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provided information on the number of people and income deprived people living in rural Output Areas. This information, along with the need identified during the consultation process, was used in the rationale for selection of the areas and the allocation of funding in the Economic Appraisal for delivery of a Rural Community Development Service, which has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Rural Development Community Service

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how funding for delivery of the Rural Development Community Service will be allocated to the eight areas selected for the project.

(AQW 9296/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The allocation of funding to the eight areas selected for delivery of a Rural Community Development Service was based on information provided by the NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) about the number of people and income deprived people living in rural Output Areas. This was subjected to an Economic Appraisal which has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Rural Development Community Service

Mr T Clarke asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the funding for delivery of the Rural Development Community Service, which was allocated to each of the eight selected areas, reflects the size of the rural population in those areas; and to outline the rationale for the award of the funding to each area.

(AQW 9298/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The NI Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) provided information on the number of people and income deprived people living in rural Output Areas. This was used as the rationale for the allocation of funding in the Economic Appraisal for delivery of a Rural Community Development Service which has been approved by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Broadband in Rural Areas

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the provision of rural broadband; and what proposals she has for higher speed broadband in rural areas.

(AQW 9303/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As you know the provision of broadband is the remit of the Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment however, to date DARD contributed some £2.554million (£1.564million + £990,000) to DETI's project to provide next generation broadband services to 85% of businesses by 2011. The DARD contribution funded fibre upgrades to some 204 cabinets across the north of Ireland. In total some £19.8million has been provided to upgrade 1,265 cabinets which has in turn, stimulated BT to upgrade further cabinets. By the end of March 2012 some 2,649 cabinets in urban and rural areas across the north of Ireland, will have been upgraded and BT estimate that 89% of telephone lines will be connected to a fibre upgraded cabinet. Figures on the number of connections on each cabinet are not recorded. However the number of businesses serviced by cabinets upgraded with DARD's funds is estimated to be in the region of 3000 businesses.

DETI primarily focus on broadband access for businesses but DARD will have a wider focus including all rural dwellers. I have recently announced that I would like to invest further DARD funds to increase the quality and coverage of broadband in rural areas and work to assess how best to do this is ongoing.

Proposed Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department will ensure that the proposed Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations do not unnecessarily penalise small scale breeders, or encourage the breeding of larger numbers in order to recoup costs, which could lead to an increase in unwanted puppies, breeders taking less care in relation to where they sell puppies and the suitability of the owners, and to dogs being abandoned.

(AQW 9312/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The commercial breeding of dogs is a legitimate business both here and across these islands and I do not intend to place any unnecessary burden on small, medium or large scale dog breeders. The draft Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations set out the minimum standards required for commercial breeding establishments to ensure that the welfare needs of breeding bitches, dogs and pups are met. Where good breeders are already operating to these minimum standards, the costs to them to implement these Regulations will be limited to the annual licence fee and microchipping their pups and these costs will be very low.

The new Regulations propose to introduce a new breeding establishment licence system which includes a sliding scale of fees, determined by the number of breeding bitches in the establishment. The introduction of the breeding establishment licence is to ensure that Councils, who will enforce these Regulations, recover their full costs when approving and inspecting breeding establishments. I intend to ensure that the fees, whilst allowing the Council to cover their costs, are kept at a realistic level. The proposed licence fee for a small breeding establishment i.e. no more than 10 bitches is £150. Whilst microchipping pups will be a compulsory requirement before the pup leaves the breeder, there will be

no requirement for a veterinary surgeon to undertake the microchip. Once a breeder is competent at microchipping they can microchip their own pups, so the cost should only be a few pounds per pup.

I do not see any breeders increasing the number of pups they breed to cover these small costs. However the draft Regulations also include proposals on the minimum and maximum ages for breeding a bitch and maximum number of litters a bitch can produce in her lifetime. This proposed new requirement whilst aimed at improving and protecting the long term welfare of the bitch will also ensure that bitches are not continuously bred to cover any new costs associated with these Regulations.

Enforcement of these proposed new Dog Breeding Establishments Regulations will, as outlined above, rest with Councils who enforced the current 1983 Dog Breeding Establishment Regulations. The proposal in the draft Regulations which requires a licensed breeder to microchip all pups before they leave the premises will assist Council inspectors to identify the owner or breeder of an abandoned pup or dog.

A draft Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) was carried out prior to the public consultation which took place from October 2011 to January 2012. A specific question was included in the consultation seeking evidence based information on any future costs to breeders. Whilst some stakeholders commented on possible costs, other stakeholders were of the view that most breeders already operate to these proposed standards, so little if any costs would be incurred. No information was provided from any breeders on actual costs they would incur.

I wish to see that all dog breeding establishments in the north operate to good welfare standards and that they produce high quality pups, both pedigree and non-pedigree. The proposal in the draft Regulations will ensure all commercially bred pups have the best possible start in life.

Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations (NI) 2012

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there will be an opportunity for further input from interested parties into the proposed Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations.

(AQW 9314/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The 12 week public consultation on the proposed Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations (NI) 2012 closed on 10 January 2012. That consultation, which issued to over 2,000 consultees, was the formal opportunity for dog breeders, specialist interest groups, councils and the general public to comment on the proposals contained within the draft Regulations. A substantial number of responses were received from that process and my officials are currently analysing these. In addition I met with one industry representative body that represents a number of dog breeders in the north and my officials met with another industry representative body to hear at first hand their views and concerns about the draft Regulations.

It is not my intention, at this time, to undertake any further consultation on these draft Regulations. However, I can assure you that I will consider all the relevant issues raised in the consultation responses before deciding on the final detail of the draft Regulations.

The ARD Committee will have the opportunity to consider the consultation responses and scrutinise the draft Regulations before I seek Executive agreement to lay them in the Assembly for debate under the draft affirmative resolution procedure before the summer recess. Any interested party has the right to make an application to come before the Committee to make representations on the proposed Regulations.

In bringing forward these Regulations I do not want to place unnecessary, potentially onerous requirements on legitimate dog breeders, but I do intend to provide sufficient powers to ensure that sub-standard breeders take the necessary steps to improve the conditions within their breeding establishments.

Dog Attacks on Livestock

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she will take to address the low prosecution rates for dog attacks on livestock.

(AQW 9332/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The control of dogs here is legislated for by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011.

Local Councils are responsible for enforcing this legislation, including taking forward any prosecutions. As Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development I am responsible for Dog Control policy and legislation. However, how that legislation is implemented, enforced and how prosecutions are taken forward is the responsibility of the Councils here; and how the law is interpreted is a matter for the Courts. Councils do not fall under my area of responsibility.

All incidents of straying, dog attacks and livestock worrying are investigated by Council Enforcement Officers and it is for Councils to decide the appropriate action to be taken. The Councils have formed a Dog Advisory Group to ensure a consistent approach to enforcement across Council jurisdictions.

Cost-Effectiveness of Away-Days and Team-Building Exercises

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department assesses the cost-effectiveness of away-days and team building exercises.

(AQW 9341/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department does not have a formal means of assessing the cost effectiveness of away days and team building exercises. Business areas involved are required to set targets and objectives and review progress at the end of each event – they are also required to adhere to guidelines on the use of facilities and restrictions on hospitality.

UK Forestry Standard

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether all the bodies or organisations within her Department's remit which own woodland are compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, including her Department, any arm's-length body and any organisation to which her Department provides grant aid.

(AQW 9385/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Forestry Standard is the formal statement of commitment to sustainable forestry. The 3rd edition of the Standard was published in October 2011 following a period of consultation. The Standard makes reference to our Forestry Act 2010, and the associated requirements of good forestry practice. It applies to all woodland, and serves to achieve a balance between the interests of forestry in delivering social benefits, as a commercial business and safeguarding the environment.

Woodland owned by my Department is managed in accordance with the Standard. Support for private woodland owners, through grants administered by Forest Service, is subject to confirmation that work undertaken meets the requirements of the Forestry Standard and its supporting guidelines. Agricultural land, including small areas of woodland, are supported under the Countryside Management Scheme and are required to comply with Good Agricultural & Environmental Condition (GAEC) cross-compliance rules and management requirements of the Scheme. The management of this woodland is consistent with the Forestry Standard.

Allocated Tuberculosis Free Areas

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there can be allocated tuberculosis free areas within a region of a European member state.

(AQW 9455/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A Member State or part or region of a Member State may be declared officially tuberculosis-free providing it meets certain conditions specified in Council Directive 64/432/EEC ("the Trade Directive").

Crucially the percentage of bovine herds confirmed as infected with tuberculosis must not exceed 0.1% of all herds - and at least 99.9 % of herds must have achieved officially tuberculosis-free status - for 6 consecutive calendar years.

While Scotland has been able to satisfy these conditions, no other part of these Islands is in a position to do so in the near future. Nor are there any Counties or Divisional Veterinary Office areas in the north of Ireland that could satisfy these criteria either.

Bovine TB is a complex and multi-factorial disease that is very difficult to eradicate. There is no cheap, quick-fix solution for TB, but our ultimate aim is to eradicate TB here.

Bovine Viral Diarrhoea

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action her Department is taking to tackle Bovine Viral Diarrhoea.

(AQW 9456/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: At farm level, production diseases such as BVD can have a significant impact on productivity and competitiveness and I welcome the fact that there is an increasing desire within industry here to tackle such diseases that are not subject to statutory control measures. As is the case in other regions where these issues are being addressed, there has to be a clear industry lead to make such animal health initiatives work.

My Department is currently supporting an industry-led BVD research project through the Research Challenge Fund, which aims to determine the prevalence of the BVD virus here. My officials are closely engaged with an industry BVD Working Group and are considering what, if any, further assistance can be given to the industry-led BVD eradication initiative. As a result of discussions at the BVD Working Group in February, my officials recently facilitated a discussion on the IT requirements of any eradication programme. Hopefully, this will assist industry in scoping the requirements and the potential costs involved.

For any eradication programme to be successful there must be widespread buy-in from the farming community in order to create demand for BVD control. As the industry in the south has shown, in order to get this buy-in, farmers must first be well informed. My officials are therefore considering whether funding support could be available under the Rural Development Programme's knowledge transfer measures to help farmers understand the steps that they can take to tackle such diseases and the economic benefits to them of doing so.

Key stakeholders and my officials are currently discussing a proposed new strategic partnership approach to tackling such diseases, with the intention that this would build on the work industry is already doing on BVD. This approach should be welcomed as a way of driving forward an eradication programme here.

BVD is not a statutory disease and its impacts are primarily felt at farm level so it is for industry to take the lead in initiatives to deal with it, as happens in other places. Industry commitment to funding such initiatives will be key. To find new funding from within DARD's budget would mean re-allocating money that is already committed elsewhere. However, reducing costs in other areas, such as TB and brucellosis compensation, may assist in making funding available to help support initiatives here to deal with production diseases.

Schmallenberg Virus

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she can introduce a temporary ban on the import of livestock in order to protect against the Schmallenberg Virus, given that it is not a notifiable disease.

(AQW 9476/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There is no indication that the EU Commission intends to introduce conditions for the movement of animals because of Schmallenberg Virus. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union enshrines the key principle of the free movement of goods and services between Member States. I am not in a position to unilaterally introduce a ban on imports to protect the national stock from this virus, as under section 24 of the NI Act 1998, the Department has no power to do anything in contravention of Community law.

Until we have more information the best way to protect against Schmallenberg Virus is for those importing animals to the north to source stock responsibly.

Religious Slaughter

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are any meat producers who use methods of religious slaughter; and what action her Department is taking to monitor meat production to ensure that animal welfare is protected.

(AQW 9497/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: One small slaughterhouse employs a licensed slaughterman trained in religious slaughter procedures. He works no more than one day a month processing a very small number of sheep. All these animals are effectively stunned by electrical means before slaughter. None of the local meat producers use "non-stun" slaughter.

I believe the standard of animal welfare in slaughterhouses here is high. Official Veterinarians from my Department are present in every slaughterhouse during the entire time animals are being slaughtered. The majority of this time is spent in the vicinity of the lairage and stunning area where they can monitor the slaughter process. This ensures that the highest standard of animal welfare is maintained at all times.

I take the welfare of animals very seriously and if I thought that the introduction of further measures such as the introduction of mandatory CCTV were necessary to protect animal welfare I would not hesitate to act. However, experience at slaughter here does not highlight any issue which might require the introduction of mandatory CCTV as a solution. Furthermore, 14 of the 20 slaughterhouses here, which together account for over 95% of the animals and birds slaughtered in the north, have voluntarily installed CCTV coverage of the stunning area already. As for the remaining establishments, my officials have already communicated my preferences on this matter to those operators and I intend to personally write to them to ask if they would consider voluntarily installing CCTV in the stunning area.

Guidance on Strategic Project Development for Local Action Groups

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when her Department will issue guidance on strategic project development to Local Action Groups.

(AQW 9505/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My officials met with representatives from all the clusters individually and outlined the development process and criteria. Officials further met with the Administrative Managers on 19th January 2012 to discuss the proposals coming forward from the clusters and to issue hard copy guidance notes to assist in the development of any potential projects.

Strategic Project Funding

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what types of organisations are eligible to apply for strategic project funding.

(AQW 9506/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Local authorities, NGO's and the community sector including social economy enterprises will be eligible to apply for strategic projects. The key will be the ability to deliver the project within the criteria and especially on time.

Audits of Local Action Groups

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail any proposals to introduce monthly or bi-monthly audits of Local Action Groups; and the sanctions that would be applied as part of any proposed audit process.

(AQW 9507/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As part of my Departments ongoing responsibility as Managing Authority for the NI Rural Development Programme my officials are constantly engaged in financial management to ensure that low spend is identified, managed and appropriate remedial action taken.

Carbon Reduction Targets

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department plans to contribute to the carbon reduction targets contained in the Kyoto Protocol.

(AQW 9512/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Climate Change Targets

We are required to contribute to a range of climate change targets. While climate change is a global issue it requires action at a number of levels. At the highest level the Kyoto Protocol secured commitments from 37 major industrialised countries and the European Community to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This eventually led to the European Union setting a target of reducing GHG emissions from 1990 levels by 20% by 2020 (the EU is now under some pressure to raise this target to 30% as it is felt by some that the current target is not sufficiently challenging). The UK Climate Change Act 2008, which the Executive agreed should extend here, established a legislative framework to enable the north of Ireland and Britain to reduce its GHG emissions by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050 and by 34% by 2022. These Climate Change Act targets are set at a north of Ireland and Britain level and there are no specific targets in legislation here or in England or Wales. Scotland have made their own legislative arrangements. However, recognising the importance of climate change to the north, the previous Executive set a target in its Programme for Government of reducing NI GHG emissions by 25% by 2025. The current Executive has, in its Programme for Government (2011-15), set a new, more ambitious, target of a 35% reduction by 2025.

My Department input to DOE, who are the lead department in respect of climate change, on the range of climate change mitigation measures that are being taken forward in conjunction with our agriculture and forestry industry stakeholders. The Agriculture and Forestry Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder Group, chaired by my officials, issued a Reduction Strategy and Action Plan 'Efficient Farming Cuts Greenhouse Gases' in 2011 to help meet the climate change challenge.

Human induced Soil Degradation

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what differences there are in the levels of human induced soil degradation in the land east and west of the River Bann.

(AQW 9549/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My department does not gather specific information on human induced soil degradation. My department does, however, support various research studies and surveys carried out by the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), where changes in soil fertility, soil carbon content and soil erosion risk are monitored. Maps which illustrate the geographic variability in these soil health indicators are publically available (see weblink belows).

http://www.snh.org.uk/pdfs/publications/commissioned_reports/325.pdf

<http://www.afbini.gov.uk/index/services/services-specialist-advice/soils-environment.htm>

Woodland

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many hectares of woodland have been created as a result of the Countryside Management Scheme.

(AQO 1569/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Countryside Management Scheme is one of three agri-environment schemes that provide funding to encourage farmers to create small areas of native broadleaf woodland by planting native trees. The maximum area of native tree planting that can be planted on one farm is one hectare or five per cent of the eligible area. Currently the total area of native tree planting carried out by agri-environment scheme participants is 625 hectares. Of this, 522 hectares were planted under the previous Countryside Management Scheme and 26 hectares were planted under the new Countryside Management Scheme. The remaining 77 hectares were planted under the Environmentally Sensitive Areas Scheme.

Single Farm Payments

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an estimate of the percentage of farmers who will have received their Single Farm Payment by 31 March 2012.

(AQO 1574/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I anticipate that between 93% and 94% of all 2011 Single Farm Payments will be completed by 31 March 2012. In total more than £246 million has now been paid out.

This leaves less than 7% of claims left to process with a maximum of £21 million potentially still to be paid for the 2011 scheme year. These claims are outstanding for a number of reasons, including the need to apply inspection findings, probate; or because the claimant has not provided bank account details. Not all the remaining cases may be due a payment because of ineligibility or the application of penalties under scheme rules.

Brucellosis

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the 2014 target for the eradication of brucellosis is on schedule to be met.

(AQO 1571/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: We are very much on target to achieve brucellosis eradication by the target date of March 2014.

Currently there are only 11 herds in the north still under restriction due to brucellosis. The most recent confirmed herd incidence level (December 2011) is 0.02%. Eradication of brucellosis by 2014 is one of our objectives in the Programme for Government, which will allow us to subsequently seek EU Officially Brucellosis Free (OBF) status.

However, eradication depends entirely on continued co-operation and compliance from herd owners in completing testing and in reporting abortions to enable us to remove the last vestiges of brucellosis from Northern Europe. Herd owners must understand that unreported abortions or any other suspicions of disease may jeopardise that target date.

Agri-food: World Markets

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the recent visit by the Vice President of China to Ireland, for her assessment of the potential for the agri-food sector in Asia and other world markets.

(AQO 1570/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Chinese Vice President's recent visit to Ireland was a positive development aimed at taking bilateral relations forward and to pave the way for increased trade with China.

I am encouraged by this and the opportunities that lie ahead for the agri-food sector. The world's population is growing rapidly and is projected to increase by one billion by 2030 and two billion by 2050. There are also opportunities arising from Asian diets becoming more westernised and I believe that the agri-food sector is well placed to exploit these opportunities with its strong record of export-led growth.

InvestNI has a key role in promoting our food sector internationally and does so through a programme of trade missions, exhibitions and events. I understand that recently, InvestNI hosted an information event in Belfast highlighting the marketing opportunities in China for local companies processing proteins. Later this year, I also understand that InvestNI is planning a food and drink sector trade mission to China and my Department is willing to support in whatever way it can.

I have been working with DETI to establish an Agri-Food Strategy Board to develop a growth strategy up to 2020. In doing so, it will be vital that industry sets challenging but achievable growth targets and this will involve consideration of wider global markets.

In preparing for export growth it is important that we continue to promote quality. For example, the EU's Protected Food Names scheme can be used successfully to help protect local products against imitation and to showcase the quality food we produce.

My Department will continue to support the sector in its efforts to grow further and we will continue to work alongside other Executive Departments and industry to maximise the potential of this crucial part of our economy at home and abroad.

Rural Crime

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what work she has undertaken in recent months with the PSNI to address rural crime.

(AQO 1572/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I met the Chief Constable in January to highlight the increase in rural crime, including the rise in theft from farms, and the very high level of concern it is causing within the farming community. The Chief Constable has since written to notify me of a recent intelligence led investigation which led to the recovery of stolen items including a tractor, plant and tools. As a result of this investigation I understand that an individual is to appear at Court in the coming weeks charged with handling stolen goods. I welcome this investigation which the Chief Constable believes has disrupted an Organised Crime Gang and plan to arrange a follow-up meeting with the Chief Constable to further discuss how we can work together to tackle rural crime and how DARD Direct Offices can be used to disseminate information to rural dwellers.

I will continue to work closely with the Minister of Justice on raising awareness of rural crime and I welcome local initiatives brought forward by Community Safety Partnerships to prevent rural crime such as trailer marking and the forensic marking of sheep. I am encouraging farmers to participate in these initiatives and to continue to ensure that they secure their properties by taking steps to minimise the risk of theft from their farms.

My Department's Veterinary Service Enforcement Branch has also been working closely with the PSNI in dealing with rural crime including carrying out joint on farm inspections, training some members of the PSNI in areas of livestock movement and identification and establishing 24/7 communication channels.

I am also planning to attend the launch of a Farmwatch Scheme aimed at reducing thefts from the rural community in County Fermanagh in the near future.

I also plan to meet with Martin Callinan, the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána to discuss cross border rural crime, particularly the recent attacks on staff from the Loughs Agency of Foyle Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC).

Agriculture: European Funding

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's engagement with European Commission officials about increasing the level of drawdown of European funds to increase innovation in the agricultural and agri-food sectors.

(AQO 1573/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: We are working hard to bring more European funding into the agri-food and rural sectors. This means that my officials sit on the Barosso Taskforce Working Group (BTWG), which was set up to help the area benefit from better participation in European policies, programmes and funding streams. This is a cross departmental initiative and all of us are working towards increasing drawdown of funding to 20% above current levels. My department will do this by helping our principal research and innovation provider, the Agri-Food Biosciences Institute (AFBI), access research funding streams.

To date we have worked with the BTWG on an inward European official visit held in March 2011, which gave AFBI an opportunity to build relationships with key European officials. Engagement is ongoing with an outward visit to Brussels planned for late March. DARD and AFBI officials on this visit, planned for the 27 - 29 March, will meet with European Commission (CION) officials to discuss further opportunities for funding draw down associated with Framework 7 and Horizon 2020.

Other profile raising activities which my officials have been involved in include attendance at European innovation events, such as the recent CION Conference "Enhancing innovation and delivery of research".

Food NI: 'Taste of Ulster'

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether Food NI has any plans to extend the Taste of Ulster Food Guide to feature shops and producers from Counties Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan.

(AQO 1575/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Taste of Ulster is a voluntary registration scheme managed and delivered by Food NI which is a private company limited by guarantee, formed voluntarily by a consortium of food sector representatives, to develop a positive identity for high quality local food. The Taste of Ulster Guide is currently predominantly a restaurant guide highlighting accredited eating establishments which use quality, local produce.

The 2012 Guide, which has been launched this week, has been part-funded through DARD's Regional Food Programme, Food NI having been successful in open competition and at Selection Panel. All eating establishments featured in the guide will have attained that inclusion through application, having passed inspection and fulfilled all necessary criteria.

All applicants are required to undertake an accreditation process which is confidential to Food NI although they have confirmed that a defined percentage of produce used by the hospitality outlets must be sourced locally in order to become an accredited Taste of Ulster member. Applications are welcomed from all counties in Ulster although I am aware that no applications were received from any hospitality outlets in Cavan, Donegal or Monaghan.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Salmon Net Fishermen

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any financial provision has been made to compensate salmon net fishermen in the event that her Department fails to issue them with a licence without good reason; and if so, to detail the level of compensation.

(AQW 9143/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Department has not entered into any discussions with the salmon net fishermen on the issue of compensation should licenses not be issued to them for the 2012 season.

2012 Olympics: Training

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what work she is undertaking to attract Olympic teams to use Northern Ireland as their training base; and what teams have confirmed that they will be based here.

(AQW 9231/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Work to attract countries for pre Games training began in 2007 by ensuring local venues were included in the London 2012 pre Games training camp guide. A delegation with representatives from my Department, SportNI and Local Government went to the Beijing Games in the Summer of 2008 where they promoted the North of Ireland as a pre Games training destination to all National and Paralympic Committees.

Members of the Pre Games Training Camp Subgroup have attended many major sporting events both abroad and in the UK to promote local venues for pre Games training.

Over 200 National Olympic Committees have been targeted with relevant marketing information. Specific presentations and bids for teams have been prepared for 20 National Olympic Committees.

All local Governing Bodies of sport were invited to engage with their counterparts in other countries.

100 international Ambassadors and Consulars have been hosted at local pre-Games events to establish relationships with their respective countries.

To date the North has secured 8 sports or teams to participate in pre Games training camps in the run up to the London 2012 Games.

The teams are the Chinese Artistic Gymnastics Team, the Australian Boxing Team, the Irish Paralympics Team, the Jordanian Paralympic Team, the Kuwait Athletic Team, the Sudanese Athletic Team, the Egyptian Athletic Team and the Qatar Athletic Team.

In addition a number of pre Games events involving international athletes have taken place in the north of Ireland. These include 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 also took place at the Antrim Forum in February 2012.

Further sensitive negotiations are underway with a number of other countries about locating pre Games training and qualifying events here. This is a highly competitive process and therefore I am unable to detail these countries or sports at this stage.

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 8073/11-15, whether the figures provided include the Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9354/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The figures provided in the response to AQW 8073/11-15 did not include the Department's arms-length bodies. Figures for total spending on hospitality for these bodies has been provided below.

2006/07	£26,863
2007/08	£26,710
2008/09	£54,601
2009/10	£62,191
2010/11	£40,043

These figures do not include spending on hospitality by the Department's North/South bodies. These bodies have a financial year running from January to December and so, their spending on hospitality in the last 5 calendar years is shown separately below:

2007	£5,968
2008	£11,102
2009	£15,378
2010	£7,123
2011	£9,156

Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Athletic Association

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department has any role in promoting the change in the name of the Royal Ulster Constabulary George Cross Athletic Association; and whether there has been any suggestion that a failure to change the name will have funding implications, and to outline why this would effect the funding the organisation receives.

(AQW 9383/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware of reports in the media that members of the RUC Athletic Association are meeting later this month to vote on a proposal to change the name of the Association. My Department has no role in promoting this change or the change in the name of any sporting organisation. Furthermore, Sport NI, which is responsible for the distribution of funding for sport in the north of Ireland, advises that the name of a sporting organisation is not part of any assessment criteria for funding

Ancestral Homes

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what level of importance her Department places on the ancestral homes of prominent people within Northern Ireland's history.

(AQW 9453/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Ulster American Folk Park which forms part of National Museums NI, is home to a wide variety of historic buildings from throughout the north of Ireland. These include as part of the outdoor exhibition, two ancestral homes of prominent people which are managed out of NMNI's current budget allocations. They are the historically significant Mellon House, childhood home of Thomas Mellon, founder of the Mellon Bank in the United States of America and McKinley House, ancestral home of William McKinley, American President 1897 – 1901.

Outside of these examples my Department does not have any remit or role to play with regard to ancestral homes which are in private or charitable ownership.

Irish language: E-Publishing

Mr D Bradley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps her Department is taking to develop e-publishing in the Irish language; and what resources she will allocate to this area.

(AQW 9529/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: As the main statutory body for the promotion of the Irish language, Foras na Gaeilge has been involved in developing e-publishing in the Irish language, through An Gúm and Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge.

The An Gúm website allows schools to download titles and it is intended to provide electronic versions of all the text books as each new textbook is made available.

Also this year Foras na Gaeilge intend to reprint three major Gaeltacht titles in e-book form - Lá Dár Saol (Seán Ó Criomhthain), An Mothall Sin Ort (Seán Ó Ruadháin) and Mám as mo Mhála (Seán Mac Meanman) which will be sold on Kindle platform and other formats.

Foras na Gaeilge have also met with IT providers such as Apple to develop products for the iPad and iAuthor software.

Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge over the past three years has provided funding for four publishers to develop aspects of e-publishing - Cló Mhaigh Eo; Leabhar Breac; Cló Iar-Chonnacht and Cois Life

Líofa Initiative

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 9035/11-15, if she will publish the business case for the appointment of a Líofa Development Officer; and to identify the budget area from which funding for this position will be drawn.

(AQW 9543/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Líofa Development Officer will be responsible for the ongoing development of the Líofa initiative. Currently over 1634 individuals have signed up to the initiative.

The budget in relation to the Líofa Development Officer will be drawn from my Department's overall administrative budget.

I will direct my officials to publish the business case in relation to this decision on the DCAL website.

Milk Cup Funding

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the discussions that officials from her Department or Sport NI have had with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment in relation to the provision of funding for the Milk Cup; and to detail the outcome of these discussions.

(AQW 9544/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In June 2011, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) and the NI Tourist Board sought a meeting with officials from my Department and Sport NI to discuss the provision of funding for the 2011 Milk Cup. The outcome of these discussions was that it would not be appropriate or necessary for DCAL to intervene. Since that meeting there have been no further discussions between my officials and DETI regarding funding for the Milk Cup.

International Sporting Tournaments

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the amount of funding that her Department provided to the organisers of international sporting tournaments that were held in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years; and to list each event and the amount of funding awarded.

(AQW 9546/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table below sets out the funding provided to the organisers of international sporting tournaments in each of the last three financial years. This includes funding provided both by the Department's former Events Unit and through Sport NI.

2008/09

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
DCAL Events Unit	2008 Foyle Cup	£55,000	£50,000
DCAL Events Unit	International Indoor Athletics Tournament	£15,000	£7,500
Sport NI	International Indoor Athletics Tournament	£15,000	£15,000
DCAL Events Unit	2008 Milk Cup	£50,000	£48,700
Sport NI	2008 Milk Cup	£15,000	£15,000
Sport NI	World Blind Golf Championships	£27,799	£16,000
Sport NI	2008 World One Armed Golf Championships	£10,000	£1,639
Sport NI	Archery Euronations	£10,000	£6,449
Sport NI	NI International Horse Show	£20,000	£20,000

2009/10

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
DCAL Events Unit	2009 Milk Cup	£95,000	£59,678
Sport NI	2009 Milk Cup	£15,000	£15,000
DCAL Events Unit	5th World Dwarf Games	£30,000	£9,400
Sport NI	5th World Dwarf Games	£20,000	£17,561
DCAL Events Unit	2009 Foyle Cup	£60,000	£50,000
DCAL Events Unit	Junior and Cadet World Fencing Championships	£160,000	£160,000

2010/11

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
Sport NI	2010 Milk Cup	£20,000	£20,000

International Sporting Tournaments

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the amount of funding requested from her Department by the organisers of international sporting tournaments held in Northern Ireland in each of the last three years; and to list each event and the amount of funding awarded.

(AQW 9547/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table below sets out the funding requested from and provided to the organisers of international sporting tournaments in each of the last three financial years. This includes funding provided both by the Department's former Events Unit and through Sport NI.

2008/09

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
DCAL Events Unit	2008 Foyle Cup	£55,000	£50,000
DCAL Events Unit	International Indoor Athletics Tournament	£15,000	£7,500
Sport NI	International Indoor Athletics Tournament	£15,000	£15,000

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
DCAL Events Unit	2008 Milk Cup	£50,000	£48,700
Sport NI	2008 Milk Cup	£15,000	£15,000
Sport NI	World Blind Golf Championships	£27,799	£16,000
Sport NI	2008 World One Armed Golf Championships	£10,000	£1,639
Sport NI	Archery Euronations	£10,000	£6,449
Sport NI	NI International Horse Show	£20,000	£20,000

2009/10

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
DCAL Events Unit	2009 Milk Cup	£95,000	£59,678
Sport NI	2009 Milk Cup	£15,000	£15,000
DCAL Events Unit	5th World Dwarf Games	£30,000	£9,400
Sport NI	5th World Dwarf Games	£20,000	£17,561
DCAL Events Unit	2009 Foyle Cup	£60,000	£50,000
DCAL Events Unit	Junior and Cadet World Fencing Championships	£160,000	£160,000
DCAL Events Unit	International Indoor Athletics Tournament	£10,000	0
DCAL Events Unit	George Best Celebrity Pro/Am Golf	£50,000	0

2010/11

Funder/Sponsor	Event	Requested	Awarded
Sport NI	2010 Milk Cup	£20,000	£20,000

Líofa Initiative

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many people have registered to participate in the Líofa initiative, broken down by community background.

(AQW 9579/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: To date 1628 people have taken up the Líofa challenge.

No information has been requested from Líofa participants regarding their community background.

Prosecutions for Illegal Fishing

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many prosecutions for illegal fishing have been secured in each of the last five years.

(AQW 9612/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table below details the number of convictions secured by the Fisheries Conservancy Board (up to 31 May 2009) and DCAL for breaches of fisheries legislation in each of the last five years for which records are complete:

Year	Number Of Convictions
2006	39
2007	53
2008	78
2009	124
2010	115

Licences Granted for Netting in Lough Neagh

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the current licences granted for netting in Lough Neagh.

(AQW 9705/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The following nets have been licensed on Lough Neagh as of 20 March 2012.

Eel draft net	Draft net for the capture of salmon and freshwater fish	Single wall set net or trammel net for the capture of trout	Single wall set net or trammel net for the capture of fish other than trout	Bait net
1	10	43	100	6

Bait net licences can only be purchased by those fishermen purchasing eel long line licences.

Loughs

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the Loughs for which her Department is responsible.

(AQW 9706/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department has responsibility for ensuring fisheries legislation is complied with on all waters in the DCAL jurisdiction

Salmon Netting Practices

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what enforcement action her Department will take to ensure that salmon netting practices cease once netting licences have been issued.

(AQW 9707/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers will continue to carry out surveillance in the areas in which the netsmen operated to ensure that they are complying with their undertakings and that no other illegal fishing activity is taking place.

Commercial Salmon Netsmen

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the negotiations that took place with the commercial salmon netsmen in relation to their voluntary agreement not to catch salmon; and (ii) whether negotiations are on-going with the two remaining netsmen who have not yet given robust assurances.

(AQW 9708/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) Negotiations between the Department and the Coastal Commercial Salmon Net Licence Holders centred on finding a formula that respected the position of the netsmen and provided them with

the opportunity to confirm their readiness to take voluntary action to conserve salmon as called for by the Minister.

- (ii) Negotiations are ongoing with the two remaining netsmen with the aim of achieving an agreed voluntary cession for the 2012 season.

Foras na Gaeilge

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the Chief Executive's office within Foras na Gaeilge.

(AQW 9710/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: It is the responsibility of the Chair and Board of Foras na Gaeilge to monitor and assess the performance of the Chief Executive.

Officials from the Sponsor Departments engage regularly with the Chief Executive of Foras na Gaeilge to review progress towards the delivery of agreed business plan targets and key project milestones and to seek assurance that statutory obligations and corporate governance standards are being complied with.

I am aware that there are some operational issues which the Sponsor Departments have asked the Chair and Board to address.

Waterways Ireland

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure when she intends to discuss at a North South Ministerial Council meeting the potential extension of the remit of Waterways Ireland to include the Newry to Portadown Canal.

(AQW 9727/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The issue regarding extending the remit of Waterways Ireland to include additional waterways was discussed at the recent North South Ministerial Council meeting on the 14 February 2012. Ministers concluded that no further action be taken at this time to extend the remit of Waterways Ireland given the current economic circumstances. I will however keep this matter under review.

My Department is exploring with the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) the potential to use canal restoration as a wider urban and rural regeneration initiative to deliver a range of social and economic benefits. This work is at a preliminary stage and will be used to inform the Department's future strategy for the Inland Waterways.

Netting in Lough Neagh

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what role her Department or its arm's-length bodies have in the (i) regulation of netting in Lough Neagh; and (ii) enforcement of such regulations.

(AQW 9843/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) The legislation covering netting in Lough Neagh is contained in the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966 as amended and associated regulations. My Department keeps this legislation under review. Amendments and new regulations are made in light of prevailing circumstances.
- (ii) My Department is responsible for the enforcement of fisheries legislation on Lough Neagh, to ensure that licensed commercial fishermen involved in netting comply with all appropriate requirements.

DCAL Fisheries Protection staff undertake regular patrols on Lough Neagh and surrounding land and waters. Any nets found not to comply with legislation are subject to seizure. Fishermen found not to be in compliance with legislation are reported with a view to prosecution.

Department of Education

Privately Operated Buses

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what action he will take to address the difference in the unit cost of privately operated buses which are 367.3 percent higher in the North Eastern Education and Library Board compared with the Southern Education and Library Board.

(AQW 8980/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The figure quoted is taken from the recently published report by DFP's Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) following its review of home to school transport. The report highlights a number of areas where there are significant differences in unit costs and indeed in practices from ELB to ELB and identifies a need for greater scrutiny of those differences to test whether there is any justification for them. It contains 29 recommendations highlighting a range of actions that might be taken to improve the efficiency of the home to school transport service

My Department will now be moving forward with actions designed to respond to these recommendations. This work will include addressing the apparent difference in unit costs for private operator buses between Boards

Schools Budget

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the proposed funding for special needs in the schools budget in the 2012/13 to 2014/15 financial years, with specific reference to the proportion of the budget allocated to special needs and the rise or fall in the overall allocation.

(AQW 9362/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the value and importance of the support provided to some of our most vulnerable children with special educational needs and their families. In recognition of this, when setting Budget 2011-15 allocations, I agreed that a number of frontline services should be afforded protection. This includes funding for Special Educational Needs. As a result no reductions in funding allocations for Special Schools have been included in my Department's Savings Delivery Plan.

Funding for special needs is not provided for within the schools budget, it is funded directly by ELBs from available Block Grant supported by a range of designated earmarked budgets for separate initiatives. Block Grant funding is distributed to ELBs annually via the Assessment of Relative Needs Exercise (ARNE) formula to reflect the relative needs within their respective areas. ELBs have full discretion on the prioritisation of funds allocated to them and it is not therefore possible to determine the level of funding attributable to special needs until financial plans (Resource Allocation Plans) have been received by the Department.

Article 3 Subsection 7 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8785/11-15, which schools are in breach of Article 3 Subsection 7 of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (NI) Order 2005.

(AQW 9375/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I understand that this question relates to Article 7 of the Education (NI) Order 1996, as substituted by Article 3 of SENDO.

Subject to specified exemptions, Article 7 of the Education (NI) Order 1996, as substituted by Article 3 of SENDO states that children without statements of SEN should be educated in an ordinary school.

The Chief Executive of Western Education and Library Board has confirmed that Belmont House and Rossmar special schools are currently in breach of Article 7.

Education and Skills Authority

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Education what progress has been made in relation to the Education and Skills Authority to date; and for a timescale for when it will take over the role that is currently carried out by the Education and Library Boards.

(AQW 9377/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Subject to Executive agreement, I intend to introduce a Bill in the Assembly in the very near future. The Education and Skills Authority will be established on 1 April 2013.

Foreign Language Qualifications

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education for his Department's assessment of (i) the foreign language qualifications of school leavers; and (ii) how the level of foreign language qualifications impacts on (a) the potential for attracting foreign investment; and (b) opportunities for employment in Europe-wide organisations.

(AQW 9410/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department has not carried out any assessment of the foreign language qualifications of school leavers. However, it has commissioned a report containing recommendations that might inform a modern languages strategy and has received a final draft of that report from the QUB/UU Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies. The commission envisaged a wide ranging report that would focus on the place of language learning not just in schools but for the economy and for society more generally.

Recognising that it will contain recommendations for other Ministers, I intend in the first instance to circulate the final draft report to Ministerial colleagues. As Education Minister I will also be looking carefully, within the resources available to me, at how best to move forward on those recommendations that are focused on the teaching and learning of modern languages in schools.

The tables below indicate the qualifications in languages taken for 2009/10 and 2010/11.

	Total GCSE Entries	
	2009/10	2010/11
Irish1	1,657	1,656
Dutch		*
French	7,100	6,510
German	1,251	1,044
Italian	26	30
Portuguese	*	6
Spanish	3,113	3,342
Arabic	6	*
Chinese	12	13
Polish	48	49
Russian	15	27
Persian		*
Urdu	*	
Classical Greek	*	12

	Total GCSE Entries	
	2009/10	2010/11
Latin	120	91
Table Total	13,355	12,783

	Total GCE Entries	
	2009/10	2010/11
Irish1	334	319
Dutch	*	
French	707	562
German	153	113
Italian		*
Portuguese	*	*
Spanish	443	461
Bengali		*
Chinese	26	30
Polish	12	21
Russian	*	6
Turkish		*
Classical Greek	*	*
Latin	20	19
Table Total	1,700	1,540

Notes

Source: RM Data Solutions databases

1 = Excludes Gaeilge

* = fewer than 5 cases

Excludes special and independent schools

GCSE data excludes short courses

Data are presented at subject level. Pupils may, therefore appear in more than 1 category

UK Forestry Standard

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Education whether all the bodies or organisations within his Department's remit which own woodland are compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, including his Department, any arm's-length body and any organisation to which his Department provides grant aid.

(AQW 9416/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department does not own any woodland. The Education and Library Boards, the Catholic Council for Maintained Schools, N I Council for Integrated Education and the Middletown Centre for Autism have confirmed that they comply with UK Forestry Standards. It was not possible, within the required timescale, to obtain information from all organisations that receive grant aid from

the Department (for example voluntary and grant maintained schools that would have had to be contacted on an individual basis).

While the Boards and other relevant Arms Length Bodies do not own large woodland areas they do apply a responsible tree management system for trees within the schools' estate, ensuring any work is carried out by suitably qualified experienced tree surgeons.

Academic Selection

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact of an education system and the economic consequences for the labour force, where academic selection divides children into two groups at the age of 11.

(AQW 9419/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A well educated and highly skilled workforce is essential to the growth of any economy, and in a highly competitive world facing very challenging economic times our workforce is our most important resource. High quality education must be a key factor in growing our economy. We need to ensure that our education system can both improve life opportunities for all our young people through promoting qualifications that are relevant to the changing world of work, and that it can supply our local economy with an appropriately skilled workforce.

Unfortunately our current system of dividing children at age 11 is not meeting the needs of either the economy or our young people. While I strongly support a move away from academic selection I believe that there are key policies which can provide a firm platform for improved outcomes for our children. These include the revised curriculum, which places greater emphasis on developing the skills children need - what they can do and not just what they know and understand; the school improvement policy, Every School a Good School; the literacy and numeracy strategy, Count, Read, Succeed. All of these policies aim to equip all children with the skills for both life and work.

Rejecting children at age 11 not only fails those children, but it fails to maximise the potential of the whole of our workforce. Selective schools are having to adjust to a wider range of academic ability but they are not adjusting to a wider range of social backgrounds: on average just 7% of pupils in our grammar schools are entitled to free school meals compared to 27% in non-selective schools. We need to move away from academic selection and rejection, informed by the experiences of those high performing systems around the world where academic selection and rejection has no place in a school admissions policy. Removing educational disadvantage in all its forms will make our education system better for all pupils and can only serve to benefit the economy and society in general.

Following the publication of the results of the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests, a BBC report in October 2011 highlighted how the education performance in Shanghai and Hong Kong "seems to be as spectacular as the country's breakneck economic expansion". While this achievement cannot be attributed to one particular feature of the education system I note with interest that among other changes Shanghai "got rid of the "key schools" system which concentrated resources only on top students and elite schools." The report suggests that education reforms in Shanghai which resulted in a system that focuses on the majority, not an elite minority, have been a factor in the economic success of the city.

If our economy is to thrive and grow we need to ensure that we value all our young people and make the most of their varying abilities. We cannot focus just on success for a minority, at the expense of the welfare of the majority. We will remain in the doldrums as an economy unless we educate all our young people to the best of their ability and not imagine that a minority will suffice.

Pre-School Places

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education, in light of the demand for funded pre-school places at Tannaghmore Community Playgroup, Antrim and the over-subscription at St Comgall's Playgroup and St

Joseph's Nursery, Antrim, what steps he intends to take (i) to introduce funded places at Tannaghmore Community Playgroup; and (ii) to ensure that each child in the local area receives a funded place.

(AQW 9423/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) has advised that within the Antrim council area there are currently two statutory nursery and 15 voluntary/private sector settings providing funded places under the Department's Pre-School Education Expansion Programme (PSEEP).

The application process for admission to funded pre-school settings for the 2012/13 school year is currently underway. As this preference based, two-stage process unfolds providers in the voluntary/private sector continue to liaise with the Board requesting additional places to meet demand in their areas.

Tannaghmore Community Playgroup has expressed an interest in joining the PSEEP in September 2012 and this request remains under consideration by the NEELB PEAG.

The Board will continue to liaise with providers as the admissions process continues and will consider bringing new groups into the PSEEP where no alternative provision is available or in areas of greatest shortfall to ensure that sufficient places are available for target age children in the area.

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8072/11-15, whether the figures provided include his Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9471/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The response to AQW 8072/11-15 does not include the Department's arm's-length bodies. The amount spent on hospitality by the Department's arm-length bodies in the last five years is shown on the following table.

Financial year	£'000
2006-07 *	573
2007-08 *	645
2008-09 *	709
2009-10	755
2010-11	538

* One Education and Library Board states it is unable to supply the full cost of hospitality, as defined by the Department, for these years as this information is not readily available from their financial systems.

Academic Selection

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how achievement in school correlates with economic growth; and what analysis his Department has carried out, or is aware of, on the effect of academic selection on economic output and the production of an adequate workforce to meet economic demands.

(AQW 9479/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A well educated and highly skilled workforce is essential to the growth of any economy, and in a highly competitive world facing very challenging economic times our workforce is our most important resource. High quality education must be a key factor in growing our economy. We need to ensure that our education system can both improve life opportunities for all our young people through promoting qualifications that are relevant to the changing world of work, and that it can supply our local economy with an appropriately skilled workforce.

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Asbestos from Schools

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 8828/11-15, in how many (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary schools in each Education and Library Board area asbestos is present.

(AQW 9488/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As a result of the introduction of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003 and the Control of Asbestos (NI Order) 2007 the Education and Library Boards arranged for asbestos assessments to be carried out on the schools' estate to ascertain the extent of asbestos containing materials present. Any asbestos containing materials that were identified during assessments as being 'high risk' were removed following the assessment.

As you will be aware from my previous correspondence, it is Government policy that, so long as asbestos is in good condition and is unlikely to be disturbed, it is better to be managed for the remaining life of the school rather than to disturb it.

The table below details the numbers of schools in the estate (excluding those in the Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated sectors) in which asbestos is present:

	BELB	SEELB	NEELB	SELB	WELB
Primary School	65	106	168	202	163
Post Primary School	13	23	33	35	28

DE circular No 2003/20 gives advice to the sectors and schools on the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003. The DE circular is to be updated shortly to reflect any changes required as a result of revisions to the Regulations.

Schools Audit

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education why the schools audit used exam results from 2008 and 2009 rather than results from 2010 and 2011.

(AQW 9492/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The viability audit included data for the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years as the data for 2010/11 had not been verified at the time of the audit and were still subject to minor changes. It was therefore considered prudent to use 2009/10, the latest year for which fully verified data were available, as the final year for the performance element of the exercise.

Media Communications Protocols

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what media communications protocols exist between his Department and each of its arm's-length bodies; and to publish these protocols.

(AQW 9595/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No media communications protocols exist between my Department and any of its arm's-length bodies.

Viability and Attainment Issues

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Education how he intends to encourage schools in the controlled, maintained and integrated sectors to work together on an area basis to overcome viability and attainment issues.

(AQW 9618/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have made it clear that my focus is on raising standards and, against the backdrop of an extremely challenging financial landscape in the coming years that progress on reshaping the structure and pattern of education provision cannot be delayed. I have therefore commissioned the Education and Library Boards, in association with CCMS and engaging fully with the other school sectors, to develop strategic plans on an area basis.

The Terms of Reference for this area planning process require the development of a network of viable and sustainable schools that can deliver the revised curriculum and the Entitlement Framework. Each area plan will cover the entirety of primary and post-primary provision within a Board area and in drawing up the agreed plans, the Boards should (among other things) identify realistic, innovative and creative solutions to address need, including opportunities for shared schooling on a cross-sectoral basis.

Enrolment Numbers Used in the Viability Audits

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education (i) why the enrolment numbers used in the viability audits did not include all children with special educational needs and children who have been statemented; and (ii) what is the impact of this on the viability audits.

(AQW 9624/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The aim of the Viability Audit was to assess the viability of mainstream primary and post-primary schools. The enrolment numbers used reflected pupils enrolled in mainstream schools, including those with special educational needs and those with statements.

The Sustainable Schools policy does not apply to Special Education provision including that provided in special education units attached to mainstream schools. It is therefore entirely appropriate to exclude pupils in such units when assessing the viability of mainstream schools.

As you will be aware the Viability Audit is the first step towards area planning and it is the intention that area plans will identify the needs of all pupils in an area and make proposals to meet these needs, including special education provision both in mainstream and stand alone Special Schools.

Roan St Patrick's Primary School

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what is his Department's position on increasing the capacity of Roan St Patrick's Primary School, Eglisli.

(AQW 9729/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the issues at Roan St Patrick's Primary School Eglisli, as I recently visited the school.

As you will be aware, I have commissioned the five ELBs and CCMS, working with the other sectors, to co-ordinate a strategic area planning process to shape the future pattern of education delivery. This may point to the growth of particular schools in an area and may change schools' admissions and enrolment numbers. These will be considered as part of any strategic plans which the Boards produce.

Department for Employment and Learning

Staff Disciplinary Actions

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of staff disciplinary actions taken by his Department in each of the last two years, at Staff Officer level and above, including details of the offence and the disciplinary sanctions applied.

(AQW 9185/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): Details of the number of staff disciplinary actions taken by the Department for Employment and Learning in each of the last two years at Staff Officer level and above are set out in the table below.

Year	Number of cases	Details of offence	Disciplinary Action taken
2010	0	N/A	N/A
2011	1	Misconduct of any kind that may have an adverse effect on the working of Departments	Formal Warning

Apprenticeships

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships have been created in each of the last three years, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 9204/11-15)

Dr Farry: The ApprenticeshipsNI programme is an employer-led provision and, as such, it is employers and not my Department that create apprenticeship positions. The data at Annex A details the number of apprentices who started on ApprenticeshipsNI for each of the last three years broken down by Parliamentary constituency.

ANNEX A

NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE COMMENCED APPRENTICESHIPS, 2009-2011 BY PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY

	Parliamentary Constituency	2009	2010	2011	Totals
1	Belfast East	246	243	107	596
2	Belfast North	336	401	607	1344
3	Belfast South	547	603	738	1888

	Parliamentary Constituency	2009	2010	2011	Totals
4	Belfast West	1813	1573	2502	5888
5	East Antrim	254	567	248	1069
6	East Londonderry	349	377	458	1184
7	Fermanagh and South Tyrone	235	396	469	1100
8	Foyle	305	559	582	1446
9	Lagan Valley	105	89	120	314
10	Mid Ulster	72	70	97	239
11	Newry and Armagh	815	757	830	2402
12	North Antrim	506	503	491	1500
13	North Down	77	290	289	656
14	South Antrim	542	638	969	2149
15	South Down	195	84	92	371
16	Strangford	51	45	97	193
17	Upper Bann	91	176	241	508
18	West Tyrone	737	961	696	2394
19	Others [Outside NI]	21	19	0	40
	Total	7297	8351	9633	25281

Off-Shore Wind Farms

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department has taken to meet the needs of the growing demand for skills in the designing, manufacturing and installation of off-shore wind farms, particularly in terms of health and safety requirements such as the Minimum Industry Safety Training Standard, the OPITO approved standard, the Client Contractor National Safety Group Safety Passport and helicopter dunk tests.

(AQW 9351/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department is funding the further education sector's Carbon Zero NI project, through its Employer Support Programme. The project aims to position the sector as an engine for the development of smart, innovative sustainable technologies in the areas of clean energy, including wind energy.

Additionally, under the Department's Assured Skills and Customised Training programmes, two Belfast Metropolitan College lecturers have been upskilled to deliver Level 2 and Level 3 NVQ Wind Turbine Maintenance courses. As a result, the college is currently delivering Wind Turbine Maintenance Training to eleven employees in this field, and has created additional capacity that is likely to be of interest to local companies and potential new investors in this sector.

The Department does not fund any statutory health and safety training; such training is the responsibility of individual employers.

A number of further education colleges offer health and safety training on a full cost recovery basis for employers, as detailed below:

South Eastern Regional College

- Minimum Industry Safety Training Standard;

- OPITO-approved Standard; and
- Client Contractor National Safety Group Safety Passport.

South West College

- a range of health and safety courses (to British Wind Energy Association standards).

Belfast Metropolitan College

- a range of health and safety courses, tailored to meet the needs of individual employers in the Offshore Renewable Energy sector.

The Confucius Institute

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether, at the time of the establishment of the Confucius Institute, anyone from his Department or the University of Ulster was required to sign a contract in support of the One China Policy.

(AQW 9522/11-15)

Dr Farry: The agreement to establish the Confucius Institute for Northern Ireland at the University of Ulster was signed on 14 July 2011 in Beijing by the Director-General of the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), Mme Lin Xu, and the University of Ulster's Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Richard Barnett. No part of the agreement signed by the University makes any reference whatsoever to the 'One China' policy, nor was anyone involved asked to support that or any other Chinese policy. Similarly, no official from my department was required to sign a contract in support of the 'One China' policy.

Student Places in the South West Regional College

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many additional (i) full-time; and (ii) part-time student places are needed in the South West Regional College to meet demand; and what steps his Department is taking to address this issue.

(AQW 9555/11-15)

Dr Farry: Further Education Colleges are funded through the recurrent block grant for the delivery of Further Education (FE) provision up to and including level 3, Higher Education delivered in FE (HE in FE) and Essential Skills provision. Funding allocations and delivery targets for each college are negotiated and agreed through the annual College Development Plan (CDP) process where each college presents to the Department a curriculum plan in line with my Department's strategic objectives, whilst reflecting demand and local economic and community needs. The CDP process is currently underway in respect of 2012/13 and, consequently, no decisions on enrolment numbers and the volume of provision to be delivered have yet been made. Any decisions made, will be informed by historical delivery trends, evidence presented within the CDP, and will be subject to resource constraints.

Former Construction Industry Workers

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what specific measures or programmes have been put in place to boost the employability and skills of former construction industry workers who are now in receipt of unemployment benefits.

(AQW 9558/11-15)

Dr Farry: As a direct response to the economic downturn, contingency arrangements were introduced in November 2008 to allow apprentices who were made redundant in the construction, engineering and motor vehicle sectors to continue their training via the Department's Steps to Work programme.

Specific measures included the opportunity for apprentices over the age of 18 years to join the Steps to Work programme for up to a maximum of 52 weeks and to complete the Technical Certificate and Essential Skills element at a Further Education College if required. Apprentices under the age of 18 years can transfer to the Programme-Led apprenticeship under Training for Success.

My Department's Careers Service also provides an impartial, all-age careers information, advice and guidance service to clients throughout Northern Ireland. This service is free and available to everyone, including former construction industry workers, and is delivered by professionally qualified careers advisers.

Careers advisers work with clients on a one to one basis to help them access and analyse appropriate information about current and future employment opportunities, determine the occupations that best suit their personal aptitudes, interests and skills, identify relevant training and develop appropriate career plans.

Media Communications Protocols

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what media communications protocols exist between his Department and each of its arm's-length bodies; and to publish these protocols. **(AQW 9590/11-15)**

Dr Farry: No media communications protocols exist between the Department for Employment and Learning and each of its arm's length bodies.

Medical and Nursing Graduates

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people graduated from universities in Northern Ireland with a (i) medical; and (ii) nursing degree in each of the last five years. **(AQW 9620/11-15)**

Dr Farry: The number of students who have graduated from universities in Northern Ireland with a (i) medical; and (ii) nursing degree in each of the last five years is detailed in the table below:

Subject	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Medicine	285	260	290	345	410
Nursing	1,870	1,910	1,845	1,575	1,500

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Notes:

- 1 Figures in the table are rounded to the nearest 5.
- 2 The figures include graduates from both postgraduate and undergraduate courses.
- 3 Medical graduates include those students who studied clinical medicine or pre-clinical medicine courses.
- 4 The latest year for which qualifications data are available is 2010/11.

DEL: Child Poverty Strategy Delivery Scheme

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what actions his Department has identified as being within its remit in developing the Child Poverty Strategy Delivery Plan. **(AQO 1578/11-15)**

Dr Farry: One of the most effective ways of addressing child poverty is supporting people/parents to move into work.

My Department's actions will therefore focus on the following areas:

- supporting people/parents to move into work;
- raising the skill levels of individuals; and
- up-skilling those in work to improve earning capacity.

My Department is currently undertaking a range of actions which support these three areas. These include:

- leading on the development of a cross-departmental strategy for those young people Not in Education, Employment or Training;
- essential skills provision to raise literacy, numeracy and ICT skills;
- increasing the proportion of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds that are engaged in Higher Education;
- the provision of a range of employment support services, including job search facilities and employment programmes;
- putting in place more effective careers support through Partnership Agreements with key partners such as schools, Health and Social Care Trusts and those who act as advocates for young people with barriers; and
- undertaking research projects to investigate best practice in relation to careers guidance for people with a disability and those with other social barriers.

Discussions are continuing, led by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, on agreeing the precise content of the Delivery Plan.

Skills Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the implementation of the Skills Strategy.

(AQO 1582/11-15)

Dr Farry: Skills are a crucial element in rebalancing and rebuilding the Northern Ireland economy and I am fully committed to driving forward work on a wide front in order to improve the skills profile of our workforce.

The aim of my Department's overarching Skills Strategy – 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' - is to enable people to access and progress up the skills ladder, in order to:

- raise the skills level of the whole workforce;
- raise productivity;
- increase levels of social inclusion by enhancing the employability of those currently excluded from the labour market; and
- secure Northern Ireland's future in a global marketplace.

The broad aims and objectives of the Skills Strategy are being taken forward through a number of Departmental strategies including 'Further Education means Business', 'Preparing for Success', 'Leading to Success' and 'Success through STEM'.

Another very important aspect of the ongoing implementation of the Skills Strategy is how my Department will work with business over the coming years to encourage them to buy in to the skills agenda and see merit in investing in the skills of their workforce. To this end, I have recently published the Department's 'Employer Engagement Plan'.

The Plan sets out how we will make it easier for local businesses to:

- up-skill their existing workforce;
- have the excellent training they offer in house accredited;
- have the existing skills of staff recognised; and
- better utilise these skills within their workforce.

The Employer Engagement Plan includes twenty projects and initiatives that will be delivered predominantly over the next eighteen months. Through these initiatives and the implementation of the overall Skills Strategy we plan to make real progress towards ensuring that we have the skilled people necessary to avail of current and future economic opportunities.

University of Ulster: Job Losses

Mr McClarty asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many job losses are expected at each University of Ulster campus following the announcement of a rolling programme of job losses over four years.

(AQO 1584/11-15)

Dr Farry: Staffing at the University of Ulster is a matter for the University itself. In the current comprehensive spending review period, all higher education institutions have been required to make efficiency savings of 6% in the current and next academic year.

It is for individual institutions to decide how to implement these efficiencies and, if necessary, to determine where any resulting job losses will occur.

Students: North/South Flows

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the main barriers to greater North-South student flows.

(AQO 1587/11-15)

Dr Farry: Members will be aware of the IBEC-CBI Joint Business Council Report published last August and will recall that I welcomed the report in this chamber as an opportunity to explore any factors that restrict students in their choice of academic institution.

The report made nine key recommendations to improve North-South undergraduate student flows. Whilst some identified causes are likely to be beyond the control of either government, a number of issues relevant to my Department include student support and registration fee arrangements for students from Northern Ireland attending universities in the Republic of Ireland and A-level and Leaving Certificate equivalences.

The subject of financial support for Northern Ireland undergraduate students studying in the Republic of Ireland is currently under review by my Department. The issues surrounding A-level and Leaving Certificate equivalences are the basis of ongoing discussion between the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and the Irish Universities Association

In addition, following the publication of the report, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation has proposed the establishment of a forum to discuss the outcomes and I have agreed that my Department will be represented there.

I believe that students from Northern Ireland should continue to have a free choice of academic institution within the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and elsewhere. I also recognise the important role played by students from the Republic of Ireland in contributing to the vibrant and multi-national atmosphere of campuses throughout Northern Ireland.

The strengthening of access to education on an all-island basis will be considered in the Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland currently being developed by my Department.

DEL: NEETs Branch

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many times NEETs Branch staff have met with relevant personnel in the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, the Department of Education and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

(AQO 1589/11-15)

Dr Farry: Discussions have taken place specifically on the issue of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training at two meetings with officials from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, at eight meetings with officials from the Department of Education and at six meetings with officials from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Discussions also took place with other Departmental officials during consultation seminars, at Invest NI and at a Young Persons' consultation in June 2011.

The issue has also been discussed within the context of cross-departmental meetings on issues such as Investing for Health, child poverty, care leavers, and at children's and young persons fora including the Ministerial Sub-Committee on Children and Young People.

These discussions are in addition to correspondence that took place by telephone and e-mail.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Small Businesses

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what support is available for small businesses that are affected by foreign Governments which have suspended payments to local companies.

(AQW 7946/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The UK Export Finance (the arm of the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills) can provide advice and support towards insuring UK investors in overseas markets and UK exporters against non-payment by their overseas buyers. This support is available to Northern Ireland firms via BIS's Export Credit Guarantee Department.

Financial Support to Companies that are Engaged in the Arms Trade

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 6196/11-15 (i) which arms companies received financial assistance from InvestNI for the period March 2005 to January 2012; (ii) how much funding each company received; (iii) how the funding from InvestNI was spent by each company; and (iv) what products each of these companies developed, or were planning to develop, as a result of this financial assistance.

(AQW 8909/11-15)

Mrs Foster: One company in Northern Ireland, Thales Air Defence Limited, which is engaged in the design, development and manufacture of short-range air defence products, received financial assistance from Invest Northern Ireland during the period 1 March 2005 to 31 January 2012.

Below is a summary of the amounts of financial assistance paid, how the Invest NI financial assistance was spent and the products developed or being developed as a result of the financial assistance.

Date of Offer	Type of Assistance	Total Amount Paid between 1 March 2005 and 31 January 2012	How Invest NI funding was spent.
March 2005	Selective Financial Assistance	£356,000	Used to improve technological efficiency and to retain and develop core manufacturing skills.
December 2009	Research & Development	£3,286,728	Research into strategic technologies for high precision guidance systems

Date of Offer	Type of Assistance	Total Amount Paid between 1 March 2005 and 31 January 2012	How Invest NI funding was spent.
January 2012	Research & Development	NIL	To extend capability in the development of open architectures for existing defence systems.

Financial Support to Companies that are Engaged in the Arms Trade

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 6196/11-15, to detail (i) the information each of the companies provided to InvestNI to secure the funding; and (ii) the application process followed by each of the companies to receive this funding.

(AQW 9123/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) In accordance with normal procedures governing the provision of financial assistance under Invest NI's schemes, the company supported was required to submit a business plan or application form detailing the commercial rationale associated with each project along with appropriate justification of the need for financial assistance.
- (ii) The business plan for each project was subjected to a commercial appraisal; and approval of Invest NI financial assistance was given at the appropriate level and in accordance with the criteria applicable to Invest NI's Selective Financial Assistance and Grant for R&D schemes.

Funding for Companies in the Defence or Security Sector

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the funding, grants or other support that her Department or its arm's-length bodies have provided to companies in the defence or security sector in each of the last ten years; and for what project or work the funding was provided.

(AQW 9199/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The information requested is provided in the table below:

Financial Year	Offers	New jobs	Safe Jobs	Total Assistance	Total Planned Investment	Reason for Provision of Assistance
2002-03	1	0	0	£899,060	£4,495,300	Research and Development Project
2003-04	4	0	0	£4,353	£4,353	Business and skills development projects.
2004-05	8	5	67	£3,866,587	£11,462,506	Research and Development, SFA expansion, management information systems, business improvement and skills development and export growth Projects.
2005-06	5	0	0	£33,088	£64,095	Research and development, business improvement and export growth projects.

Financial Year	Offers	New jobs	Safe Jobs	Total Assistance	Total Planned Investment	Reason for Provision of Assistance
2006-07	7	52	4	£975,188	£7,473,073	Research and Development, SFA expansion, management information systems, product development and energy efficiency Projects.
2007-08	9	14	0	£368,525	£2,505,425	Research and Development, management information systems, business improvement and skills development and export growth Projects.
2008-09	7	0	0	£146,948	£286,316	Research and Development, innovation focused, business improvement and skills development and product development Projects.
2009-10	17	11	0	£3,780,545	£9,386,400	Research and Development, capital expansion, business improvement and skills development, Trade and export growth Projects.
2010-11	30	21	0	£297,939	£1,683,517	Research and Development, capital expansion, business improvement and skills development, Trade and export growth Projects.

UK City of Culture: Derry

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what degree of priority Tourism officials will give to supporting events in and around 2013 as Londonderry celebrates its status as the first UK City of Culture.

(AQW 9221/11-15)

Mrs Foster: NITB has been supporting the City Council in Londonderry and ILEX in the run up to 2013, to ensure the City can develop an exciting and comprehensive events programme for 2013. NITB has committed £700,000 towards the UK City of Culture programme of events, subject to the necessary approval. In addition NITB's Tourism Events Fund will open again in the autumn of 2012 to which projects in the area can apply. NITB will be working with the Culture Company to develop and align marketing and communications plans for 2013.

Tourism Ireland's new three-year global advertising campaign will reach over 200 million consumers in 2012 alone and has been developed to be flexible and adaptable and will evolve over its three-year lifespan to capitalise on events such as Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013. Tourism Ireland is already promoting Londonderry worldwide in advance of the arrival in July of the Clipper Round

the World Yacht Race and events such as the Peace One Day concert at Ebrington Barracks in June, marking the opening of the London 2012 Festival and Paralympic Games.

Tourism Ireland's programme of trade and familiarisation visits to Londonderry continues and in relation to business tourism, Tourism Ireland will sponsor the annual conference of the Association of British Professional Conference Organisers (ABPCO) which will take place in Londonderry in 2013.

Our Time Our Place Initiative

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how the 'Our Time Our Place' initiative has been advertised in (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) other parts of the UK; and (iii) the rest of the world; and what budget was allocated to each campaign.

(AQW 9224/11-15)

Mrs Foster: ni2012 is a major opportunity to capitalise on a series of significant events and anniversaries to create a platform which will reposition Northern Ireland as a positive place to live, work, invest, study and visit. A marketing strategy, for the Northern Ireland and Republic of Ireland marketplaces, including both an extensive campaign and the innovative use of digital and social media is currently taking place.

To date £832,000 has been invested in the domestic campaign in Northern Ireland and £1.32 million in the Republic of Ireland marketplace.

Tourism Ireland, which markets Northern Ireland worldwide, has invested £4.7 million specifically for marketing ni2012. The majority of this money will be spent in Great Britain, which is our most important market. £1 million of this investment has been invested in co-operative marketing campaigns with air and sea carriers.

Other overseas activity to promote ni2012 includes TV advertising on British terrestrial and satellite channels, a major promotional roadshow series in key access gateways such as London, Manchester and Glasgow and participation in trade and consumer travel shows in France, Spain and Germany.

Directors of the Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) why her Department is engaging senior legal figures from outside Northern Ireland in seeking the disqualification of the Directors of the Presbyterian Mutual Society; (ii) how much her Department has spent to date on this; and (iii) for an estimate of the final costs.

(AQW 9234/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department has engaged Counsel both from England and Northern Ireland, experienced in the field, to advise and represent it in the disqualification proceedings. To date, the fees incurred have been £6985.13 inclusive of VAT. The proceedings are not yet listed for hearing and it is not possible at this stage to give an estimate of the costs which will be incurred.

Directors of the Presbyterian Mutual Society

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what factors her Department assess to decide which Directors of the Presbyterian Mutual Society should be disqualified.

(AQW 9236/11-15)

Mrs Foster: This is a live issue in relation to proceedings currently before the Court and it is therefore not appropriate to comment on PMS at this time.

DETI has a statutory obligation, following receipt of an Administrator's report, to consider whether disqualification proceedings should be commenced against any director of a company which has become insolvent. The Department must consider whether it is expedient in the public interest to initiate such proceedings under article 10 of the Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002. It is a matter for the High Court, not the Department, to determine whether a

disqualification order should be made. If the Court is satisfied that the conduct of a director is such as to make him unfit to be concerned in the management of a company, then it must make such an order.

The concept of the public interest is incapable of precise formulation. It is a question of judgement in any given case and will involve consideration of a number of factors including the purpose of the legislation (the main purpose being protection of the public), the nature of the allegations at issue, the directors responsibility in respect of such allegations together with any aggravating or mitigating factors and the prospects of success of proceedings should they issue. The Department reviews the position throughout the course of proceedings.

Hospitality: Spend

Mr Allister asked Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 6316/11-15, whether the figures provided include the Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9245/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Department's response to AQW 6316/11-15 did not include arms length bodies.

For Invest NI, hospitality expenditure for 2007-08 to 2010-11, and in the year to date was provided in response to AQW 6314/11-15.

The table below provides a breakdown of hospitality expenditure across the Department's other arms length bodies for each of the last five financial years:

	Health & Safety Executive NI (see note a)	Consumer Council NI (see note b)	NI Tourist Board
2010-11	£3,594	£6,415	£17,200
2009-10	£4,811	£9,531	£13,362
2008-09	£6,682	£10,866	£13,562
2007-08	£2,544	not available	£13,704
2006-07	£5,073	not available	£12,419

Notes:

- (a) HSENI figures represent the programme element of the amount spent on hospitality.
- (b) Consumer Council figures for 2006-07 and 2007-08 are not available without incurring disproportionate cost.

The Shore Film Production

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has in place to build on the recent success of 'The Shore' film production, particularly in terms of the potential benefits to the tourism sector in the South Down area.

(AQW 9254/11-15)

Mrs Foster: TV and film are recognised as strong influencers on prospective visitors and often provide the opportunity to promote Northern Ireland as a holiday destination by highlighting the character of our landscapes. The success of The Shore will help lever positive exposure for Northern Ireland around the world. The US media coverage of the success of The Shore at the Oscars has already generated over \$2 million in equivalent advertising value.

Building on this success writer and director Terry George and producer Oorlagh George have agreed to feature in footage Tourism Ireland is currently filming at the St Patrick Centre and Down Cathedral for

inclusion in its promotional activity overseas. Tourism Ireland is also highlighting The Shore on all of its Social Media channels, including Facebook.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has also included a news story about The Shore on its website www.discovernorthernireland.com and the South East Ulster/Mourne Mountains region is one of several key destinations NITB promotes both within Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland through its marketing campaigns, website, promotional literature, PR and social media outlets.

Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills regarding the trade visits that he has made on behalf of the United Kingdom; and whether Northern Ireland has been represented on any of these visits.

(AQW 9365/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Some Northern Ireland companies have participated on trade missions facilitated by UK Trade & Investment (UKTI), the organisation that delivers such missions on behalf of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). However, I understand there has been no Northern Ireland representation on the four occasions that the Secretary of State for BIS has accompanied business delegations overseas.

Invest NI's Chief Executive recently met with the Chief Executive of UKTI and among the matters discussed, it was agreed that both organisations should consider ways in which Northern Ireland might be represented on UKTI missions being led by Westminster Ministers.

Invest NI has its own programme of trade visits overseas and in the period March 2012 to March 2013 there are plans to organise 70 events worldwide.

Direct Flights between Belfast and Toronto

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she has taken to encourage and secure direct flights between Belfast and Toronto.

(AQW 9392/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The restoration of a direct service between Toronto and Belfast is a strategic priority for tourism and the broader economy. Tourism Ireland, in cooperation with Belfast International Airport, has continued to case-make for the restoration of a direct service from Toronto to Belfast. Meetings took place with both Air Transat and Air Canada last summer and further meetings will take place this year.

Indirect access from Toronto to Belfast (via New York or London) is currently being highlighted to potential visitors by Tourism Ireland.

Tourism Ireland

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how much Tourism Ireland spends on an annual basis in (a) Canada; and (b) the United States; and (ii) how much of this spend is used for promoting Northern Ireland.

(AQW 9393/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tourism Ireland has an extensive marketing programme in place in North America for 2012 and will invest approximately £7.2 million in this market this year to promote both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is not possible to split this spend between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

However, I can confirm that Tourism Ireland will spend £450k on its dedicated ni2012 campaign in North America on co-operative marketing of the Continental Airlines New York/Belfast service, the NI "Home of Champions" golf campaign and specific NI engagement with the tourism trade and consumer promotion.

Hospitality Trade

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what (i) financial assistance; (ii) advice; and (iii) training her Department or its arm's-length bodies provide for the hospitality trade.
(AQW 9394/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Hospitality businesses can access an extensive range of assistance via my Department's arm's length bodies - the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), Invest NI and Tourism Ireland. Examples of assistance provided to hospitality businesses include:

- NITB grant aid via the Tourism Development Scheme and Events Fund; NITB's Industry Development Programme (including Masterclasses and Learning Journeys); participation in an accommodation Quality Assurance Scheme; and a broad range of NITB advice such as start up guidance for B&B providers, signposting to initiatives and training opportunities, the provision of guidance on the development of sustainable tourism and green accreditation schemes;
- Invest NI grant support for qualifying tourist accommodation projects; Invest NI advice and financial support for qualifying businesses to help improve business processes, skills development and training, marketing, e-commerce, knowledge management, energy efficiency and environmental practices; and
- Tourism Ireland's assistance in helping to promote hospitality businesses in 22 markets overseas, including attendance at overseas consumer and trade fairs, co-operative marketing opportunities, features in consumer and business tourism ezines and publicity opportunities.

Strategic Framework to Improve Consumers' Basic Financial Knowledge

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether he plans to introduce a strategic framework to improve consumers' basic financial knowledge.
(AQW 9399/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The final Programme for Government 2011-15 includes an Executive commitment to develop and implement a Financial Capability Strategy for consumers under Priority 2, Creating Opportunities, Tackling Disadvantage, and Improving Health and Wellbeing. The aim of the Financial Capability Strategy will be to equip consumers with the skills and knowledge to manage their finances effectively.

UK Forestry Standard

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether all the bodies or organisations within her Department's remit which own woodland are compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, including her Department, any arm's-length body and any organisation to which her Department provides grant aid.

(AQW 9436/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Of DETI's four Non Departmental Public Bodies, only Invest NI own land. Invest NI owns the freehold of 2830 acres of industrial land across Northern Ireland, which includes landscaped and woodland areas. The vast majority of this land has been let and lease conditions place the responsibility for retention and maintenance of trees within landscaping on the tenant and provides the right of inspection and challenge for Invest NI. Vacant land is regularly inspected, to ensure that it is free of trespass and maintained to a high level. Invest NI works in partnership with Planning NI, its professional service providers and various environmental agencies to ensure that biodiversity and sustainability are taken into account when planning maintenance and development works.

It is not possible to provide information on organisations to which DETI provides grant aid as this data is not held centrally.

Foresight Unit

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the timescale for the establishment of the Foresight Unit to identify emerging sectors and their specific skills needs.

(AQO 1585/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI's new Foresight Unit is already in place and is working with MATRIX to identify emerging high technology market priorities and opportunities. Its first study will be into the sustainable energy sector and will be published by the autumn. The unit has also engaged at national level with the UK's BIS' Foresight team and is now a partner in "UK Future of Manufacturing" study. As it develops its work programme the unit will also engage with businesses in other sectors to identify emerging markets and opportunities across the whole economy.

Gas Network

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has urged the gas industry to expand the gas network; and to which towns specifically.

(AQW 9524/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The majority of responses to my Department's 2011 consultation paper on extension of the natural gas network in Northern Ireland, particularly those from the natural gas sector, local industry and the public sector, supported extending the natural gas network and agreed that the areas outlined in the consultation, i.e. the main towns in the West and North West of Northern Ireland, namely Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen/Derrylin and Strabane, and towns in East Down such as Saintfield, Ballynahinch, Crossgar and Downpatrick represent the key remaining areas in which the natural gas network might feasibly be developed.

Following the consultation, my officials have been having discussions with the Utility Regulator in relation to how best to take forward gas network extension. As part of this work, I plan to complete a detailed economic analysis covering the costs and benefits of extending the network to the above areas.

Extended Gas Network

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment which towns are the most economically viable for inclusion in an extended gas network.

(AQW 9525/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Responses to my 2011 consultation on extension of the natural gas network noted overall support from the energy industry and the wider community for bringing gas to the new areas outlined in the consultation paper, i.e. the main towns in the West and North West of Northern Ireland, namely Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen/Derrylin and Strabane, and towns in East Down such as Saintfield, Ballynahinch, Crossgar and Downpatrick.

I now plan to complete a further detailed economic analysis which will consider the costs and benefits of the proposed extension.

Natural Gas

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any suppliers of natural gas have indicated a desire to provide natural gas to areas of East Antrim which they currently do not serve, such as Glenarm, Carnlough and the Glens.

(AQW 9580/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I am not aware of any plans by natural gas companies to take gas to Glenarm, Carnlough and the Glens in East Antrim.

Any extension of the gas network must be economically viable, and is very dependent on there being sufficient gas loads in the proposed new areas.

Availability to the Gas Network

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the (i) percentage of availability to the gas network in the ten towns licence area; (ii) percentage of homes connected to the gas network within this area that are (a) owner-occupied; and (b) Housing Executive owned; and (iii) projected percentage of availability to the gas network in the ten towns licence area by 2015.

(AQW 9597/11-15)

Mrs Foster: firmus energy has advised that approximately 15% of the domestic properties in its 10 Towns gas licensed area have availability to the natural gas network.

firmus energy also advise that some 47% of its domestic customers in the 10 Towns area live in NI Housing Executive properties, with the remaining 53% of domestic customers living in owner-occupied or privately rented properties.

A number of factors will influence the projected percentage of domestic properties with availability to the natural gas network. firmus energy estimate that approximately 25% of domestic properties in their licensed area will have gas available to them by 2015.

Wind Turbines

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment who pays for the infrastructure to connect wind turbines to the grid.

(AQW 9602/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The cost of the infrastructure to connect wind turbines to the grid is met by the generating station owner. NIE, as network owner, is required to provide a connection offer to all generation considering connecting to the distribution system in line with its connection charging statement. These costs will include any necessary associated line upgrades required to accommodate the additional power generated.

UK City of Culture: Derry

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the plans for a marketing campaign to promote tourism for Derry City of Culture 2013.

(AQW 9643/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW 9221/11-15.

Independent News and Media PLC

Ms J McCann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many jobs were created at Independent News and Media PLC's Belfast and Newry sites as a result of InvestNI's investment of £3.5 million between 2005 and 2009; and whether any of the funding was used by Independent News and Media PLC for a programme of redundancies.

(AQW 9686/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI assistance to Independent News and Media from 2005-2009 was £3.66million. The number of jobs associated with the grants was 183.

The grants were paid out against vouched and approved capital expenditure on plant and equipment.

Economy: Cross-border Co-operation

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the potential for economic growth and job creation from cross-border economic cooperation.

(AQO 1596/11-15)

Mrs Foster: For Northern Ireland, with a small home market, we need to expand our horizons and look across the world to seize trading opportunities. To do this it is vital that local companies establish commercial links with partners outside of our borders. In the new NI Economic Strategy we have increased our target for export growth by 2014/15 from 15% to 20%.

The greatest potential for export led growth, in the coming years, will be in trading with emerging economies, which is why we have introduced a new stretching target in the Economic Strategy to increase our exports to these emerging markets by 60% by 2014/15. I have witnessed this potential myself at Trade Missions across the world, seeing first hand the opportunities for local companies to make new contacts, build alliances and ultimately access new markets.

Executive: Business Investment

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the help that other Executive colleagues could give to her Department, in terms of policies, to assist in increasing business investment.

(AQO 1597/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy was developed by the Executive Sub-Committee on the Economy, and represents a shared commitment across all Departments to improve economic competitiveness and improve employment and prosperity.

The focus of activity is on supporting export-led economic growth making Northern Ireland more attractive for business investment.

I anticipate that the successful cross-departmental approach present during the development of the Strategy will continue throughout implementation.

Invest NI: Unemployment

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why InvestNI has delivered the lowest numbers of jobs in the constituencies with the highest numbers of unemployed and long-term unemployed people.

(AQO 1598/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The assertion that less jobs are promoted in areas which have higher rates of unemployment is not valid. For example, the Foyle constituency has a relatively high rate of claimant count compared to the Northern Ireland average, but has also received the third highest number of jobs assisted by Invest NI during the past five years. Newry and Armagh, which also has relatively high rates of unemployment, is ranked fourth out of the eighteen Parliamentary Constituency Areas in Northern Ireland in terms of jobs supported by Invest NI. During the past five years almost 60% of new jobs supported by Invest NI were located in areas of economic disadvantage – areas which account for around 30% of the Northern Ireland population.

Invest NI assistance has tended to reflect the concentration of companies in and around our main towns and cities. It is important for our economic growth that companies must be able to locate where they believe they can operate most profitably.

Economy: EU Regional Aid

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the Review of EU Regional Aid Guidelines will have on economic development.

(AQO 1599/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Any steps to further reduce Regional Aid ceilings or coverage in Northern Ireland, through the possible removal by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills of Northern Ireland's automatic assisted area status, will have a significant impact on our ability to support business competitiveness and growth. It is particularly concerning that, while one part of the United Kingdom Government is seeking to rebalance the Northern Ireland economy and grow our private sector, another

part is taking steps which will have a significant detrimental effect on our ability to encourage private sector growth. We have raised our concerns with the United Kingdom Government and will continue to do so.

Credit Unions: Financial Services Authority

Mr Murphy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there have been any developments in alleviating concerns that credit unions have over the Financial Services Authority's regulations.

(AQO 1600/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 1 February 2012 I wrote to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury to reiterate my concerns regarding the investment potential of Northern Ireland Credit Unions under Financial Services Authority regulation. As a result the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has offered to facilitate a meeting between Northern Ireland MPs and the Financial Services Authority in order that concerns can be raised with the Regulator directly.

Additionally, the Financial Services Authority have agreed to host a series of 'information surgeries' in Belfast between 21-23 May 2012. All Northern Ireland credit unions have been invited to attend and will be afforded the opportunity to raise queries and discuss concerns they may have about Financial Services Authority regulation.

Invest NI: North Belfast

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance InvestNI has given to small and medium sized enterprises in North Belfast in the last year.

(AQO 1601/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The SME sector is the lifeblood of our local economy and helping our SMEs to develop and expand into new markets is one of Invest NI's key objectives. Invest NI therefore offers a wide range of financial assistance to SMEs which are at the growth stage and which can demonstrate that their plans will contribute to increasing Northern Ireland's productivity.

Between 1st March 2011 and 29th February 2012, Invest NI approved offers worth almost £950,000 to SMEs in North Belfast.

You may also be aware that in November 2011, I launched the Jobs Fund with the specific aim of boosting job creation. The Jobs Fund includes a measure aimed at young people aged 16-24 not in employment, education or training which offers a business start grant of £1,500 upon business start up. I am pleased to say that there has been a very positive uptake of this strand of the Jobs Fund in North Belfast with 11 offers having already been issued to young people in the constituency. The Jobs Fund also includes a business start grant of £1,000 for people living in a Neighbourhood Renewal Area and 45 offers have been issued in the last year to people living in North Belfast, creating 15 new jobs to date.

There are also several more projects at varying stages of negotiation and I can assure you that we are committed to helping our North Belfast-based SMEs grow and develop in the months and years ahead.

Business: Energy Costs

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures she can take in conjunction with her Executive colleagues to reduce costs for large energy consumers in the business community.

(AQO 1602/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I appreciate the concerns of consumers regarding energy prices, however my Department does not set electricity and gas tariffs. Rather, it works with the Utility Regulator to develop market conditions to put downward pressure on prices.

I have been examining the feasibility of Invest NI providing financial assistance to a limited number of Large Energy Users who could show that by making a significant capital investment, they could reduce their energy costs. As I advised the Assembly on 13 March 2012, Invest NI is willing to consider providing financial assistance on a pilot basis, under its normal Selective Financial Assistance schemes, to Large Energy Users who have proposals for capital expenditure which will make a significant impact on energy efficiency and therefore reduce their costs and improve competitiveness.

Invest NI: SMEs

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department is encouraging InvestNI to play a greater role in providing support to local small and medium sized enterprises.

(AQO 1603/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has taken the lead in working with the Executive Sub-group on the Economy and Invest NI to develop a coherent Economic Strategy whose ultimate aim is to improve the economic competitiveness of the Northern Ireland economy.

The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy aims to develop an economy based on innovative firms competing in export markets.

As part of the Economic Strategy my Department is currently developing an Enterprise Strategy which will set out what we are doing to improve the local business environment for all companies in all sectors, not just those who are exporting. There will be a focus on promoting enterprise, entrepreneurship, creating the necessary conditions and providing access to finance to enable businesses across all sectors of the economy, including SMEs, to grow.

The Executive's Economic priority is to improve economic competitiveness in order to increase employment and prosperity. The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy aims to develop an economy based on innovative firms competing in export markets. The Strategy contains a number of measures which aim to grow indigenous SMEs.

Business Start-ups: South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action she is taking to encourage more investment in business start-ups in the South Antrim constituency.

(AQO 1604/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI works directly, and with partner organisations in the South Antrim area, to promote investment in business start ups and provides a range of support, both financial and advisory.

While Invest NI is not currently delivering a Business Start Programme, it has put in place appropriate arrangements to respond to business start enquiries to ensure potential entrepreneurs can access the relevant advice and support that they need. This activity is supporting the needs of potential entrepreneurs as they move into self employment.

In addition, Invest NI's Boosting Business initiative, encompassing support under five themes: Jobs, R & D, Exports, Technology and Skills, is available to new start businesses. Its Jobs Fund which provides rapid support for employment creation, would be particularly relevant to export focused new start entrepreneurs, at a time when cashflow is often strained.

Invest NI's North Eastern Regional Office is also working closely with Councils in the South Antrim area to develop a range of new programmes, supported by the Local Economic Development Measure of the Sustainable Competitiveness Programme, targeted at small businesses that have not traditionally been able to avail of Invest NI support. Start up businesses would be eligible to participate.

Department of the Environment

Trees Under Tree Protection Orders

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment how many trees, which were under Tree Protection Orders, were felled or destroyed in each of the last five years, broken down by council area; and how many prosecutions resulted from the destruction of these trees.

(AQW 7438/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): The Department will investigate all alleged breaches of planning control. However, when determining what (if any) action is to be taken, the Department has a general discretion on whether to take enforcement action against a breach of planning control. It does so when it considers it expedient, having regard to the provisions of the development plan and any other material consideration. Priority will be given to those breaches where, in the Department's opinion, the greatest harm is being caused. Where the extent of the breach is considered by the Department to be minor in nature and the impact on the environment minimal, the Department may consider that it is not expedient to take formal enforcement action. This consideration must be made on a case by case basis.

The Department's IT system was upgraded in March 2009 and only live case information as of 1 April 2009 was backdated into the upgraded system; hence information is only available from that date. Furthermore, information is not captured within the Department's IT system in such a way as to enable the Department to identify how many trees, protected by Tree Protection Orders were felled or destroyed in each of the last five years broken down by council area.

However, during the last three business years, the number of enforcement cases investigated relating to the alleged cutting down, uprooting or wilfully destroying a tree, or wilfully damaging, topping or lopping a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) are set out in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF ENFORCEMENT CASES RELATING TO TREE PROTECTION ORDERS OR TREES IN CONSERVATION AREA (PROSECUTION)

Business Year/District	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012 (Dec 2011)
Antrim	1	0	1
Ards	2	1	2
Armagh	0	1	1
Ballymena	2	0	0
Ballymoney	1	1	2
Banbridge	1	1	1
Belfast	7	10	8
Carrickfergus	1	0	0
Castlereagh	0	0	0
Coleraine	2	3	0
Cookstown	0	0	0
Craigavon	0	1	0
Derry	4	2	4
Down	0	3	4

Business Year/District	2009/10	2010/11	2011/2012 (Dec 2011)
Dungannon	0	0	0
Fermanagh	2	0	0
Larne	0	1	0
Limavady	1	0	1
Lisburn	4	3	1
Magherafelt	2	1	2
Moyle	1	0	0
Newry and Mourne	2	3	0
Newtownabbey	3	3	5
North Down	7	4	5
Omagh	1	2	0
Strabane	0	0	0
Total	44	40	37

It is important to note that the vast majority of breaches of planning control are resolved informally through negotiation with the owner/occupier or through the submission and consideration of a retrospective planning application.

Of these 121 cases, one prosecution resulted from the destruction of trees protected by a TPO. In November 2011, a Co Tyrone man was fined £5,000 with court costs of £85 at Omagh Magistrates' Court for a breach of a DOE Planning Tree Preservation Order.

Whilst only one prosecution has resulted from the above investigations on cases opened in the last three business years, 43% of the 121 cases when investigated did not breach planning control; and, 14% were remedied/received planning permission. A summary of closure reasons are set out in the Table 2 below.

TABLE 2: REASON FOR CLOSURE

	Cases closed
No Breach	52
Not Expedient	19
Planning Permission Granted	3
Remedied Resolved	14
Immune from Enforcement Action	1
Total	89

As of the 28 February, 32 of the 121 cases relating to the alleged cutting down, uprooting or wilfully destroying a tree, or wilfully damaging, topping or lopping a tree protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) remain 'live'.

Listed Buildings

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the number of listed buildings, broken down by grade; and (ii) whether the buildings are (a) private homes; (b) commercial premises; or (c) public buildings.

(AQW 7514/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The last published figures (31 March 2011) in relation to listed buildings indicates a total of 8472 listed buildings. The breakdown by grade is as follows;

Grade	A	B+	B1	B2	B
Total 8472	204	556	3512	2515	1685

The recently published Northern Ireland Environmental Statistics Report published by the department also contains statistics on the number of listed buildings. This information is available online at

<http://www.doeni.gov.uk/statistics>.

It should be noted that in some cases a record can cover more than one building, such as terraces or estates, so it not possible to state exactly how many separate buildings may be listed; but I understand that the figure would be in the region of 8500.

If a property has been through the Second Survey process, then information is available on the previous and current use of the building. However, this is recorded as the particular building type, and does not detail commercial, public or privately owned property. Only limited information is available for buildings which have not been second surveyed.

I have asked officials to consider how statistical information on such buildings can be increased.

Answer to AQW 5351/11-15

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment why the answer to AQW 5351/11-15 was provided to the press before it was provided to the MLA who tabled the question.

(AQW 7721/11-15)

Mr Attwood: When the press query was received, my Press Office sought out the draft reply to your AQW (AQW5351/11-15) to use as the source for the Department's answer to the media query. It was then discovered that due to an oversight the AQW had not been answered. A reply was immediately drafted, which I then approved.

The reply was sent to the Business Office and delivered to your pigeon hole in Parliament Buildings. As the media query had to be answered the Press Office provided a reply. The reply may not have reached your pigeon hole prior to it being released to the media. I trust this explains the situation.

Local Council Staff: Redundancy or Retirement Packages

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 5798/11-15, to detail (i) the former pay scale of each of the local council staff when they retired or took a redundancy package, and whether they were employed on a (a) full-time; or (b) part-time basis; and; (ii) the current pay scale of each person who returned to work, and whether they are employed on a (a) full-time; or (b) part-time basis.

(AQW 8062/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In AQW 5798/11-15 it was recorded that three council employees who took retirement packages were subsequently re-employed. The details of these are as follows:

Person A was originally employed on a scale £54,540 to £60,576 on a full time basis. The officer returned on the same scale, but was employed on a part time pro rata basis.

Person B was originally employed on a scale £24,402 to £30,356 on a full time basis. On their initial return to the council, the employee worked on a casual part time basis, but was then subsequently employed on a full time basis for four months to cover maternity leave before returning to part time. The rate of pay for the part time post was pro rata £19,621 to £23,708 and for full time post was £23,708 per annum.

Person C was originally employed on a scale £38,961 to £41,616 on a full time basis. The person has since been re-employed on a casual ad hoc basis at a rate of £8.3211 per hour.

AQW 5798/11-15 had also referred to one employee who took a redundancy package and was re-employed at a later stage. Further investigation indicated that this person had not been re-employed. The response to AQW 5798/11-15 is, therefore, being corrected.

Assembly Questions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment why he consistently fails to comply with the requirements of Standing Order 20B(4) in relation to the time limits for answering written Assembly Questions.

(AQO 1427/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I fully appreciate the requirement to answer all written assembly questions within the time limits as set out in Standing Order 20B (4), and I acknowledge some delays on occasions. I believe this situation has all been rectified.

My main aim is to ensure that members' questions are fully considered and addressed and that all relevant issues are integrated into any reply. Standing Order 19(5) addresses the content of Ministerial replies where "A question must be answered as clearly and as fully as possible". I consider that my reply to AQ's fulfil this standard, as I try to include and disclose as much information as possible. This may mean that deadlines suffer.

I am committed to ensuring that any issues raised by members are dealt with fully in line with the requirements of Standing Orders. I will also continue to work with officials to ensure that processes and procedures for dealing with Assembly Questions are as effective and efficient as possible.

No-Cycling By-Laws in the North Down Borough Council Area

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the process to amend the No-Cycling By-Laws in the North Down Borough Council area.

(AQW 9153/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The bye-laws that currently regulate cycling in the district of North Down are the Pleasure Ground Bye-laws, which were confirmed jointly by this Department and the Department of Education in 1995. The 1995 bye-laws regulate cycling only in relation to pleasure grounds designated by the Council and listed in the Schedule to those bye-laws.

North Down Borough Council has indicated its intention to replace the 1995 bye-laws with a new set of Bye-laws for Pleasure Grounds, Public Walks and Open Spaces. The proposed bye-laws will include provision to regulate cycling in designated areas, as well as other matters such as horses and animals, field sports and games, camping, trading, and the use of metal detectors. The bye-laws will need confirmation by this Department and the Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure, which has lead responsibility for one of the enabling powers under which the bye-laws are to be made.

Following advice from the Department, the Council submitted a re-drafted set of bye-laws, together with supporting information, on 27 October 2011.

Officials have scrutinised this draft and are currently awaiting further comment from Departmental Solicitor's Office, which is expected shortly. This will be conveyed to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

When the bye-laws have been agreed by all parties involved, the Council will be required, by section 91 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, to advertise the bye-laws in two newspapers

circulating in the locality, and to make copies available for public inspection, in its offices, at least one month before submitting them for confirmation.

Repairs to the Listed Building at 1 Stewart's Place, Holywood

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment how much funding was allocated for the repairs to the listed building at 1 Stewart's Place, Holywood, and whether this funding has been accepted and spent.
(AQW 9155/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The NIEA Historic Buildings Unit (HBU) has been in contact with the owners of 1 Stewart's Place (Wilson Group) since 13 Oct 2008, when a site meeting was held to agree the scope of urgent remedial works.

Subsequent to that meeting, and after the issue of a dangerous structure notice from building control - as well as a warning letter from HBU - some urgent repair works were carried out. Following this first intervention, an application for NIEA listed building grant-aid was made to carry out further urgent repairs, along with some less urgent works, to address repairs to the building.

After prolonged negotiations with the Wilson group - as to the extent of the works - a letter of offer was made on 3 October 2011, for the sum of £2,010. This offer of grant-aid has been declined, and the owners have stated that - due to the difficult economic environment - they do not intend to proceed with the works agreed in the grant-aid application.

On the 5 February, the Wilson Group indicated, in a telephone conversation with the NIEA Area Architect, that they would be willing to carry out the minimum works necessary to fulfil their statutory obligations, to secure the fabric of the building. An 'Urgent Works' warning letter will be issued to the owners by the NIEA Conservation Architect on 12 March, confirming the works which must be undertaken to safeguard this building.

Listed Building at 131 Hillsborough Road, Dromore

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment what action has been taken to safeguard and restore Turnpike Cottage (Toll House), a listed building at 131, Hillsborough Road, Dromore, HB Ref No: HB19/05/124.
(AQW 9156/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Planning Policy Statement 6 states '...while there is not a specific duty on owners to keep their buildings in a good state of repair it will normally be in their best interests to do so'. The Department has statutory powers to take action where a historic building has deteriorated, to the extent that its preservation may be at risk. In practice the department will normally try to enter into dialogue with the listed building owner, in an attempt to find a way to rectify the situation before resorting to legal action.

This building is graded B1 and is on the Built Heritage at Risk Northern Ireland (BHARNI) Register. It was sold to the present owner in 2007. Officials in NIEA have been engaging with the owner's representatives since then, to seek action to secure this important listed building, and with a local Building Preservation Trust, to try to find a solution to arrest its deterioration.

My officials have advised that the owner has not demonstrated an intention to carry out works to secure this building, despite repeated efforts by the NIEA: Historic Buildings Unit to encourage him to do so.

NIEA is in the process of serving an Urgent Works Notice on this property.

Public Allotments

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how much land each council currently makes available for public allotments.
(AQW 9160/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Following AQO 1420, a paper documenting the number of allotments provided by councils was placed in the Assembly Library. That paper advised that there were 602 allotments provided by 11 councils. The following table identifies the amount of land currently provided by councils in relation to those allotments.

District Council	Area of Allotments in Square Metres
Belfast	44,109
Carrickfergus	47,395
Castlereagh	885
Derry	8,400
Larne	900
Lisburn	21,400
Newtownabbey	4,006
North Down	4,135
Strabane	6,994
Dungannon and South Tyrone	1,296
Magherafelt	840
Total	140,360

Listed Buildings in the North Down Constituency

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the listed buildings in the North Down constituency.

(AQW 9161/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Based upon the 1974 ward boundaries, which is how the department holds such records, the total number of listed buildings in the North Down Borough Council Area is 255. The North Down constituency also includes two electoral wards of Ards Borough Council in Donaghadee, which contain a further 58 listed buildings (highlighted in bold). This gives a total of 313 listed buildings in your constituency.

It should be noted that North Down is currently being reviewed under the second survey process, and this figure may change again, when all records have been reviewed.

To provide the detail of all of these listed buildings by hard copy would be unwieldy however the information that you have sought may be accessed electronically at the following link www.doeni.gov.uk/nia/other-index/content-databases/content-databases-build.htm.

Once you have accepted the terms and conditions of the site, a search may be carried out by Council area – in this case Ards and North Down.

You will be aware, however, that there have been boundary changes since 1974, and therefore the figures should not be taken as definitive in relation to the current boundaries. For that reason I have appended, for your information, a table which shows the number of the listed buildings within each ward of the North Down and Ards Borough Council Areas.

You may also wish to note that NDBC – which is a statutory consultee in the listing process - has been provided with a copy of each listing in its area, as the listing process has proceeded over the years since the introduction of the legislation in the early 1970's.

NUMBER OF LISTED BUILDINGS IN THE NORTH DOWN AND ARDS DISTRICT COUNCIL AREAS

HB23 - North Down			HB24 - Ards		
1	Groomsport	13	1	Portaferry	73
2	Churchill	1	2	Kircubbin	22
3	Ballyholme	1	3	Ballyhalbert	5
4	Ballymagee	1	4	Grey Abbey	62
5	Bangor Harbour	24	5	Carrowdore	6
6	Conlig	4	6	Donaghadee North	26
7	Bangor Castle	24	7	Donaghadee South	32
8	Whitehill	0	8	Loughries	10
9	Rathgael	0	9	Movilla	5
10	Clandeboyne	18	10	Glen	3
11	Silverstream	0	11	Scrabo	16
12	Spring Hill	0	12	Ulsterville	0
13	Bryansburn	1	13	Central	43
14	Princetown	12	14	Comber North	0
15	Crawfordsburn	23	15	Comber South	32
16	Craigavad	20	16	Ballygowan	13
17	Loughview	6	17	Killinchy	31
18	Cultra	29			
19	Hollywood Demesne	11			
20	Hollywood Priory	67			
	Total	255		Total	379

Area of Special Scientific Interest

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment whether there is automatic prosecution of parties that are found to have destroyed an Area of Special Scientific Interest.

(AQW 9206/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The decision as to whether to prosecute parties suspected of having destroyed an Area of Special Scientific Interest ultimately rests with Public Prosecution Service.

Article 46 of the Environment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 (as amended) defines the offences in relation to Areas of Special Scientific Interest, which include carrying out or permitting to be carried out an operation requiring the written consent as defined in the declaration documents, and the damage or destruction of the special features of the ASSI, without reasonable excuse.

Following criminal investigations if there is found to be significant, non-rectifiable environmental damage or destruction to the special site selection features, where there is evidence of an offence under the Environment Order and a suspect or suspects can be identified, the Department will refer the case to Public Prosecution Service (PPS) for their consideration for prosecution through the courts.

MOT Centres: CCTV

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether any MOT centres have CCTV installed.
(AQW 9208/11-15)

Mr Attwood: CCTV cameras have been installed in the reception areas at two Driver & Vehicle Agency test centres: Balmoral Road, Belfast, and Jubilee Road, Newtownards.

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 6360/11-15, whether the figures provided include the Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9218/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The response to AQW 6360/11-15 included hospitality expenditure in relation to meetings held by the Department's three Statutory Advisory Councils (the Historic Monuments Council, Historic Buildings Council and the Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside).

The figures, however, did not cover the Department's two Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB's), the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC) and the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC). Hospitality is not provided to guests who attend NILOGSC functions. LGSC hospitality expenditure is detailed in the table below.

NDPB	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £
Local Government Staff Commission	1,427	1,508	1,226	778	1,103

Bus Operators

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) whether he is aware of bus operators continuing to allow young passengers, often below the legal drinking age, to consume alcohol in their vehicles; (ii) how many times, in each of the last two years, enforcement officers have spoken to bus operators about the consumption of alcohol in their vehicles; and (iii) the circumstances, including all allegations, investigations and any subsequent penalties imposed on each bus operator.

(AQW 9267/11-15)

Mr Attwood: As Minister responsible for road safety, the problem of alcohol on buses and coaches is of great concern to me, and I intend to take whatever action is necessary to deal with it.

I met with representatives of the nightclub industry on 7 March 2012 to discuss ways in which the owners of pubs and clubs could improve the management of their activities in order to address my concerns about the related issues of health, safety and public order, particularly in relation to young people. This was a frank meeting and the key issues were raised.

I am also meeting with a number of licensed bus operators on 14 March 2012 to highlight my concerns to them and to identify what further action might be taken to address the problem. Again, this was a straight talking meeting. During both meetings, I stated that the public, political and media spotlight was on them and that the irresponsible proprietors needed to get their house in order.

I have also instructed my officials to identify and explore any options that may be available, including any changes to the relevant legislation or to the regulatory regime, in consultation as necessary with partner organisations such as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, the Department for Regional Development and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, as well as with the industry itself.

Responsibility for enforcement in this area lies primarily with the PSNI, and for that reason the Department does not hold any statistical information in relation to advice given or action taken on operators regarding the consumption of alcohol on their vehicles.

I shall update the Committee of the short term and longer term interventions I propose.

Bus Operators

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how his Department ensures that all bus operators request an Access NI enhanced disclosure on bus drivers, who are responsible for transporting children to and from school before they are hired; and (ii) whether he is aware that bus drivers do not have to be registered with the Independent Safeguard Authority; and for his assessment of this situation.

(AQW 9268/11-15)

Mr Attwood: A person who applies to the Department of the Environment for a driving licence to drive a passenger-carrying vehicle (PCV) must provide a recent basic disclosure certificate issued by AccessNI. This certificate will show any unspent convictions, and may therefore indicate that the applicant is not a fit person to hold such a licence. The Department has a statutory duty, under Article 71 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, to carry out such conduct checks before issuing PCV drivers' licences.

The driving of buses which carry children to and from school is a regulated activity for the purposes of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. It is the responsibility of the employer of anyone who will be carrying out a regulated activity to ensure that a higher level of conduct check is undertaken. In general, the employer must be registered with AccessNI as a Registered Body.

In its capacity as the driver licensing authority, the Department of the Environment is not a registered body under the Order, and cannot therefore access the information which would be disclosed under AccessNI's Standard or Enhanced Disclosure schemes.

The Independent Safeguarding Authority maintains records of those who are barred from working with children and vulnerable adults. However, the Department, as it is not a registered employer, does not have access to that information.

Policy on protecting children and vulnerable adults in Northern Ireland is the responsibility of the Department for Justice, the Department for Education and the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

I have met with officials recently on this general issue and am looking at what more needs to be done to build public confidence.

Narrow Water Bridge Project

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of the Environment (i) for an update on his Department's role in the Narrow Water Bridge Project; (ii) what discussions have taken place within his Department, or with its arm's-length bodies, in relation to the project; and (iii) whether his Department intends to support the planning applications for the project.

(AQW 9273/11-15)

Mr Attwood:

- (i) An application for the erection of a new single carriageway bridge across Newry River was received by DOE Planning on 09 February 2012 and is being processed by the Southern Area Planning Office. The application is accompanied by an Environmental Statement and is at the initial stages of consideration. Consultations have been issued to the relevant bodies and following receipt of their comments an opinion will be formed on the proposal at the earliest opportunity.
- (ii) The project has been the subject of considerable pre-application discussion between Planning, the applicant and agents and interested consultees including NIEA, Roads Service etc. Senior

Planning Officials have also met with Officials from Louth County Council and Newry and Mourne Council, to discuss the project.

- (iii) In reaching an opinion, Planning are fully aware of the social and economic benefits that would follow from the development of the bridge and these will be taken into consideration in the decision making process, along with the other normal planning and environmental criteria. I recognise that the Mournes and wider area is a wonderful natural asset which should be protected and positively developed. The Bridge Project is an important application and Planning will very carefully consider the proposal.

New Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment whether the new Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan will be adopted before the end of 2012, given that the development plan process began in 1999; and to outline the reasons for his position on this issue.

(AQW 9276/11-15)

Mr Attwood: All outstanding information regarding the BMAP Public Inquiry has now been received by my Department. The PAC has reported on the considerable number of objections and highlights the complexity of the strategic issues.

The Department has a small dedicated team considering all the information presented and working towards adoption of the Plan. Consideration of the strategic issues is on-going and much of the work on the individual Districts is well progressed.

I am considering if it is legally feasible and operationally appropriate to see the rollout of the plan in an earlier timescale.

New Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of the Environment to provide a timescale for the final preparation and adoption of the new Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan; and if he can offer an assurance that there will be no further delays.

(AQW 9277/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) has now delivered all outstanding information to my Department relating to the BMAP public inquiry that finished in May 2008.

A dedicated team is currently working through the extensive PAC recommendations in order to prepare the Plan for adoption. Significant work in relation to individual Districts has already been progressed. At present it is anticipated that adoption will take place early in 2013.

I am considering if it is legally feasible and operationally appropriate to see the rollout of the plan in an earlier timescale.

Regulations to Control the Use of Snares

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment when he intends to introduce regulations to control the use of snares.

(AQW 9283/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department aims to begin a consultation process on proposed regulations to control the use of snares by the summer of 2012.

Escalation in Metal Theft

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to (i) combat the escalation in metal theft; and (ii) reduce the opportunities to sell stolen metal.

(AQW 9310/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The primary responsibility for combating theft (including of metal) lies with the PSNI and the Department of Justice. However, DOE recognises the benefit of using the environmental legislation that it is charged with enforcing to assist in tackling the problem using a multi-agency approach.

Through a strategic partnership, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency is working with the PSNI on all environmental crime and the harm it does to communities. The issue of metal theft has been identified as one where the environmental legislation implemented by DOE has a role to play in tackling the issue of metal theft. As a result of the Department's officers sharing knowledge on DOE's waste enforcement powers and working with PSNI colleagues, a number of cases involving suspected metal theft are currently being progressed through the Courts where defendants have breached environmental legislation as part of their activities.

The Department has a robust monitoring system for licensed waste management facilities including those that can accept scrap metal, and will also be participating in an inter-agency group, to be led by the Department of Justice, examining possible responses to tackling the issue of metal theft in Northern Ireland.

Cost-Effectiveness of Away-Days and Team-Building Exercises

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department assesses the cost-effectiveness of away-days and team building exercises.

(AQW 9336/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Occasionally, officials in my Department may organise time away from the office, but for business reasons only. For example, as part of the business planning cycle, senior officials including the Permanent Secretary have set aside time away from DOE HQ to consider the Department's contribution to the 2011-2015 Programme for Government and to identify other key priorities for the 4 year period covered by PfG. Existing DOE premises were used for this purpose, as is currently the case in most instances away from the office. I am advised by officials that this Department has not engaged in away days for team building purposes for some years.

I am satisfied with the cost effectiveness of away days where they are restricted to business related activities and where unnecessary expense is not incurred in the form of rental of private premises. I have instructed officials to remind staff that these criteria must be adhered to.

Proposed Quota of Female Candidates for the Council Elections

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what percentage he intends to set for the proposed quota of female candidates for the council elections.

(AQW 9372/11-15)

Cycling Proficiency Courses

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment how many cycling proficiency courses were held at schools in (i) the 2010/11 academic year; and (ii) this academic year to date.

(AQW 9390/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In the 2010 – 2011 academic year 575 schools participated in the Cycling Proficiency Scheme (CPS) and 8,760 were trained. In the current academic year to date, 12 schools have already participated in the scheme, compared to 14 in the previous academic year. This is not unusual as most schools choose to deliver CPS training during the final academic term of each year.

In recent years the number of schools participating in CPS has remained steady at approximately 580, with an average of 8,880 – 9,000 children trained each year. The current indications are that numbers will be similar this year.

Road Safety Education Officers

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment how many Road Safety Education Officers are employed by his Department.

(AQW 9391/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There are currently ten Road Safety Education Officers and three Senior Road Safety Officers employed in the Department.

Driving Licences

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment how many people currently hold a driving licence.

(AQW 9672/11-15)

Mr Attwood: On 15th March 2012, a total of 1,151,487 people held valid Northern Ireland driving licences, 110,618 of which are provisional driving licences with no full entitlement to drive cars or motorcycles.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Special Advisers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) where and when the proposal to increase the upper limit of the Band B salary scale for Special Advisers to £90,000 originated; (ii) whether the First Minister and deputy First Minister were consulted about the decision taken by his Department on 18 July 2011 in relation to the increase; (iii) what input the First Minister and deputy First Minister had to the decision; and (iv) whether other Ministers were consulted.

(AQW 1711/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): I took the decision in my role as Minister with responsibility for civil service pay to set the upper limit of the pay band B for Special Advisers at £90,000.

Departmental Special Adviser

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to outline the specialism which his Special Adviser brings to his office and (ii) whether his Special Adviser holds any role or post outside of his office for which he is remunerated.

(AQW 1805/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Special Adviser provides a significant level of policy and political advice and undertakes strategic policy and political analysis. He is a Councillor in Lisburn City Council and a member of Libraries NI.

Departmental Special Adviser

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Special Adviser is paid within Band A or Band B of the his Department's salary scale; and, if it is within Band B whether, in light of the decision to increase the upper limit of the Band B scale to £90,000, there has been an increase in salary or an increase is planned.

(AQW 2038/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the remuneration of the Special Adviser is published in the Note on Staff Numbers and Related Costs in the Department's Annual Resource Accounts.

Departmental Special Adviser

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, since the appointment of his current Special Adviser to date, how many meetings (i) he has had with his Special Adviser; (ii) his Special Adviser has had with departmental officials; and (iii) he has attended, accompanied by his Special Adviser.

(AQW 2596/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The information requested is not readily available and can only be compiled at disproportionate cost.

Civil Servants

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil servants, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) council area.

(AQW 7012/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The numbers of civil servants, broken down by (i) grade; and (ii) council area are set out in the attached tables. In view of the large number of grades within the Northern Ireland Civil Service the tables of permanent staff show general service and analogous grades.

STAFF (HEADCOUNT) BY GRADE AT 1 APRIL 2011

Analogous Grade Level	Staff Headcount
Grade 5+	241
Senior Principal/Principal	1413
Deputy Principal	2337
Staff Officer	3376
Executive Officer I/Executive Officer II	7923
Administrative Officer	8009
Administrative Assistant	1967
Industrial Staff	1093
Total	26359

STAFF BY COUNCIL AREA AT 1 APRIL 2011

Council Area	Total Number Of Nics Staff By Work Location
Antrim	372
Ards	224
Armagh	329
Ballymena	642
Ballymoney	95
Banbridge	116
Belfast	14980
Carrickfergus	281
Castlereagh	410
Coleraine	927

Council Area	Total Number Of Nics Staff By Work Location
Cookstown	135
Craigavon	675
Derry	1606
Down	474
Dungannon	275
Fermanagh	516
Larne	133
Limavady	92
Lisburn	687
Magherafelt	250
Moyle	11
Newry & Mourne	407
Newtownabbey	198
North Down	998
Omagh	809
Strabane	112
Unknown*	605
Total	26359

Notes:

Data sourced from HR Connect & Additional DOJ databases 1st Apr 2011.

Figures are Staff Headcount.

Figures comprise Staff Headcount for staff working in the 13 Northern Ireland Departments and in the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, the Office of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, and staff of The Assembly Ombudsman for Northern Ireland/The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints

Includes all Permanent NICS staff for whom Work Location information is available with the exception of uniformed Prison Service staff.

Staff on career break are excluded.

*Unknown are staff whose work location was not recorded at the time the information was extracted by the NI Statistics and Research Agency.

Pooling of Budgets

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department is aware of any instances of Departments, or their agencies, pooling budgets to commission or deliver services in the previous budgetary period; and (ii) whether his Department is aware of any Departments wish to pool budgets to commission or deliver services at any time in the 2011-15 budget period.

(AQW 8992/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I am aware of a number of areas involving Departments routinely pooling resources across a range of areas in both the previous and the current budget period. Front line service delivery examples include DHSSPS and DE pooling budgets to provide Children's Services; and another example

led by DE, but also involving DSD, DHSSPS, OFMDFM and DCAL is the North Belfast City Learning Centre, which provides community and youth facilities at the Girls and Boys' Model Schools.

In terms of back office functions my Department provides shared services to all NICS Departments and Agencies for the functions of finance, personnel and ICT.

I am sure there is scope to do more in specific service areas and I would always encourage a collective approach, however, you would need to ask the respective Ministers for that level of detail.

Special European Union Programmes Body

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, for each of the last five years, to detail (i) how much the Special European Union Programmes Body has spent on external consultants in total and as a percentage of its budget; and (ii) how this compares with his Department's spending on consultants. **(AQW 9030/11-15)**

Mr Wilson:

Year	Consultancy Spend (£'000)	% of consultancy spend against annual budget
2007	726	1.07%
2008	824	1.77%
2009	886	1.79%
2010	485	0.7%
2011	125	0.2%

SEUPB expenditure on consultancy for each of the years 2007-2011 is set out in the table below.

The costs shown are based on contracts awarded within the relevant calendar year. More than half of the costs incurred in any year relate to the engagement of consultants to carry out economic appraisals on allocations to projects seeking PEACE III or INTERREG IVA funding.

All consultancy costs associated with the Programmes are co-funded between the European Regional Development fund (ERDF), Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The Northern Ireland contribution is 16-20% of the overall costs.

My Departments expenditure on consultancy for each of the years 2006-07 to 2010-11 is set out in the table below.

Year	Consultancy Spend (£m)	% of consultancy spend against annual expenditure
2006-07	4.4	1.8%
2007-08	6.3	2.4%
2008-09	4.5	1.5%
2009-10	1.1	0.4%
2010-11	0.1	0.05%

Unemployed People

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people (i) were unemployed last year; and (ii) are currently unemployed, in the Derry area.

(AQW 9112/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The official measure of unemployment is sourced to the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, the sub-regional and annualised LFS estimates for 2011 are, as of yet, unavailable.

As an alternative, the table overleaf provides information from the claimant count measure of unemployment. It shows the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits, in the Foyle Parliamentary Constituency Area, for each month of 2011, as well as the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits in February 2012.

TABLE - NUMBERS CLAIMING JOB SEEKER'S ALLOWANCE, FOYLE PCA

Month	Number
January 2011	5,266
February 2011	5,305
March 2011	5,298
April 2011	5,211
May 2011	5,178
June 2011	5,207
July 2011	5,501
August 2011	5,679
September 2011	5,798
October 2011	5,816
November 2011	5,633
December 2011	5,517
February 2012	5,769

Unemployed People

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people (i) were unemployed last year; and (ii) are currently unemployed.

(AQW 9113/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The official measure of unemployment is sourced to the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS). The most recent LFS data available, for the period November 2011 – January 2012, estimate that there were 56,000 people, aged 16 and over, unemployed. An annualised 2011 LFS estimate of unemployment is, as of yet, unavailable.

As an alternative, the table overleaf provides information from the claimant count measure of unemployment. It shows the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits for each month of 2011, as well as the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits in February 2012.

TABLE - NUMBERS CLAIMING JOB SEEKER'S ALLOWANCE, NORTHERN IRELAND

Month	Number of claimants
January 2011	59,689
February 2011	60,447
March 2011	59,961

Month	Number of claimants
April 2011	59,162
May 2011	58,644
June 2011	58,704
July 2011	60,635
August 2011	61,805
September 2011	61,412
October 2011	59,973
November 2011	59,373
December 2011	59,113
February 2012	62,778

Staff Disciplinary Actions

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of staff disciplinary actions taken by his Department in each of the last two years, at Staff Officer level and above, including details of the offence and the disciplinary sanctions applied.

(AQW 9124/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The information requested is detailed below:

2010

No. of staff	Offence	Sanction
1	Criminal conviction	Formal written warning

2011 - NIL

Registered Businesses

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of registered businesses in each constituency.

(AQW 9166/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses, including agriculture, can be obtained from the Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR). Table 1, overleaf, provides a breakdown of active businesses in Northern Ireland by Parliamentary Constituency at January 2012. Where a business has more than one local unit (site) the location of the business is based on the postcode of the Head Office reporting for all local units within Northern Ireland.

Table 1: Numbers of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses in Northern Ireland, by Parliamentary Constituency¹

	No. of Businesses
Belfast East	2,330
Belfast North	2,185
Belfast South	4,465

	No. of Businesses
Belfast West	1,430
East Antrim	2,360
East Londonderry	3,900
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	6,610
Foyle	2,205
Lagan Valley	3,765
Mid Ulster	5,695
Newry & Armagh	5,405
North Antrim	4,790
North Down	2,310
South Antrim	3,445
South Down	5,050
Strangford	3,190
Upper Bann	3,535
West Tyrone	5,095
Total	67,765

- 1 In addition, there were 795 businesses active in Northern Ireland at January 2012 for which the reporting Head Office was outside Northern Ireland. Therefore a Parliamentary Constituency for these businesses could not be determined.

Renewable Energy

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what steps his Department and particularly the Central Procurement Directorate has taken to improve the uptake of renewable energy amongst public sector organisations.

(AQW 9209/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) in its guidance on Procurement of Construction Works and Services sets a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) target of 'Excellent' for new build projects and 'Very Good' for refurbishment projects procured by Departments, Agencies and NDPBs.

Where CPD itself acts as the Centre of Procurement Expertise (CoPE) on behalf of public sector clients, construction procurement practitioners are proactive in advising their construction clients on the scope for incorporating energy saving technologies into projects when initial appraisals indicate that this is both economically and technically feasible.

My Department manages the government office estate and is working to improve the energy efficiency of the buildings within that estate and has put in place an Energy Efficiency/Carbon Reduction Plan (EE/CRP) which aims to achieve a 10% reduction in energy use over the period 2011–2014. A number of renewable technologies have also been trialled within the office estate, including installation of solar panels and biomass boilers. The results of these trials will be used to determine the viability of future installations.

Civil Servants

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of civil servants based in each council area.

(AQW 9223/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I would refer the Member to the reply I provided to Mr Phil Flanagan in AQW 7012/11-15 issued on 20 March 2012.

Rates Capital Value Mechanism

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the potential benefits of introducing a bottom band in the Rates Capital Value mechanism.

(AQW 9232/11-15)

Mr Wilson: This particular issue is an interesting one but it is not something I wish to examine in any detail at this time because of the current uncertainty around the impact of welfare reform; particularly on the ability of the Executive and Assembly to maintain levels of means tested rates support. At the moment this matter is being examined by the Executive Sub Committee on Welfare Reform, amongst many other issues. Therefore, I have not made any assessment of the potential benefits of adopting a bottom band for the domestic rates system.

The issue of a minimum payment was something considered in the Executive's 2007 Review of the system. It was not brought forward at that time because it was not even short listed by the Finance and Personnel Committee as worthy of further consideration by the Executive. It may be something worth re-visiting in the medium or longer term.

I enclose as an appendix a copy of the relevant text from the Committee's report in 2007, together with the Department's analysis of the issue at that time.

Appendix

Extract from:

Finance and Personnel Committee's Report in response to the 2007 Executive Review of the Domestic Rating System (7 November 2007)

(b) Introduction of a Minimum Payment

13. The Committee identified the following views on this option from the Department's report on the consultation and from the evidence provided to the Committee:

Arguments For	Arguments Against
Recognises that there is a basic level of local and regional government services that are consumed by households.	Those below the capital value threshold would experience a slight increase in rates, whilst those above would experience a slight reduction.
Would ensure those in lower value properties, who can afford to pay, make an appropriate contribution to the cost of providing those services.	Disproportionate impact on lower paid.
Those on low incomes would continue to be supported by the housing benefit system and the rate relief scheme introduced in April 2007.	Could run counter to new TSN policies.
Setting a minimum payment would significantly increase the cost of housing benefit – could be a funding gain for NI from annually managed expenditure (normally needs Treasury approval).	Caps benefit the very wealthy and/or the very poor with those in the middle left to cover shortfall.

Arguments For	Arguments Against
	Would add to the cost of local rate relief scheme.
	Potential need for new IT systems may delay introduction.

14. In addition to the above arguments the Committee noted the advice from the IRRV that there is presently no need to introduce a minimum payment rule. Under the existing system the payment liability is driven by the person's ability to pay as determined by the value of their house, the local rate relief scheme and the housing benefit scheme.
15. In considering this option, the Committee has also taken account of DFP's summary analysis of the associated costs, benefits, and impacts. (see Annex A)
16. Having considered the available evidence, the Committee recommends that a minimum payment/capital value is not introduced as it is not required given the capacity of the present domestic rating system to determine payment liability, taking account of capital value and entitlement to rate relief and housing benefit.

ANNEX A

DFP's Analysis (2007) - Introduction of Minimum Capital Value

Background

While the domestic rating system is considered to be purely a property tax, the introduction of a minimum capital value would recognise the fact that there is a minimum limit to the level of local and regional government services that can be consumed by a household. As with the maximum capital value, the minimum capital value would be set in terms of capital values. That is, once the limit is chosen, any property with a capital value below that limit would be rated as if its capital value is at that limit.

Options

The options examined were:

- Introduce a minimum capital value at £75,000 (the lowest such council tax bill in 2007/08 is £454. Based on the average rate in Northern Ireland, this would relate to a property with a capital value of approximately £75,000)
- Introduce a minimum capital value at £50,000 (this relates to the lowest council tax band which exists in Wales, uplifted to January 2005 values)
- Introduce a minimum capital value at £62,500.

Impact

The following table shows the revenue gain associated with a minimum capital value and the number of properties faced with a higher rate bill as a result:

Minimum CV	Revenue increase (compared with current system)	No. properties less than Minimum CV
£50k	£6 - £6.5m	56,000
£62.5k	£13 - £14m	125,000
£75k	£27 - £28m	210,000

Redundant Workers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many people in each constituency were made redundant in each of the last three years.

(AQW 9278/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The table overleaf details the number of confirmed redundancies by parliamentary constituency in each of the last 3 years.

Parliamentary Constituency	2009	2010	2011
Belfast East	609	367	163
Belfast North	352	224	97
Belfast South	443	377	318
Belfast West	435	64	218
East Antrim	503	119	76
East Londonderry	185	74	11
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	137	18	59
Foyle	673	145	180
Lagan Valley	147	44	32
Mid Ulster	194	92	81
Newry & Armagh	130	98	94
North Antrim	109	56	156
North Down	130	103	33
South Antrim	89	83	109
South Down	168	1	55
Strangford	28	8	37
Upper Bann	207	171	70
West Tyrone	57	52	15
Total	4,596	2,096	1,804

Procurement

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many times, in each of the last five years, the cost of carrying out a procurement exercise for a contract has been greater than the value of the contract.

(AQW 9333/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The cost of a procurement exercise includes direct costs incurred by the client; the cost of any professional advisers; and the costs to industry in preparing tender submissions. The total cost depends on the procurement route and the number of firms expressing an interest or submitting a tender.

Central Procurement Directorate does not capture these costs in relation to the procurements that it undertakes on behalf of client bodies and therefore it is not possible to provide the information that you seek.

While individual contracts vary in scale, value and complexity, generally speaking the cost of procuring a low value contract will tend to be higher, relative to the contract value, than the cost of procuring a larger contract. In recognition of this, Central Procurement Directorate has developed guidance on the simplified procurement of contracts under the respective European thresholds for works, services and supplies. I expect this guidance to be published shortly.

Vacant Non-Domestic Properties

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of vacant non-domestic properties in each ward of the North Down constituency.

(AQW 9429/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of vacant non-domestic properties in each ward of the North Down constituency is not available as data is collated at District Council and Ward level only.

As at 11th March 2012 there were 583 and 446 non-domestic properties recorded as vacant in the Ards and North Down District Council Areas respectively. The tables attached indicate the number of vacant non-domestic properties for each ward area within the two Council areas.

VACANT NON-DOMESTIC PROPERTIES IN THE ARDS BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA AS AT 11TH MARCH 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Ballygowan	14
Ballyrainey	63
Ballywalter	17
Bradshaws Brae	47
Carrowdore	17
Central	139
Comber East	57
Comber North	*
Comber West	12
Donaghadee North	39
Donaghadee South	6
Glen	*
Gregstown	*
Killinchy	9
Kircubbin	18
Lisbane	12
Loughries	6
Millisle	34
Movilla	12
Portaferry	36
Portavogie	23

Ward	Number of Properties
Scrabo	8
Whitespots	*
Ards Borough Council Total	583

* 5 properties or less

VACANT NON-DOMESTIC PROPERTIES IN THE NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA AS AT 11TH MARCH 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Ballyholme	*
Ballymagee	*
Bangor Castle	39
Bloomfield	28
Broadway	*
Bryansburn	8
Clandeboye	14
Conlig	79
Craigavad	*
Crawfordsburn	6
Cultra	*
Dufferin	*
Groomsport	19
Harbour	116
Hollywood Demesne	41
Hollywood Priory	29
Loughview	7
Princetown	*
Rathgael	15
Silverstream	8
Spring Hill	*
Ward not identifiable	*
North Down Borough Council Total	446

* 5 properties or less

UK Forestry Standard

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether all the bodies or organisations within his Department's remit which own woodland are compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, including his Department, any arm's-length body and any organisation to which his Department provides grant aid. **(AQW 9437/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: The Stormont Estate is the only managed woodland area for which DFP is directly responsible. The Estate is compliant with the UK Forestry Standard.

None of the Department's arm's-length bodies own woodland.

The Department provides grant aid to the Somme Association who own woodland in France. The Association is not required to comply with the UK Forestry Standard however the woodland is managed in a manner that complies with French forestry legislation.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why it is necessary for architects and other professionals to carry professional indemnity insurance of £5 million to tender for minor works contracts of up to £0.5 million. **(AQW 9498/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: The setting of the level of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) cover is a matter for the department procuring the professional services. The decision should be based on an assessment of the risks associated with the particular project. There is no requirement for departments to insist on £5 million cover in all cases. Higher or lower levels of cover may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances. Potential losses by a public body resulting from professional negligence may exceed the consultant's fee or the value of the construction contract, particularly where the project has a low value. CPD is currently finalising a Procurement Guidance Note which will provide advice on the levels of PII cover that should be sought by departments. I expect the guidance to issue shortly.

Professional Indemnity Cover

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the disparity between the practice in the Republic of Ireland, where an architect or other professional has to produce evidence of £1 million professional indemnity cover to tender for a public works contract to a value of £1 million, compared with Northern Ireland where the requirement is £5 million indemnity. **(AQW 9499/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: The setting of the level of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) cover is a matter for the department procuring the professional services. The decision should be based on an assessment of the risks associated with the particular project. There is no requirement for departments to insist on £5 million cover in all cases. Higher or lower levels of cover may be appropriate, depending on the circumstances. Potential losses by a public body resulting from professional negligence may exceed the consultant's fee or the value of the construction contract, particularly where the project has a low value. CPD is currently finalising a Procurement Guidance Note which will provide advice on the levels of PII cover that should be sought by departments, including that for lower value, lower risk projects. I expect this guidance to issue shortly.

Professional Indemnity Insurance Cover

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he will undertake a review of the requirements for professional indemnity insurance cover, given the current cost of such cover, the contradiction between the contract value and the limit of indemnity required for minor works contracts, and the subsequent difficulties imposed on smaller professional firms in tendering for Government contracts. **(AQW 9500/11-15)**

Mr Wilson: I am aware of the potential for disproportionate levels of Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) cover to act as a barrier to small professional practices competing for government contracts. In light of this, a review has already been carried out and Central Procurement Directorate is finalising a Procurement Guidance Note on Liability and Insurance in Government contracts, which will provide advice on the levels of PII cover that should normally be sought by departments. The key principle will be that the cover should be proportionate to the risks associated with the project. I expect the guidance to issue shortly.

Royal Ulster Constabulary Athletic Association

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what funding his Department provides to the PSNI for the Royal Ulster Constabulary Athletic Association; and whether he intends to withdraw any funding should the Association not change its name.

(AQW 9504/11-15)

Mr Wilson: My Department does not provide specific funding to individual bodies. Funding is allocated to the Department of Justice and it is for the Minister of Justice to decide how he allocates his budget.

Media Communications Protocols

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what media communications protocols exist between his Department and each of its arm's-length bodies; and to publish these protocols.

(AQW 9657/11-15)

Mr Wilson: No written media communications protocols exist within the Department and its arm's-length bodies.

Joint Ministerial Working Group on Rebalancing the Economy

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the second Joint Ministerial Working Group Meeting on Rebalancing the NI Economy held on 7 March 2012.

(AQO 1608/11-15)

Mr Wilson: We had a constructive discussion at the second meeting of the Joint Ministerial Working Group earlier this month, particularly around the potential costs and practical implications of transferring corporation tax powers. I have always maintained that it is vital that any devolution of these powers is at a fair and reasonable cost to Northern Ireland. Considerable progress has been made on the work programme agreed at the first meeting but there is still work to be done over the coming months. That said, the work programme remains on course and is still anticipated to be completed in time for the Ministerial Working Group to produce a report for a decision in the summer.

Corporation Tax and Air Passenger Duty

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on discussions with Treasury on the transfer of Corporation Tax and Air Passenger Duty powers.

(AQO 1606/11-15)

Mr Wilson: We had a constructive discussion at the second meeting of the Joint Ministerial Working Group earlier this month, particularly around the potential costs and practical implications of transferring corporation tax powers. I have always maintained that it is vital that any devolution of these powers is at a fair and reasonable cost to Northern Ireland. Considerable progress has been made on the work programme agreed at the first meeting but there is still work to be done over the coming months. That said, the work programme remains on course and is still anticipated to be completed in time for the Ministerial Working Group to produce a report for a decision in the summer.

Turning to Air Passenger Duty, discussions with the Treasury are ongoing to finalise the precise arrangements for the devolution of these powers, including the associated costs and necessary administrative changes. The necessary legislative changes in Westminster will be made in the 2012

Finance Bill, the draft clauses of which have been published for consultation. I would expect this to have Royal Assent by early autumn and a Legislative Consent Motion will be required to seek Assembly agreement in this regard.

Following that, an Assembly Bill will be required to enable the Executive to follow through on the commitment to reduce Air Passenger Duty to zero.

Civil Service: Pensions

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the proposed changes to the Northern Ireland Civil Service Pension Schemes.

(AQO 1613/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There are two proposed changes to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland.

Firstly, in line with the decision by the Executive on 22 September 2011 on the proposals for increasing member contributions for public service pension schemes, and, following a formal consultation, employee contributions will be increased with effect from April 2012 for the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, on 8 March 2012 the Executive agreed to wider reform proposals for public service pension schemes. This will mean a move from final salary to career average pension scheme, with the Normal Retirement Age linked to State Pension Age.

DFP: Consultants

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what checks his Department has in place to monitor spending on consultants.

(AQO 1615/11-15)

Mr Wilson: My Department issues guidance on the Use of External Consultants which provides a framework for establishing the need for, and the procurement and management of external consultants - but the decision to incur expenditure on external consultants is a matter for individual departments and ministers. In addition, my Department commissions an annual exercise from departments in order to monitor compliance with the DFP guidance, and the results of this exercise are published annually. The most recent report, in respect of the 2010-11 financial year, was published in February 2012.

It noted that in 2010-11 the total spend on external consultancy across departments and their Arms Length Bodies was less than £16 million. This was a reduction of 56% from the level reported in 2007-08. Looking forward, as part of Budget 2011-2015 the Executive set a target of year-on-year reductions of 10% for external consultancy spend over this budget period and a drop of 56% therefore shows the significant level of reduction already achieved.

All proposed external consultancy spend of £10,000 or above now requires the specific prior approval of the relevant Minister. Individual Ministers remain free to lower this threshold even further within their own departments as they may see fit.

External Consultancy

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether his Department holds information on the external consultancy projects undertaken by non-ministerial departments.

(AQO 1616/11-15)

Mr Wilson: My Department requests returns from all Departments, on an annual basis, as regards the use of external consultants. This information is collated and published in DFP's Annual Compliance Report on the Use of External Consultants. My Department also requests this information from the non-ministerial Departments, that is: the Assembly Ombudsman/Commissioner for Complaints, the Foods Standards Agency; the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission, the Northern Ireland Audit Office,

the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation and the Public Prosecution Service. The Northern Ireland Audit Office is the only body which declines to take part in this exercise.

Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the work currently being undertaken by the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit.

(AQO 1617/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The work of the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) is currently focused on the delivery strand of the unit's remit following the recent completion of two major reviews in respect of the Education and Health & Social Care sectors.

In particular, PEDU has worked closely with officials in OFMDFM to put in place robust monitoring arrangements to drive delivery of the new Programme for Government (PfG), covering the period 2011-15. The first stage of this work involved the development of a Delivery Framework covering all aspects of planning, monitoring and reporting. This was agreed by the Executive on 9 February 2012. There is now ongoing engagement with departments on the production of Delivery Plans for each commitment, which build on and clarify the milestones and outputs contained in the PfG 2011-15 document.

Going forward, PEDU will continue to be closely involved in the PfG monitoring process, and in accordance with its remit, the unit will provide support to departments seeking to constructively address performance issues.

Welfare Reform

Mr Brady asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the issue of welfare reform and its implications for the local economy were discussed at the recent meeting with Treasury.

(AQO 1618/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I assume the Member is referring to the recent 5th March 2012 meeting of Devolved Administration Finance Ministers and HM Treasury Ministers. The agenda for this meeting included employment, infrastructure, local pay and pension reform issues. However, at this meeting I also took the opportunity to express concern about the localisation of Council Tax benefit and the impact that this will have in Northern Ireland.

In terms of the wider welfare reform agenda, the Member will be aware that the Executive has established a sub-group to consider the issues involved. There is also ongoing engagement with relevant Whitehall departments at ministerial and official level.

Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit: Social Disadvantage

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit has looked at measures and targets within Departments in relation to tackling social disadvantage.

(AQO 1619/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) has not previously been asked to examine departmental measures and targets aimed at tackling social disadvantage. However, as part of the unit's broader work on monitoring progress against Programme for Government (PfG) 2008-11, PEDU did prepare a delivery assessment to inform an accountability review on progress against the child poverty targets.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Prisoners: Hospital Trips

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the average number of weekly prisoner trips to local hospitals; and (ii) the number of hospital trips made by each prisoner in the last 12 months.

(AQW 9237/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): In the 12 months from February 2011 to February 2012 there were an average of 17 trips to hospital per week.

It has not been possible to determine the number of trips by each prisoner. However, a total of 909 prisoners were escorted to hospital in the 12 months between February 2011 and February 2012.

Health Promotion

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) as a percentage of the overall budget, how much his Department currently spends on health promotion; (ii) how much his Department has spent on health promotion in each of the last three years; (iii) how much his Department intends to spend on health promotion in the next three years; and (iv) whether his Department is aware of the comparative statistics on the percentage of the health budget spent on health promotion in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 9242/11-15)

Mr Poots:

(i) & (ii)

Health Promotion expenditure for the 2011/12 financial year is not yet available. The expenditure for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11 amounted to £94 million and £89 million respectively, representing approximately 2.3% and 2.1% of the Department's current budget allocation in those years (and reflecting spend by the Trusts, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Board). However, total overall spend on Health Promotion activities will be greater than this, as it is inherent within and across all aspects of health and social care provision in Northern Ireland.

(iii) My commitment to increasing public health expenditure is evident in the Programme for Government. I will invest an additional £5m, £7.5m and £10m over the three years to 2014/15 through the Public Health Agency when compared to their actual spend in 2011/12. In addition, I plan to have the new Public Health Strategic Framework in place by the end of 2012.

(iv) We cannot directly compare health promotion expenditure with other UK administrations. Budgets associated with such outcomes are, by their very nature, delivered through a wide and differing range of hospital and social care solutions making true and direct comparisons problematic.

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 8074/11-15, whether the figures provided include his Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9265/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can confirm that my answer to AQW 8074/11-15 did not include information in respect of arm's length bodies. Information on hospitality expenditure within each of my Department's arm's length bodies is provided in the following table:

	2006/07 £k	2007/08 £k	2008/09 £k	2009/10 £k	2010/11 £k
Belfast Trust	*Not available	35.0	12.0	15.0	15.0
Northern Trust	*Not available	34.6	43.6	18.2	14.0
Southern Trust	*Not available	62.0	67.0	38.71	15.5
South Eastern Trust	*Not available	97.5	133.7	109.7	38.5
Western Trust	*Not available	109.2	86.3	52.41	9.5
NIAS	3.1	4.3	8.7	3.2	4.5
Business Services Organisation	19.8	17.8	25.3	28.0	20.3
Health and Social Care Board	^n/a	112.5	92.0	65.2	65.5
Public Health Agency	^n/a	37.5	62.0	22.1	49.9
PCC	^n/a	^n/a	^n/a	0.4	6.4
NIFRS	14.0	24.7	60.3	58.0	45.3
NIPEC	3.6	5.1	3.4	2.1	1.8
NISCC	14.4	13.8	18.5	20.5	31.4
NIGALA	0.9	2.8	1.3	2.4	1.0
NIBTS	3.8	3.3	4.3	3.3	1.4
RQIA	15.8	10.5	10.6	10.7	7.8
NIMDTA	13.0	12.21	11.51	11.31	6.2
Total	n/a	582.79	640.54	461.16	334.0

* Trusts were re-organised on 1 April 2007 under the Review of Public Administration and information in respect of the old Trusts can only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

^ These bodies were formed on 1 April 2009 but information is available for some of the bodies which operated prior to 1 April 2009.

1 Following review, these figures have now been updated from the previous public information.

Due to the wide ranging operational nature of the Department's ALBs, hospitality may also include other expenditure associated with the provision of refreshments, for example room hire and equipment hire

Funding for Community Based Initiatives

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the total level of funding his Department allocated for community based initiatives in 2007/08; 2008/09; 2009/10; and 2010/11 in the (i) Erne North; (ii) Erne West; and (iii) Erne East wards in Co Fermanagh.
(AQW 9275/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible to provide this information by ward, as funding is not allocated on this basis.

However, Funding allocated by the HSC Board and Western HSC Trust to voluntary and community organisations which are located in or are providing a service or community initiative to the Fermanagh and Omagh areas, was as follows:

	2010-11 £	2009-10 £	2008-09 £	2007-08 £
HSCB	655,837	696,961	600,033	683,891
WHSCT	4,528,226	3,480,013	3,703,267	3,676,413

No other Trust has allocated funding to any voluntary or community organisation in the Fermanagh area or for any community initiative in the area.

Food Safety Promotion Board Staff

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1254/11-15, to detail the outcome of the monitoring of the community background of staff in the Food Safety Promotion Board.

(AQW 9357/11-15)

Mr Poots: None of the North-South Implementation Bodies has historically monitored the community background of its southern based employees.

At present the Food Safety Promotion Board employs 29 staff, all of whom are based in the Republic of Ireland. Acting on legal advice FSPB has not asked individual employees to state their 'community background'. In the absence of a direct question method or any reliable proxy indicator of employees' perceived religious affiliation, the Chief Executive of FSPB indicated in August 2011 that he was of the view that the community background of the staff complement of FSPB broadly reflected the general community, taking account of location and the disciplines and professions within the organisation.

MRI Scanner in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 8481/11-15, to detail (i) how many children required an MRI scan in 2010; (ii) how many adults are currently waiting for an MRI scan in each Health and Social Care Trust area; and the current average waiting time; (iii) how many children are currently waiting for an MRI scan in each Trust area, and the current average waiting time; (iv) the provisions that are in place for children who require an MRI scan in each Trust area; and (v) what action he is taking to reduce the waiting time for an MRI scan.

(AQW 9387/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) I have been informed by the Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland, that a total of 1,892 children received an MRI scan during 2010.
- (ii) MRI waiting time data are collected in aggregate time bands; therefore it is not possible to calculate an average waiting time. It is, however, possible to calculate the median time band, a similar statistical measure.

The number of adults currently waiting for an MRI scan at each HSC Trust, and the median waiting time band, is outlined in the table below:

HSC Trust	No. adults currently waiting for MRI scan¹	Median waiting time band (weeks)
Belfast	1,751	6-9 weeks
Northern	286	0-6 weeks

HSC Trust	No. adults currently waiting for MRI scan¹	Median waiting time band (weeks)
South Eastern	912	0-6 weeks
Southern	847	0-6 weeks
Western	429	0-6 weeks
Northern Ireland	4,225	0-6 weeks

Source: HSC Trusts

(iii) The number of children currently waiting for an MRI scan at each HSC Trust, and the median waiting time band, is outlined in the table below:

HSC Trust	No. children currently waiting for MRI scan¹	Median waiting time band (weeks)
Belfast	332	6-9 weeks
Northern	11	0-6 weeks
South Eastern	17	0-6 weeks
Southern	72	0-6 weeks
Western	58	0-6 weeks
Northern Ireland	490	6-9 weeks

Source: HSC Trusts

1 Children are categorised as patients aged between 0 and 16 years of age, with adults categorised as patients over 16 years of age.

(iv) The provisions that are in place for children who require an MRI scan in each Trust are detailed in the table below:

HSC Trust	Provision in place for Children who require an MRI scan
Belfast	There are a total of 7 scanners within the Belfast Trust. The majority of children receive their scan within the Imaging Centre of the RVH as this is the only facility with a scanner equipped with the provision to administer General Anaesthetic (GA) scans to those children who require it.
Northern	Children as with adults may receive MRI scans at the Northern Trust's MRI scanner at Antrim Area Hospital. Children from 3 months old to 5 years old who are suitable for sedation can also be accommodated at this facility. However children requiring GA MRI scans are referred by their GP directly to the Belfast Trust as the Northern Trust does not provide a GA service.
South Eastern	The Trust provides a GA MRI scan session every 2 weeks. Three children are usually imaged during this session. The associated appointment slots are protected and the appointments are categorised as planned. The average waiting time for this examination type is usually 4 to 5 weeks.

HSC Trust	Provision in place for Children who require an MRI scan
Southern	The Trust's Radiology Department do not attempt to scan babies from 3 months to children of 6 years – they are referred to the Belfast Trust. The Southern Trust's Radiology Department are able to perform scans for neonates where they 'wrap and feed' so that the baby lies still for the scan. The Trust's Radiology Department do attempt to scan children from 6 years up to see if they will lie still enough for the scan, if not they are also referred to the Belfast Trust for GA scans, as the Southern Trust does not routinely give sedation to children.
Western	The Trust currently provides access for MRI scans for all patients in the catchment area regardless of age. In order to facilitate scanning of children who cannot co-operate the Trust offers an MRI GA service in Altnagelvin Hospital. GA scanning occurs on two mornings per month with additional sessions being created as and when required to stay within the 9 week waiting time standard. The Trust expects no child to have waited more than 9 weeks for an MRI scan by the end of March 2012.

- (v) The action being taken by each Trust to reduce the waiting time for an MRI scan is detailed in the table below:

HSC Trust	Action taken to reduce waiting time for an MRI scan
Belfast	There are four GA MRI scan lists provided per week. In addition to this, there is non-recurrent funding from the HSCB to perform additional general anaesthetic lists during weekends. This funding has been extended into quarter one of 2012/13.
Northern	All patients requiring an MRI scan receive their scan within the 9 week waiting time standard. Up to 30 additional unfunded sessions per month are required to meet current demand on the single Northern Trust Scanner. The Trust's Radiology Service has completed Investment Proposal Cases for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i 4 additional MRI weekend sessions; and ii. 2 breast and biopsy sessions per week The radiology department is finalising a major capital and revenue business case for a second MRI scanner in Antrim Hospital, including the provision of GA and Breast MRI services.
South Eastern	The Trust has implemented various initiatives in order to reduce outpatient waiting times. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i The implementation of 4 seamless working days each week (funded by non recurrent waiting list initiative). ii. The implementation of 4 to 5 evening sessions each week (funded by non recurrent waiting list initiative). iii. During Consultant annual leave/study leave, MRI radiographers undertake unsupervised sessions, working to approved protocols. iv. The Trust is currently in discussion with the HSCB regarding the possibility of expanding MRI capacity through a second scanner.
Southern	The Southern HSC Trust is taking no additional action to reduce the waiting time for an MRI scan as Trust end of year performance is anticipated to be within the 2011/12 9 week waiting time standard.

HSC Trust	Action taken to reduce waiting time for an MRI scan
Western	<p>There are a number of initiatives being taken forward by the Trust which may reduce MRI scan waiting times for children. These are:</p> <p>I. An extended working day on the scanner in Altnagelvin. This includes evenings, and Saturday and Sundays when required.</p> <p>II. The Trust has a contractual arrangement with an Independent Service provider to deliver MRI scanning in the Erne Hospital for the local population and also the population of the whole trust to minimise waiting times. This service will run to 15 June 2012.</p> <p>III. A new MRI scanner will be operational in the Southwest Acute Hospital from 21 June 2012.</p> <p>IV. The Trust is currently developing plans with the HSCB to install a second MRI scanner on the Altnagelvin site to deal with the increase in demand as well as ensure resilience of services</p>

Cancer Patients

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of cancer patients (i) who are receiving treatment; and (ii) who have died in each of the last three years, in the East Antrim area, broken down by electoral ward.

(AQW 9432/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) Table A below outlines the number of cancer patients¹ who received surgery, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy in the years 2007-2009 in East Antrim Assembly Area by Electoral Ward. For patient confidentiality reasons, the years have been grouped. The figures have been supplied by the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry and are the most up to date available.
- (ii) Table B below outlines the number of deaths registered due to cancer¹ in East Antrim Assembly Area for each year between 2008 and 2010 by Electoral Ward. The figures have been supplied by the General Registry's Office and relates to the year of registration of death.

1 The ICD10 codes used to classify cancer are C00-C97. For a listing and explanation of ICD-10 codes see International Classification of Diseases for Oncology, 3rd Edition, World Health Organisation, Geneva, 2000. For an explanation of ICD-10 codes see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ICD-10_codes.

TABLE A: THE NUMBER OF CANCER PATIENTS¹ WHO RECEIVED TREATMENT WITHIN 12 MONTHS OF DIAGNOSIS IN THE YEARS 2007-2009 IN EAST ANTRIM PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, BY ELECTORAL WARD

Electoral Ward Code	Electoral Ward Name	Number receiving treatment*
95HH01	Blackhead	31
95HH02	Bluefield	28
95HH03	Boneybefore	24
95HH04	Burleigh Hill	34
95HH05	Clipperstown	20
95HH06	Eden	41
95HH07	Gortalee	25
95HH08	Greenisland	25

Electoral Ward Code	Electoral Ward Name	Number receiving treatment*
95HH09	Killicrot	42
95HH10	Knockagh	24
95HH11	Love Lane	18
95HH12	Milebush	20
95HH13	Northland	15
95HH14	Sunnylands	29
95HH15	Victoria	37
95HH16	Whitehead	28
95HH17	Woodburn	30
95QQ01	Antiville	15
95QQ02	Ballycarry	19
95QQ03	Ballyloran	13
95QQ04	Blackcave	14
95QQ05	Carncastle	38
95QQ06	Carnlough	19
95QQ07	Central	34
95QQ08	Craigy Hill	26
95QQ09	Gardenmore	34
95QQ10	Glenarm	25
95QQ11	Glynn	19
95QQ12	Harbour	23
95QQ13	Island Magee	36
95QQ14	Kilwaughter	46
95QQ15	Town Parks	22
95UU08	Glemaan	13
95UU09	Glenariff	21
95UU10	Glendun	11
95WW19	Jordanstown	58
95WW21	Monkstown	40
95WW23	Rostulla	41

* Treatments consisted of surgery, radiotherapy, and chemotherapy

TABLE B: NUMBER OF REGISTERED DEATHS DUE TO CANCER¹ IN EAST ANTRIM ASSEMBLY AREA FOR EACH YEAR BETWEEN 2008 AND 2010 BY ELECTORAL WARD.

Ward Code	Ward Name	Registration Year		
		2008	2009	2010
95HH01	Blackhead	10	4	7
95HH02	Bluefield	2	2	4
95HH03	Boneybefore	4	6	5
95HH04	Burleigh Hill	1	5	6
95HH05	Clipperstown	6	4	5
95HH06	Eden	8	8	4
95HH07	Gortalee	6	3	4
95HH08	Greenisland	5	3	7
95HH09	Killycrot	7	10	5
95HH10	Knockagh	6	3	2
95HH11	Love Lane	4	4	8
95HH12	Milebush	3	4	8
95HH13	Northland	1	3	3
95HH14	Sunnylands	7	4	8
95HH15	Victoria	5	10	7
95HH16	Whitehead	5	2	13
95HH17	Woodburn	5	4	7
95QQ01	Antiville	5	6	2
95QQ02	Ballycarry	6	5	5
95QQ03	Ballyloran	6	3	3
95QQ04	Blackcave	5	7	8
95QQ05	Carncastle	8	2	7
95QQ06	Carnlough	5	6	5
95QQ07	Central	12	8	10
95QQ08	Craigy Hill	3	7	10
95QQ09	Gardenmore	6	12	11
95QQ10	Glenarm	5	2	6
95QQ11	Glynn	7	4	6
95QQ12	Harbour	8	3	7
95QQ13	Island Magee	8	8	4
95QQ14	Kilwaughter	10	2	6
95QQ15	Town Parks	1	6	3

Ward Code	Ward Name	Registration Year		
		2008	2009	2010
95UU08	Gleanaan	4	3	1
95UU09	Glenariff	2	4	3
95UU10	Glendun	3	3	4
95WW19	Jordanstown	8	9	13
95WW21	Monkstown	6	5	9
95WW23	Rostulla	10	11	6

UK Forestry Standard

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether all the bodies or organisations within his Department's remit which own woodland are compliant with the UK Forestry Standard, including his Department, any arm's-length body and any organisation to which his Department provides grant aid.

(AQW 9439/11-15)

Mr Poots: All HSC bodies that own areas of woodland apply appropriate land management for these woodland areas as outlined in my Department's guidance 'Land Management for the Conservation and Creation of Biodiversity in Health, Social Care and Public Safety (HSC&PS) Estates'. This guidance document broadly covers the same principles as the UK Forestry Standard. The update of the Departmental guidance will fully reflect all aspects of the UK Forestry Standard.

Human Papilloma Virus

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) where women can be tested for the Human Papilloma Virus; (ii) whether testing is available for all women; and (iii) whether his Department has any plans to include the test as part of the NI Cervical Screening Programme.

(AQW 9444/11-15)

Mr Poots: HPV testing is not currently part of the cervical screening programme in Northern Ireland, however, the Western HSC Trust is using HPV testing on a pilot basis as part of cervical screening. This will provide useful information on the implications of introducing such a test on a wider scale in Northern Ireland.

In the other Trust areas, HPV testing is one of a number of diagnostic tests that can be used for second line investigation of specific conditions. A decision whether to refer a sample from a patient for the HPV test will be made on the basis of the individual case and clinical judgement.

The potential role of HPV testing within the NI Cervical Screening Programme was considered in May 2011 by the Northern Ireland Screening Committee (NISC) which is chaired by the Chief Medical Officer. The Public Health Agency has been developing proposals and associated costs for introducing HPV testing into the Programme, and these were considered by NISC in January 2012. The UK National Screening Committee (NSC) is due to consider HPV testing at a meeting in April 2012 and NISC has recommended that the Department should await the NSC recommendations before decisions are taken on the introduction of HPV testing into the Northern Ireland Cervical Screening Programme.

Human Papilloma Virus

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women have been diagnosed and treated for the Human Papilloma Virus in each of the last five years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 9445/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of women diagnosed and treated for the Human Papilloma Virus is not available.

Information on a number of STI diagnoses is published by the Public Health Agency and can be found at the following link:

http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/HIV_and_STI_Report_12_2011.pdf

Human Papilloma Virus

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety under what circumstances a woman would be tested for the Human Papilloma Virus; and whether this varies across each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 9446/11-15)

Mr Poots: HPV testing is one of a number of diagnostic tests that can be used for second line investigation of specific conditions. A decision whether to refer a sample from a patient for a HPV test will be made on the basis of clinical judgement on the individual case. Such decisions will therefore vary from case to case and will not necessarily vary significantly between geographical areas.

HPV testing is not currently part of the cervical screening programme in Northern Ireland. The Western HSC Trust is using HPV testing as part of the cervical screening programme on a pilot basis. This will provide useful information on the implications of introducing such a test on a wider scale in Northern Ireland.

Cervical Screening Appointments

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women between the age of 25 and 49 are currently overdue their regular cervical screening appointment; and what is the average length of time since their last appointment.

(AQW 9450/11-15)

Mr Poots: Women who are eligible for cervical cancer screening in Northern Ireland are sent reminders when their next cervical screening test is due. It is then the responsibility of the woman to make an appointment with her GP or a family planning clinic to have the test carried out. The screening programme does not issue appointments.

Until January 2011, women aged 25 to 49 years were recommended to have a cervical screening test every 5 years. From January 2011, this recommendation has changed to every 3 years. It should be noted that it will take 3 years for this change in practice to be fully implemented, therefore current data relates to a five year screening interval.

Given this service delivery model, it is not technically accurate to estimate the number of women overdue a regular cervical screening appointment. It is possible, however, to present an estimate of the number of eligible women who have not undergone adequate cervical screening in Northern Ireland during the last five years.

These data are estimated based on coverage, for example, the percentage of eligible women with an adequate screening result recorded in last five years. The position at 31st October 2011, the most recent position for which robust data are available, are outlined in the table below.

Eligible Northern Ireland population aged 25 to 49 years	Number and percentage of eligible women with an adequate screening test result in the last 5 years	Number and percentage of eligible women with no adequate screening test result in the last 5 years
334,112	262,698 (78.6%)	71,414 (21.4%)

Source: Quality Assurance Reference Centre (Public Health Agency)

Information on the average length of time between cervical screening tests is not available.

Fire Stations

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which fire stations have undergone major refurbishments or have had capital new builds in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 9527/11-15)

Mr Poots: All Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Fire Stations meet the general requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. Each NIFRS workplace is subject to a 6-monthly health & safety audit and workplace audits are carried out by competent NIFRS personnel.

The table shows the total cost of the project against the year in which the project was completed. In some cases, the expenditure was incurred across more than one year.

Year	Project	Total Cost (£M's)
2011/12	Rathfriland FRS	0.8
2010/11	None	Nil
2009/10	None	Nil
2008/09	None	Nil
2007/08	Rathlin FRS	0.19
2006/07	None	Nil
2005/06	Enniskillen FRS	0.42
2004/05	Knock FRS	0.32
2004/05	Lisnaskea FRS	0.12
2003/04	None	Nil
2002/03	Glengormley District	0.25

The table shows the total cost of the project against the year in which the project was completed. In some cases, the expenditure was incurred across more than one year.

Year	Project	Total Cost (£M's)
2011/12	Omagh FRS	0.5
2010/11	Armagh FRS	2.719
2009/10	None	Nil
2008/09	None	Nil
2007/08	None	Nil

Year	Project	Total Cost (£M's)
2006/07	None	Nil
2005/06	None	Nil
2004/05	None	Nil
2003/04	None	Nil
2002/03	None	Nil

Note: The total cost of the Omagh project is £5.619m, of which £500k is in 2011/12.

Fire Stations: Health and Safety Standards

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which fire stations do not meet health and safety standards; and how often this is monitored.

(AQW 9528/11-15)

Mr Poots: All Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Fire Stations meet the general requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. Each NIFRS workplace is subject to a 6-monthly health & safety audit and workplace audits are carried out by competent NIFRS personnel.

The table shows the total cost of the project against the year in which the project was completed. In some cases, the expenditure was incurred across more than one year.

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Year	Project	Total Cost (£M's)
2007/08	None	Nil
2006/07	None	Nil
2005/06	None	Nil
2004/05	None	Nil
2003/04	None	Nil
2002/03	None	Nil

Note: The total cost of the Omagh project is £5.619m, of which £500k is in 2011/12.

Code of Dignity for Health Workers Caring for Elderly Patients

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the benefits of a signed Code of Dignity for health workers caring for elderly patients.

(AQW 9534/11-15)

Mr Poots: The concept of treating all patients, irrespective of their age, with dignity and respect at all times is integral to the training of all healthcare professionals. All registered professions have very clear Codes of Conduct built into the regulatory requirements, and all registrants must maintain those standards in order to remain on their professional register. I remain to be convinced about the value of a Code of Dignity for a specific group of patients over and above these arrangements.

Report by the Business Service Organisation into the Fire and Rescue Service

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he will have (i) within his own Department; and (ii) with the Assembly Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding the recent report by the Business Service Organisation into the Fire and Rescue Service.

(AQW 9551/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have requested the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service to submit the Business Service Organisation's report as soon as possible. Once I have had an opportunity to consider it, I shall ensure that the Health, Social Services and Public Safety Committee is briefed appropriately.

Need for an Air Ambulance

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the need for an air ambulance to cover the geographical northern half of the island of Ireland.

(AQW 9554/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can only comment about health and social care provision in Northern Ireland. I can confirm that, at my predecessor's request, the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) commissioned consultants to undertake a feasibility study on the need for and sustainability and affordability of an HEMS/air ambulance for Northern Ireland. The HSCB expects the consultants to present a final report in April this year after which it will be submitted to my Department to consider.

In the meantime, the Department's policy remains that investment to modernise ground ambulance services to provide the best possible response to people in life threatening situations must be a priority.

Once the HSCB feasibility study is available, I will assess its conclusions and decide if the Department's existing policy should be revised.

Day-Case Paediatric Surgery

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether a second anaesthetist is on site on every occasion when day-case paediatric surgery is carried out.

(AQW 9562/11-15)

Mr Poots: The deployment of medical staff within the Western HSC Trust is an operational matter for the Trust. I am advised by the Trust that following a clinical incident on 22nd February, it was decided that pending a full incident review two anaesthetists would be required on site to strengthen clinical support during paediatric surgery.

The Trust has advised that during paediatric surgery at Altnagelvin and Erne hospitals, 2 anaesthetists are on site and that paediatric surgery continues at the Tyrone County Hospital when a second anaesthetist is on site.

Hygiene Standards for Hospitals

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) who is responsible for setting the hygiene standards for each hospital; (ii) how these standards have been set; and (iii) who is responsible for checking the hygiene standards for each hospital.

(AQW 9563/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- i. Hygiene and environmental cleanliness standards are set regionally by the Department of Health Social, Services and Public Safety, (with the Minister having overall responsibility).
- ii. Environmental cleanliness standards have been set out in "Cleanliness Matters 2005-2008 - A Regional Strategy for Improving the Standard of Environmental Cleanliness in HSS Trusts". Hygiene standards, which include hand washing, patient linen, waste and sharps, patient equipment, general environment, hygiene facilities, organisational systems and governance, and hygiene practices, have been set out in "Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards" which was issued to Trusts in July 2011.
- iii. For environment cleanliness, daily checks and departmental (ward) audits are the responsibility of the ward manager. Managerial audits are the responsibility of a team consisting of senior management from cleaning services, estates and nursing. These may also include ward managers, infection control professionals and service users. Trust internal audit staff may also audit a sample of areas as part of the yearly Controls Assurance Standard process; compliance with the Controls assurance Standards is signed off by Trust Chief Executives. Ward managers are responsible for hygiene checks/audits; arrangements are in place to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely and effective manner as set out in the "Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards". The Regional Quality and Improvement Authority carry out announced or unannounced inspections of hygiene and cleanliness and use the Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Tool as part of those inspections.

Hygiene Standards in a Hospital

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the process of remediation, should it be discovered that hygiene standards in a hospital or on a ward have not been met.

(AQW 9564/11-15)

Mr Poots: In relation to environmental cleanliness, the DHSSPS "Cleanliness Matters 2005-2008 - A Regional Strategy for Improving the Standard of Environmental Cleanliness in HSS Trusts" sets out the timescales for rectifying cleaning problems identified in an audit as follows.

Priority	Timeframe for rectifying problem
A) Constant – Cleaning critical (very high risk and high risk functional areas)	Immediately, or as soon as is practically possible. Where domestic/cleaning staff are not on duty this should be the responsibility of other ward or department personnel and these responsibilities should be clearly set out and understood.
B) Frequent – Cleaning important and requires maintaining (significant risk functional areas).	0-3 hours for patient areas (to be rectified by daily scheduled cleaning service for non-patient areas)
C) Regular – On a less frequent scheduled basis, and as required between cleans (low risk functional areas)	0-48 hours

In relation to hygiene, which includes hand washing, patient linen, waste and sharps, patient equipment, general environment, hygiene facilities, organisational systems and governance, and hygiene practices, Trusts are required to have robust arrangements in place to ensure that issues identified during internal monitoring and audit are addressed in a timely and effective manner. These should include lines of accountability and escalation as set out in the DHSSPS “Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards” which were issued to Trusts in July 2011.

Hospital Hygiene Standards

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the standard process that is used to check hospital hygiene standards, including details of any microbiological tests that are routinely carried out as part of this process.

(AQW 9565/11-15)

Mr Poots: In relation to environmental cleanliness, daily checks and departmental (ward) audits are carried out by ward managers based on 49 elements (surfaces, articles or fixtures) which have been defined in DHSSPS “Cleanliness Matters 2005 -2008 - A Regional Strategy for Improving the Standard of Environmental Cleanliness in HSS Trusts”, using a risk-based approach which sets out the risk category of each area. Managerial audits are carried out by a team consisting of senior management from cleaning services, estates and nursing. These may also include ward managers, infection control professionals and service users. All areas should be covered at least once a year. Trust internal audit staff may also audit a sample of areas as part of the yearly Controls Assurance Standard process. Compliance with the Controls assurance Standards is signed off by Trust Chief Executives. Ward managers are responsible for hygiene checks/audits; arrangements are in place to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely and effective manner as set out in the “Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards” which were issued to Trusts in July 2011.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority also carry out announced or unannounced inspections of hygiene and cleanliness and use the Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Tool as part of those inspections.

Microbiological testing is not routinely carried out by Trusts but is carried out where an infection outbreak is suspected or confirmed.

New Builds for Fire Stations

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much has been spent on new builds for fire stations in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 9575/11-15)

Mr Poots: All Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) Fire Stations meet the general requirements of the Health & Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. Each NIFRS workplace is subject to a 6-monthly health & safety audit and workplace audits are carried out by competent NIFRS personnel.

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2005/06	None	Nil
2004/05	None	Nil
2003/04	None	Nil
2002/03	None	Nil

Note: The total cost of the Omagh project is £5.619m, of which £500k is in 2011/12.

Qualified Medical Staff

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for each of the last three years, to detail (a) the number of qualified medical staff who, following an application for a position as a doctor or a nurse in the Health Service, were unsuccessful; (b) the average number of vacancies for junior doctors and nurses; and (c) the average number of hours per month that junior doctors and

nurses have been required to work over and above their contracted hours; and (ii) the current number of vacancies for junior doctors and nurses; and (iii) the current number of qualified doctors and nurses who are seeking employment.

(AQW 9628/11-15)

i Mr Poots:

- a. The number of qualified medical staff who were unsuccessful in an application for a position as a doctor or nurse within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care over the last three years could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
- b. Information on the number of vacancies within Northern Ireland Health and Social Care is collected bi-annually (as at 31st March and 30th September) by means of a survey and is published on the Departmental web site at http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/workforce-statistics/stats-hsc.htm. The latest information available is 30th September 2011. The number of vacancies for doctors in training (Specialty Registrar and Foundation House Officer grades) and qualified nurses over the last three years is given below.

NUMBER OF CURRENT VACANCIES FOR DOCTORS IN TRAINING AND QUALIFIED NURSES – MARCH 2009 TO SEPTEMBER 2011

Date	Doctors in Training		Qualified Nurses	
	Headcount	WTE	Headcount	WTE
31st March 2009	50	50.0	214	200.0
30th September 2009	39	39.0	225	212.0
31st March 2010	41	41.0	158	146.4
30th September 2010	19	19.0	127	119.6
31st March 2011	28	27.5	250	237.6
30th September 2011	34	33.0	259	224.8

Source: Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Vacancy Survey

Notes:

WTE=Whole-time equivalent

A current vacancy is a post which at the survey date the organisation was trying to fill.

Medical Training grades are subject to high levels of turnover, therefore the vacancy levels can be subject to significant fluctuation throughout the year.

- c. The average number of hours per month that junior doctors and nurses have worked over and above their contracted hours could only be provided at disproportionate cost. Please note that extra hours are worked on a voluntary basis and not a required basis.
- ii. The latest information available (at 30th September 2011) on the number of vacancies is provided in the table above.
- iii. The number of qualified doctors and nurses who are seeking employment is not available.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Cases

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the adequacy of the facilities that are available to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder cases, given that the number of cases is likely to increase as a result of military personnel returning from active service.

(AQW 9648/11-15)

Mr Poots: A recent study found that Northern Ireland has the highest level of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among all comparable studies undertaken across the world, including other areas of conflict.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is recognised as an effective treatment for PTSD. A Strategy for the Development of Psychological Therapies Strategy was published by my Department in 2010 and has been underpinned by an additional £4.4m per annum.

While it is not possible to quantify separately the resources provided by Health and Social Care services for the treatment of PTSD, in the year 2010/11 year £228 million was spent on specialist services for people with mental health problems. This does not include expenditure on primary care services and voluntary organisations which may treat and support patients with post traumatic stress disorder.

The adequacy of the facilities that are available to deal with post-traumatic stress disorder cases is primarily for the Health & Social Care Board to address as part of its commissioning role.

The Armed Forces Healthcare protocol ensures that Armed Forces personnel, their families and Veterans receive equality of access to health and social care services, including PTSD services, across Northern Ireland.

Media Communications Protocols

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what media communications protocols exist between his Department and each of its arm's-length bodies; and to publish these protocols.

(AQW 9659/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no written media communications protocols between the Department of Health and each of its arm's length bodies. However, a number of planning, monitoring and alert arrangements are in place to support the flow of information in both directions.

Judicial Review Brought by Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an estimate of the cost of the appeal against the decision of the judicial review brought by Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland.

(AQW 9679/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not possible to estimate how much the appeal against the decision of the judicial review brought by Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland will cost. The overall costs of the judicial review, including the costs of the appeal, will not be determined until all the legal processes are concluded and liability for costs has been decided by the Court of Appeal.

Hygiene Audits of Hospitals

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he intends to take to ensure that hygiene audits of hospitals are completed on time and that the results are monitored so that issues are dealt with urgently.

(AQW 9715/11-15)

Mr Poots: The requirements for environmental cleanliness audits are defined in "Cleanliness Matters 2005-2008 – A Regional Strategy for Improving the Standard of Environmental Cleanliness in HSS Trusts". The responsibility for auditing and monitoring rests with the Health & Social Care Trusts. Trust internal audit staff may also audit a sample of areas as part of the yearly Controls Assurance Standard process. Compliance with the Controls Assurance Standard is signed off by Trust Chief Executives.

Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority Inspection

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will grant enforcement powers to the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety so that it can request a Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority inspection of a hospital when it receives a serious complaint regarding hospital hygiene.

(AQW 9717/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not legally within my gift to add to or amend the function or powers of statutory committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 places a duty of quality on all HSC Trusts. As Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety I can require the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority to conduct reviews, inspections and investigations into the management, provision or quality of services for which statutory bodies and service providers have responsibility, and to make a report to me.

I have already exercised these powers in the past and will continue to do so in the future where and when it is warranted.

Children's Emergency Department at The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the average waiting time for patients attending the Children's Emergency Department at The Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.

(AQW 9720/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the average waiting time for patients attending the Children's Emergency Department at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children is not currently available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost. However, information is available on the number of new and unplanned review attendances at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children according to specified time bands (Less than 4 hours, 4 to 12 hours and 12 hours or more), and is available to view or download from:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/stats_research/hospital-stats/emergency_care-3/emergency_care-monthly_waiting_times.htm

Provisional information for February 2012 indicates that 67.6% of new and unplanned attendances at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children were either treated and discharged home, or admitted within 4 hours, with 2 patients waiting over 12 hours.

Inspections/Investigations Carried out by the Public Health Agency into the Antrim Area Hospital

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the inspections/investigations carried out by the Public Health Agency into the Antrim Area Hospital in the last six months; (ii) the results or recommendations of any such inspections/investigations; and (iii) what follow-up actions, including management reviews, have been carried out and what conclusions have been communicated to the Northern Health and Social Services Trust and his Department.

(AQW 9721/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Public Health Agency has confirmed that it has not carried out any inspections/investigations into the Antrim Area Hospital in the last 6 months.

In January 2012 the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) asked the PHA to provide professional advice and support to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) for a 6 week period.

This support and assistance was provided by Mrs Mary Hinds, Director of Nursing at the PHA and had a particular focus on unscheduled care at Antrim Area Hospital.

Mrs Hinds has now concluded this work and is finalizing her report. I expect this report to be made available to the Department, the HSCB and the NHSCT shortly.

Antrim Area Hospital

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been kept in the Antrim Area Hospital since 1 January 2012 due to the absence of social support in the community; and how many nights, in total, the patients remained in hospital without medical necessity.

(AQW 9735/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not currently available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

My Department currently monitors information on delayed discharges from acute hospitals against the standard that:

‘90% of complex discharges from an acute hospital setting take place within 48 hours of the decision to discharge; all non-complex discharges from an acute hospital setting take place within six hours of being declared medically fit; and, no discharge from an acute hospital setting takes longer than seven days.’

A delayed discharge refers to any patient remaining in hospital after the time they were deemed medically fit for discharge.

During February 2012, 15.6% (229) of patients with complex care needs waited longer than 48 hours to be discharged from an acute hospital setting following a decision to discharge and 4.1% (618) of patients with non-complex care needs waited longer than 6 hours. Of these delays (both complex and non-complex), 112 waited longer than 7 days.

Transfer of Marion McGlinchey to Hydebank Wood

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he discussed the transfer of Marion McGlinchey to Hydebank Wood with the (i) Prison Service; and (ii) South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust prior to the transfer.

(AQW 9740/11-15)

Mr Poots: The decision to transfer a prisoner from one establishment to another is a matter for the NI Prison Service. In this case it was taken based upon the ongoing clinical assessment of Marian Price/McGlinchey’s needs.

I did not discuss this matter with either the NI Prison Service or the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has ensured that my Department is up to date on developments in this case.

Provision of Healthcare for Prisoners

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his role in the provision of healthcare for prisoners.

(AQW 9741/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has a duty to promote a system of healthcare designed to secure improvement in the physical and mental health and in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness, for all people in Northern Ireland, including those in prison.

In relation to prison healthcare services, this duty is discharged by the Health and Social Care Board and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, which, respectively, commission and provide healthcare services across the 3 prison establishments.

I am accountable to the Assembly for the manner in which this duty is discharged.

Loading Bay at Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the new £2 million loading bay at Altnagelvin Hospital is still not in use, given that patients, who are being taken to theatre and x-ray, have to pass the temporary loading bay which gives rise to health and safety issues.

(AQW 9746/11-15)

Mr Poots: The new loading bay was designed as part of a new Receipt and Distribution (R&D) facility for receipt of goods and onwards distribution. This R&D centre is located at some significant distance from the core hospital distribution lifts and requires additional resources to transfer goods over greater distances and to bring the centre fully into operation.

It is anticipated that the R&D centre, including the new loading bay, will be brought into use in the 2012/13 financial year.

Defibrillators

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many defibrillators are available to support clubs in the Foyle area.

(AQW 9835/11-15)

Mr Poots: Any organisation or individual may purchase a defibrillator. There is no requirement to register the purchase, possession or location of a defibrillator. It is therefore not known how many defibrillators are available to sports clubs in the Foyle area.

A pilot programme to train people to use defibrillators, which my Department is currently running, has had the additional benefit of raising awareness, in some sporting organisations and District Councils, of the location and accessibility of defibrillators purchased by their organisation and also the need for maintenance of the defibrillator and training of staff in their use.

Accident and Emergency Department at Belfast City Hospital

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in light of the temporary closure of the Accident and Emergency Department at Belfast City Hospital, due to senior staffing problems, what steps his Department is taking to recruit staff to allow the Department to reopen.

(AQW 9838/11-15)

Mr Poots: The temporary closure of the emergency department at the City Hospital, from 1 November 2011, was for safety reasons and in order to sustain high quality services for the population of Belfast.

These changes are operational matters which will apply until there is a full public consultation and a longer term strategic decision taken by me on the permanent configuration of such services for the greater Belfast area.

I will only take that decision after I have listened carefully to stakeholders in a process of effective engagement and open and transparent consultation

Department of Justice

The Accessories and Abettors Act 1861

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many convictions have been secured for aiding, abetting counselling or procuring the commission of drugs offences under the Accessories and Abettors Act 1861, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 9196/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Section 8 of the Accessories and Abettors Act 1861 provides that anyone who aids, abets, counsels or procures shall be liable to be tried, indicted and punished as a

principal offender. This might be recorded as a prosecution for the substantive offence or it might be recorded as aiding and abetting the substantive offence. It would not be the normal practice to quote the Accessories and Abettors Act 1861 in the charge or indictment.

It is not therefore possible to answer the question.

Capital Spend on Bangor Courthouse

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the level of capital spend on Bangor Courthouse in each of the last five years; and what this represents as a percentage of the total capital spend on courthouses during this period.

(AQW 9205/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below provides a breakdown of the capital spend on Bangor Courthouse in each of the last five years and the total capital spend on courthouses during the same period.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12 ¹	Total
Bangor	-	£11,825	£83,799	£42,510	£10,271	£148,405
Total capital spend on courthouses	£375,724	£1,927,878	£2,387,184	£3,827,089	£613,258	£9,131,133
% of total capital spend on Bangor	0%	0.6%	3.5%	1.1%	1.7%	1.6%

1 – Figures are for the 10 month period April 2011 to January 2012 inclusive.

Hospitality: Spend

Mr Allister asked Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 6361/11-15, whether the figures provided include the Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9215/11-15)

Mr Ford: Spend on hospitality by the arm's-length bodies of the Department of Justice (DOJ) was not included in the answer to AQW 6361/11-15. Hospitality expenditure for the arm's-length bodies and Agencies of the DOJ for each of the last five years is set out in the table below.

	2006/07 £	2007/08 £	2008/09 £	2009/10 £	2010/11 £
Arm's-length Bodies	17,068	18,660	25,688	33,665	13,344
Agencies	90,117	67,981	85,008	87,384	47,717

This excludes hospitality expenditure for the Northern Ireland Police Fund and Independent Monitoring Boards prior to 2009/10. These figures could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Fear of Crime in Local Communities

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what groups have benefited from the recently announced £800,000 of funding to address the fear of crime in local communities; and why his Department only invited applications from within the Department and its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 9226/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have provided a list of those organisations which benefited from the funding as an annex to this answer.

Under section 94 of the Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Department of Justice has the power to allocate funds to prevent crime and reduce the fear of crime and to support the recovery of criminal assets. Applications were invited from within the Department and from its agencies and arm's-length bodies as the funding became available relatively late in the year. Existing funding streams were used to ensure that governance and accountability structures were in place. I have asked officials to consider seeking applications from a wider field in 2012/13.

Independent Safeguard Authority

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each year since 2010 (i) the total number of barred individuals, as defined by the Independent Safeguard Authority and Access NI, who (a) have sought to undertake; or (b) have undertaken work with vulnerable groups; (ii) the number of employers who knowingly have employed barred individuals; (iii) the length of time each breach existed before being detected; and (iv) whether any penalties were imposed on the barred (a) employee; and (b) employer.

(AQW 9248/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since 2010 AccessNI has matched 11 applicants, who have been seeking work with children or vulnerable adults (regulated activity), with individuals on the lists of barred persons held by the Independent Safeguarding Authority as follow:

Year	Number of individuals matched
2010	6
2011	2
2012 (to date)	3

In relation to part (iv)(a) of the Question:

It is an offence under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 for anyone on these lists to seek employment in regulated activity. AccessNI passes details of all such suspected offences to PSNI. In relation to the eleven cases set out in the table above:

- Two cases were not referred to PSNI. In one the individual was seeking work in controlled activity rather than regulated activity. Those working in controlled activity can do so while barred. In the other case no application should have been made to AccessNI.
- Three cases had insufficient information to be referred by police for consideration of a prosecution as, for example, the applicant did not make the application him or herself, or he or she was applying for a position that he or she believed did not require work with children or vulnerable persons.
- One case was passed by police to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) which recommended no prosecution.
- One individual received a police caution, directed by PPS.
- Two cases are pending with PPS.
- Two cases are currently under police investigation.

With regard to questions (i)(a) and (b), (ii), (iii) and (iv)(b), AccessNI operates in accordance with Part V of the Police Act 1997 to provide criminal history information to organisations. It has no information on these aspects.

Release of Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what monitoring was in place following the release of Thomas Ward; and on how many occasions he breached his Sexual Offenders Prevention Order.
(AQW 9257/11-15)

Mr Ford: I cannot provide detail on any individual case.

Information in relation to multi agency public protection arrangements, including detail of risk assessment, risk management initiatives and court orders used in the risk management process are available on the PPANI website.

Breach of a SOPO is a criminal offence and a matter for the courts.

Jury Service

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice whether people who are called for Jury Service will receive financial compensation for the working days they have lost while they are required to be available for service, even if they are not selected to sit on the jury.
(AQW 9269/11-15)

Mr Ford: People who are called for jury service may claim for loss of earnings whether or not they are sworn on a jury.

A Juror Information Booklet is sent to people summonsed for jury service and explains details of allowances and the claims process.

Police and Community Safety Partnerships

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 8593/11-15, how many of the applicants in each constituency were successful at interview and were referred to the Policing Board as cleared for appointment.
(AQW 9280/11-15)

Mr Ford: The process of appointing independent members to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) is a restricted function of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

I have been informed by the Policing Board that the information you have requested is not yet available, however it can be provided to you once finalised.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice how many compensation claims registered with the Compensation Recovery Unit have involved plaintiffs in receipt of legal aid in each of the last ten years.
(AQW 9326/11-15)

Mr Ford: Legal aid is administered through the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission (the Commission). The Compensation Recovery Unit (CRU) provides compensators and customers with details of Social Security benefits paid in respect of accidents, injury or disease for which compensation is awarded. The personal data held by CRU is subject to Data Protection legislation and the Commission does not have access to these records. The Department therefore cannot provide details on who received legal aid in these cases.

Release of Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will order an investigation into the release of Thomas Ward, to include (i) how he presented himself as reformed to Probation Officers; (ii) whether any prison staff expressed concerns about his release; (iii) the monitoring that was in place following his release; (iv) how he was able to repeatedly breach his Sexual Offences Prevention Order

requirements; (v) why he was allowed to reside close to his victim following his release; and (vi) how he was able to commit a second sexual assault whilst under restrictions.

(AQW 9331/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is always regrettable when an offender chooses to reoffend despite best efforts on the part of agencies to reduce risk.

The Departmental guidance to agencies on public protection arrangements (PPANI), issued under Article 50 of the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008, requires the agencies to consider commissioning a serious case review where an individual whose risk of serious harm is being managed through the arrangements, is charged with a serious sexual or violent offence, or where a significant failure occurs in their risk management. The definition of a serious sexual offence is provided in the PPANI Manual of Practice. Both documents are available on the PPANI website.

I understand that the agencies have examined the matter and do not believe that there are sufficient issues in the PPANI process which need to be addressed through the serious case review procedure in the context of this case.

Pearson Review Team Report

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 8563/11-15, to outline the position in relation to unannounced inspections from external inspectors and agencies, which the 2009 Pearson Review Team Report raised as a matter of concern.

(AQW 9337/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) is the primary agency for the inspection of organisations within the criminal justice system, including prisons. CJINI undertakes both announced and unannounced inspections which, depending on the nature and scope of the inspection can involve other agencies.

Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether, prior to his release, Thomas Ward was deemed rehabilitated or reformed by the relevant authorities after serving a sentence for sexual assault in 2006; and on what date he was classed as fit for release.

(AQW 9418/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested constitutes sensitive personal data as defined at section 2 of the Data Protection Act 1998. The disclosure of such information is likely to breach the data subject's rights under the Act and would be incompatible with the Data Protection Principles. The information cannot therefore be provided as requested.

For those sentenced to a determinate sentence prior to the introduction of the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008 there was no discretion to release any individual other than on the earliest date of release as calculated in accordance with NIPS Sentence Calculation policy.

Marion McGlinchey: Accommodation and Facilities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 8561/11-15, who authorised the expenditure; and why the alterations were deemed necessary.

(AQW 9458/11-15)

Mr Ford: The alterations were authorised by Senior Management at Prison Service Headquarters. They were deemed necessary following a security and regime review.

Deliberate Damage to Prisons Caused by Inmates

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how much has been spent in each of the last five years in each prison facility, including Hydebank Young Offenders Centre and in juvenile justice units, on repair or replacements following deliberate damage caused by inmates.

(AQW 9460/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not possible to detail the cost of repair or replacements following deliberate damage caused by inmates except at disproportionate cost to the public purse.

Bench Warrants

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 8086/11-15, in which court division each of these warrants was issued.

(AQW 9462/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the breakdown sought.

Warrant Issued	Number Outstanding	County Court Division
1 to 5 years	2	Belfast
5 to 10 years	3	Antrim Armagh & South Down Craigavon

Parole Process

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what is the minimum length of time before a prisoner can re-apply for parole after a refusal.

(AQW 9472/11-15)

Mr Ford: The release arrangements for prisoners serving indeterminate or extended custodial sentences are set out in article 18(5)(b) of The Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. The minimum period is two years before a prisoner can re-apply for parole. However, on refusing an application, the Parole Commissioners indicate when the case should be referred to them again and the Northern Ireland Prison Service makes a referral in line with this timescale. Cases must be reconsidered within a maximum period of two years from refusal.

Proposed Courthouse Closures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 8726/11-15, to detail the travel arrangements of court users broken down by (i) defendants; (ii) legal representatives; (iii) press; (iv) witnesses; (v) police; and (vi) other court users.

(AQW 9533/11-15)

Mr Ford: The travel arrangements of court users attending Magherafelt and Strabane Courthouses as collected on the day of the 2011 Exit Survey are set out in the following tables:-

MAGHERAFELT

	Walk		Own Vehicle		Lift from friend/ family		Bus		Brought by PSNI/ Solicitor		Other		Don't know/ refusal/missing	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Applicant/ Claimant/ Plaintiff	0	0%	4	66.7%	1	16.7%	0	0%	0	0%	1	16.7%	0	0%
Defendant/ Respondent	1	5%	14	70%	3	15.0%	1	5%	1	5.0%	0	0%	0	0%
PSNI	0	0%	5	71.4%	0	0%	0	0%	1	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0%
PPS	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Legal Profession/ Representative	0	0%	19	95%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	5%
Prosecution Agency	0	0%	5	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Witness	0	0%	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Court Agent	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Family/Friend	4	28.6%	10	71%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Media	0	0%	2	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	1	14.3%	3	42.9%	1	14.3%	0	0%	0	0%	2	28.6%	0	0%
Member of Public	0	0%	1	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	6	6.8%	67	76.1%	7	8.0%	1	1.1%	2	2.3%	4	4.5%	1	1.1%

STRABANE

	Walk		Own Vehicle		Lift from friend/ family		Taxi		Bus		Brought by PSNI/ Solicitor		Don't know/ refusal/missing	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	Row %	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Applicant/ Claimant/ Plaintiff	2	15.4%	6	46.2%	5	38.5%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Defendant/ Respondent	2	12.5%	8	50%	2	12.5%	2	12.5%	1	6.3%	0	0%	1	6.3%
PSNI	1	25%	2	50%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	0	0%
Legal Profession/ Representative	1	20.0%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Witness	1	20%	4	80%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Victim	0	0%	3	100%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Family/Friend	1	3.6%	13	46.4%	9	32.1%	3	10.7%	1	3.6%	0	0%	1	3.6%
Total	8	10.8%	40	54.1%	16	21.6%	5	6.8%	2	2.7%	1	1.4%	2	2.7%

Note: Count refers to the number of people surveyed.

Occupy Belfast Movement

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many members of the Occupy Belfast movement have been (i) charged with offences; and (ii) convicted of an offence.

(AQW 9714/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI have no completed or ongoing investigations in relation to the Occupy Belfast Movement.

'Legal High' Ocean Snow

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to introduce legislation to outlaw the sale, supply and possession of the 'legal high' Ocean Snow, given that it was found to contain the Class A drug p-methoxymethylamphetamine.

(AQW 9762/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is the substance or substances in a product that are illegal, not the product name itself. If the product is found to contain

p-methoxymethylamphetamine (PMMA), which is a class A drug, it is already illegal and therefore no further legislation is required.

Department for Regional Development

Cars Marked for Sale Parked in Public Spaces

Mr Craig asked the Minister for Regional Development what action he is taking to address the issue of cars marked for sale being parked in public spaces.

(AQW 2812/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): As Minister with responsibility for roads, your question has been passed to me to reply. My Department's Roads Service has advised that offering of cars for sale on a public road is unlawful and constitutes an offence under Article 90 of The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. Offenders shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine.

While legal powers do exist, Roads Service's policy and procedures in relation to its response to the selling of vehicles along the road side are aimed at ensuring the safety of the public. Therefore, particular attention is given to matters concerning the obstructions of sightlines, footways etc. The objective of enforcement is not so much to secure convictions and impose penalties, as to remove the offending vehicle and or discourage other potential offenders.

Roads Service generally contacts car sellers on an informal basis and advises of the restrictions on offering vehicles for sale, as covered by the Roads Order. Such approaches are generally successful and it has not been necessary to divert any resources in pursuit of prosecution cases.

With regard to cars marked for sale being parked in public spaces my colleague, Nelson McCausland MLA, Minister for Social Development has advised that under the Street Trading Act (Northern Ireland) 2001, a person selling cars in a public place as a business is required to have a street trading licence issued by the district council in which the trading is taking place.

It is an offence for a person to engage in street trading without a licence issued by the council in which the trading is taking place, or to contravene the conditions of a licence in relation to the trading location or the days and times during which trading can take place. An authorised officer of a council or a police constable may seize goods and any receptacle or equipment being used in the course of the trading, and on summary conviction of any of the above offences, a court may impose a fine of up to £1000.

Beersbridge Road Bicycle Lane

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) why cars are permitted to park on the Beersbridge Road bicycle lane at all times except rush hour; (ii) for his assessment of the safety of cyclists using this bicycle lane when cars are parked along the route; (iii) why this bicycle lane begins and ends intermittently along the route; (iv) for his assessment of the value of this bicycle lane when cars are parked along the route; and (v) to outline any plans his Department has to prohibit cars from parking along this bicycle lane and to provide adequate car parking spaces elsewhere.

(AQW 9175/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the Beersbridge Road is subject to Clearway regulations, which prohibit parking during the morning and afternoon peak periods of traffic flow. Advisory cycle lanes are usually installed on roads with Clearway regulations, so that when traffic levels and the number of cyclists are at their highest, cyclists effectively have their own road space. This makes cycling safer, and at times of congestion, allows cyclists to make time savings over those using vehicular modes.

During times when traffic levels are at their lowest and the Clearway restrictions do not apply, it is legally permissible to park across cycle lanes. During these off-peak times, the levels of traffic and cyclists are at their lowest and it is therefore considered that cyclists can successfully share the remaining roads space. This arrangement is intended to provide the best balance between the needs of cyclists and the adjoining businesses/properties.

Whilst it would, in my view, be desirable to install a continuous cycle lane along Beersbridge Road, a balance has to be struck and the needs of all other road users, with the result that such an arrangement can be difficult to achieve. For example, the provision of a continuous cycle lane would have reduced the capacity of junctions and narrowed stretches of the Beersbridge Road, resulting in queues and delays, maybe up to twice those presently experienced.

The provision of a mandatory cycle lane, which would be marked by a solid white line, would provide a clear route for cyclists and would also restrict vehicles, subject to certain exceptions, from parking along the road. However, the introduction of waiting restrictions, or mandatory cycle lanes, can be a contentious issue and would generally lead to a displacement of parking, often to other locations that are less able to accommodate it, such as residential streets in the general vicinity. Therefore, Roads Service currently has no plans to further prohibit parking at the Beersbridge Road cycle lane, or to provide additional car parking spaces in this vicinity.

I can, however, advise that 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 Transportation Strategy, which will complement the existing National Cycle Network.

Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the consultation document 'Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland'; and whether we should have an independent target to increase cycling by 5 percent by 2020.

(AQW 9213/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The draft Active Travel Strategy 'Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland' aims to build upon the many programmes and initiatives that have already been successful – both in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. I want the Strategy, when agreed, to provide the foundations, over the longer term, to build a travel culture in which walking and cycling are seen as the natural choice for most of the journeys most of us make.

The public consultation on the draft Strategy ended on 9th March 2012. Informed by the views expressed by respondents, we are currently considering whether a specific target is required in respect of cycling. My Department will also draw up a detailed action plan to coordinate and monitor delivery and the impact of the actions through the current budget period, 2012 – 2015.

Total Spend on Hospitality

Mr Allister asked Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 8070/11-15, whether the figures provided include the Department's arm's-length bodies; and if not, to provide this information for each of the last five years.

(AQW 9246/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The response to AQW 8070/11-15 did not include the Department's arm's-length bodies. Expenditure on hospitality by the Department's arm's-length bodies, in each of the last five financial years, is provided below.

Year	NITHC £'000	NI Water £'000	Total Cost £'000
2006 / 07	27*	62**	89
2007 / 08	27*	63	90
2008 / 09	26*	67	93
2009 / 10	27	53	80
2010 / 11	24	18	42

* The NI Transport Holding Company (NITHC) is the parent company of Northern Ireland Railways, Metro and Ulsterbus all operating as Translink. Expenditure by the holding company is excluded as it transferred to a new accounting system in 2009/10, prior to which hospitality expenditure was not separately identifiable.

** NI Water costs for 2006/07 relate to its predecessor Water Service. .

For completeness Translink has advised that there may also be occasions when executives and senior management provide working lunches at meetings which are paid for and claimed back through expenses. These come out of payroll and to extract such detail would involve disproportionate cost.

Narrow Water Bridge Project

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his recent meetings with the Warrenpoint, Dundalk and Kilkeel Chambers of Commerce in relation to the Narrow Water Bridge Project. **(AQW 9255/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that I met with representatives of the Warrenpoint, Dundalk and Kilkeel Chambers of Commerce on Monday 27 February 2012, with no officials present, when the Narrow Water Bridge project was discussed. Those attending the meeting confirmed their support for the bridge linking the Mourne and the Cooley Peninsula, describing its primary benefit as addressing the under-performance of the tourist industry in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

I advised that, whilst I understood the benefits that the bridge might be expected to provide, I had responsibility for roads infrastructure and tourism did not fall within my remit. I also highlighted the substantial benefits the proposed Newry Southern Relief Road project would bring, if that scheme was progressed.

I confirmed that, I was not in a position to contribute any funds to the Narrow Water Bridge scheme. While I undertook to reflect on the detailed business case when it is provided, I also advised the delegation to ensure they made representations to other significant players in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Narrow Water Bridge Project

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on his recent meetings with Newry and Mourne District Council and Louth County Council in relation to the Narrow Water Bridge Project. **(AQW 9256/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that I met with a delegation from Newry and Mourne District Council and Louth County Council on Wednesday 22 February 2012 to discuss Narrow Water Bridge. I was advised that Planning Applications for the scheme, including a comprehensive Environmental Statement (Environmental Impact Statement), had been submitted in both jurisdictions.

The delegation advised the primary benefit of the bridge as enhancing the tourist potential of the area, particularly Cooley Peninsula and the Mourne. They also advised how it was envisaged the project's estimated cost of €17.369 million would be funded and confirmed that an application for EU Interreg funding had recently been submitted, with Louth County Council as the lead partner and having responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the bridge and associated costs.

I advised that, whilst I understood the benefits that the bridge might provide, I had responsibility for roads infrastructure and tourism did not fall within my remit. I also highlighted the substantial benefits the proposed Newry Southern Relief Road project would bring, if that scheme was progressed.

The delegation understood that as the proposed bridge did not improve or extend Northern Ireland's Strategic Road Network, it would therefore not attract a high priority compared to other schemes in my Department's current programme for road improvements.

I confirmed that I was not in a position to contribute any funds to the scheme. I undertook to reflect on the detailed business case when it became available and advised the delegation to ensure they made representations to other significant players in the Northern Ireland Executive.

Proposed A55 Knock Road Upgrade

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the outcome of the public inquiry into the proposed A55 Knock Road upgrade.

(AQW 9321/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has been considering the Inspector's report since March 2011. The report recommended that further detailed consideration be given to some engineering issues, however, this involved traffic surveys which could only be carried out during autumn 2011. Analysis of the information is now nearing completion.

My Department intends to release its response to the Inspector's recommendations by way of a Departmental Statement and the Inspector's report will be made available to the public at the same time.

It is intended to publish the Departmental Statement and the Inspector's report in spring 2012.

Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy.

(AQW 9329/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In the 2007 Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy it was suggested that an opportunity existed locally to integrate both cycling and walking in one Sustainable Transport Forum.

My Department, in keeping with its objective of supporting and promoting both cycling and walking, established an inter-sectoral Active Travel Forum which has tasked with providing recommendations for a draft Active Travel Strategy. A public consultation on the draft Strategy entitled 'Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland' concluded on 9th March 2012. The Strategy aims to build upon earlier initiatives such as the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy and develop a new travel culture in which walking and cycling are seen as the natural choice for most of the journeys most of us make.

Cost-Effectiveness of Away-Days and Team-Building Exercises

Mr S Anderson asked the Minister for Regional Development how his Department assesses the cost-effectiveness of away-days and team building exercises.

(AQW 9343/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: In my Department, away-days and team building events are generally arranged to support effective business planning and team working and in some cases involve working with a charity as part of a wider volunteering initiative.

Evaluations of interventions of this nature show that team events facilitate focussed and productive working and help enhance team effectiveness through improved communication, leadership and staff morale.

NSL: Contract

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development when the current contract with NSL is due to expire; and whether a decision has been made to continue with a similar scheme after this date.

(AQW 9353/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the current parking enforcement and car-park management services contract with NSL Services Group will expire in October 2012.

In order to ensure that services continue to be provided after that date, Roads Service is currently engaged with the Department of Finance and Personnel's Central Procurement Directorate, in a competitive tendering procurement project.

Booking Office Counter at the Ballymena Bus Station

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development how much it cost Translink to alter the Booking Office counter at the Ballymena bus station; and what use will be made of it in the future.

(AQW 9448/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink advise that works to revise ticket counter facilities at Ballymena bus station cost £6,118.

The alterations to the booking office counter at Ballymena Bus Station were part of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Project work which was carried out at all Translink operational locations. These works replaced an old counter which did not comply with DDA guidance. The new counter will allow less able bodied people to access all Translink services provided at 'Tickets and Information' in future.

New Buses for the North Down Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much his Department plans to invest in new buses for the North Down area over the next three years.

(AQW 9477/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that it has no specific plans to invest in new buses for the North Down area over the next three years.

The possibility of providing funding for Translink's overall Bus Replacement Programme will be kept under review. Additional funding may become available during the period of the budget.

Department for Social Development

Major Capital Building Programmes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's planned major capital building programmes in each of the next three years.

(AQW 8052/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The table below provides details of my Department's planned major capital building programmes in each of the next three years.

	2012 - 13 £k	2013 - 14 £k	2014 - 15 £k
Neighbourhood Renewal	6,000	8,000	8,000
Urban Development Grant	3,312	3,000	3,000
Public Realm	12,360	15,000	15,000
Modernisation Fund	2,000	0	0
Total	23,672	26,000	26,000

Double Glazing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the benefits of double glazing a house which does not have cavity wall insulation.

(AQW 9064/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The installation of cavity wall insulation provides an excellent investment for any home. It is the Housing Executive's policy to insulate empty cavity walls, most of which were carried out before 1990, although a small number may not have been insulated where a tenant refused permission or where the construction is of single skin. The benefits from double glazing a house are better if the house has already had cavity wall insulation installed or where single skin walls have external wall insulation. Energy efficient double glazing keeps a home warmer and quieter as well as reducing energy bills, lowering carbon emissions and improving comfort levels by reducing drafts and condensation. Actual costs and savings will differ depending upon dwelling type, size of window and materials used. The most commonly used material is uPVC which is long lasting and can be recycled. I have therefore ensured that the Programme for Government has as a priority to improve the thermal efficiency of Housing Executive stock and ensure full double glazing in its properties.

Welfare Reform

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development whether all staff who offer face-to-face advice in Jobs and Benefits Offices will retain their posts, given the problems that might be encountered by claimants as a result of the proposed Welfare Reform changes and the likely increase in the demand for advice.

(AQW 9173/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Social Security Agency is currently working with relevant impacted government organisations to consider how best to deliver a range of services through Jobs and Benefits offices as a result of the changes brought about by the reform of the welfare system.

Central to the planning for each of these changes is the need to ensure that customers continue to have access to the necessary advice and support channels they will need as these changes are introduced. This includes ensuring the right number of staff, with the right skills, in the right places to help meet the needs of our customers.

Work is also underway to consider the organisational and staffing considerations for each of these reform initiatives. Whilst it is too soon to determine the staffing requirement in detail, I can confirm that I remain committed to face to face services as one part of the benefit service which will be available following implementation of the changes proposed under Welfare Reform.

Alcohol Promotions

Mrs Overend asked the Minister for Social Development what plans he has in relation to his commitment to tackle the limiting of alcohol promotions.

(AQW 9271/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As Minister responsible for Liquor Licensing I have been concerned for some time about how alcohol is promoted and marketed and in particular promotions involving very cheap alcohol. The Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 gave my Department the powers to ban irresponsible drink promotions. Therefore, I have decided to make regulations to ban irresponsible alcohol promotions such as, "All you can drink for £20" and supermarkets offering 8 bottles of beer/cider for the price of 6. A public consultation was launched on 12 March on the detail of these regulations.

My Department is currently working with various drinks trade representatives on developing a code of practice which seeks to promote best practice and to prevent alcohol being irresponsibly promoted, served or sold. The code will seek to end irresponsible promotions which encourage excessive consumption of alcohol, such as serving alcohol in large measures, promotions encouraging specific groups to drink for free or at a discount, "Half price drinks for under 25s", discount night for students, "Buy one get one free".

I intend to make compliance with the code a condition of holding a liquor licence.

Gnangara, Enniskillen: Referrals

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of referrals to Gnangara, Enniskillen, since its opening, which were made by (i) self or family; (ii) care management; (iii) Community Social Work Teams; (iv) other elements of the Health Service; and (v) the Housing Executive.

(AQW 9293/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested. However, Fold Group has advised me that referrals to Gnangara, Enniskillen were as follows;

- one person self referred for supported accommodation;
- 17 referrals were made by Care Management /Community Social Work Teams
- three referrals for the supported accommodation bungalows have been received through Western Health and Social Care Trust Community Teams / Care Management and,
- there have been no direct referrals from the Housing Executive

Saint Vincent de Paul

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to outline the role that Saint Vincent de Paul plays in tackling fuel poverty; (ii) for his assessment of its contribution to tackling fuel poverty; and (iii) how his Department intends to work with charitable organisations, such as Saint Vincent de Paul, to ensure that resources are best targeted to meet objective need.

(AQW 9295/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development's new Fuel Poverty Strategy "Warmer Healthier Homes" gave a commitment to build partnerships to tackle fuel poverty and to work with partners to promote Oil Stamp Savings Schemes. Saint Vincent de Paul played a key role in the Fuel Poverty Advisory Group working in partnership with other government departments and colleagues from

the voluntary sector. The Society also played a leading role in the development of Oil Stamp Saving Schemes. In relation to the question relating to working with charitable organisations the Department for Social Development has supported and will continue to support many charitable organisations in the Voluntary and Community sector through a range of funding programmes.

Funding Energy Assessors

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development what consideration his Department has given to funding energy assessors to examine domestic or commercial properties, to identify energy inefficiencies and save consumers money.

(AQW 9315/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Improving domestic energy efficiency is a key part of my Department's new Fuel Poverty strategy "Warmer Healthier Homes" which was launched in April 2011. The strategy is to take forward a pilot area based approach to tackling fuel poverty and this pilot scheme is due to commence later this year. I expect the pilot scheme to include an assessment of the energy efficiency of each home in the target areas and this will be carried out by a trained energy assessor.

On the commercial side, Invest NI can provide project management support which can include for example the assessment of energy, water and materials use with a view to identifying and prioritising projects that will reduce the cost of consumption. Invest NI also provides funding for an interest free Energy Efficiency Loan Fund managed and operated by the Carbon Trust. This fund provides unsecured business loans from £3,000 to £400,000 to help Northern Ireland businesses purchase energy saving equipment. The anticipated energy savings accrued in any particular project funded through the loan fund provide the means to repay the loan. Since the launch of the fund in 2003 over £18 million in interest free loans have been offered to over 330 Northern Ireland businesses, and leveraged an additional £20 million of private sector investment.

Application for a Crisis Loan

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the criteria used when considering an application for a crisis loan.

(AQW 9322/11-15)

Mr McCausland: If a person needs financial help with an emergency or disaster they may be able to get a crisis loan. The loans are decided on an individual basis and will have to be paid back, but are not subject to interest charges. The criteria used when considering an application for a crisis loan are – the person must: be aged 16 or over; not have enough money to meet their (or their family's) immediate short term needs in an emergency or as the result of a disaster; and without the loan there will be a serious damage or risk to their (or their family's) health or safety.

Social Housing Bungalows

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the number of social housing bungalows with (i) 1; and (ii) 2 bedrooms, broken down by council area.

(AQW 9323/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate these details by district council area. However, table 1 below details the number of Housing Executive bungalows with one or two bedrooms, by District Office area: -

TABLE 1: HOUSING EXECUTIVE BUNGALOWS (WITH ONE AND TWO BEDROOMS):

Housing Executive District Office	1 Bedroom Bungalows	2 Bedroom Bungalows
Antrim	125	197
Armagh	161	496
Ballycastle	109	141
Ballymena	162	308
Ballymoney	65	249
Banbridge	183	371
Bangor	209	437
Carrickfergus	146	274
Castlereagh	196	414
Coleraine	162	326
Collon Terrace	94	296
Cookstown	25	160
Downpatrick	141	613
Dungannon	141	266
East Belfast	78	170
Fermanagh	97	697
Larne	102	93
Limavady	114	291
Lisburn Antrim St	282	610
Lisburn Dairyfarm	79	187
Lurgan Brownlow	148	420
Magherafelt	15	384
Newry	313	597
Newtownabbey 1	89	149
Newtownabbey 2	229	144
Newtownards	224	778
North Belfast	84	388
Omagh	103	329
Portadown	240	159
Shankill	49	285
South Belfast	85	208
Strabane	74	524
Waterloo Place	108	104
Waterside	77	463
West Belfast	153	185
Total	4,662	11,713

Table 2 below details the number of Housing Associations bungalows with one and two bedrooms, broken down by council area: -

TABLE 2: HOUSING ASSOCIATION BUNGALOWS (WITH ONE AND TWO BEDROOMS): -

Council Area	1 Bed Bungalows	2 Bed Bungalows
Antrim Borough Council	10	29
Ards Borough Council	44	72
Armagh City and District Council	0	36
Ballymena Borough Council	31	52
Ballymoney Borough Council	9	24
Banbridge District Council	7	12
Belfast City Council	344	765
Carrickfergus Borough Council	47	78
Castlereagh Borough Council	3	61
Coleraine Borough Council	22	53
Cookstown District Council	1	3
Craigavon Borough Council	61	76
Derry City Council	146	263
Down District Council	0	33
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council	0	20
Fermanagh District Council	38	98
Larne Borough Council	50	3
Limavady Borough Council	0	41
Lisburn City Council	52	219
Magherafelt District Council	33	15
Moyle District Council	15	27
Newry & Mourne District Council	17	71
Newtownabbey Borough Council	44	42
North Down Borough Council	82	76
Omagh District Council	8	37
Strabane District Council	43	85
Total	1107	2291

The Information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Compensation Recovery Unit

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development how much public money has been recouped by the Compensation Recovery Unit from cases where the plaintiff was in receipt of legal aid, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 9327/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Compensation Recovery Unit are not informed if legal aid has been applied for therefore this information is not held on any Department for Social Development Systems and cannot be obtained.

Rural Dwellers Living in Poverty

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 7987 11-15, why figures are not available for the total number of individuals in the Rural East area who are living in relative low income.

(AQW 9345/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The total number of individuals in the Rural East who are living in relative low income is not available for 2008/09 due to small sample sizes. The relative low income figures are produced from the Family Resources Survey, which has a sample size of around 1900 households. This sample size is sufficient to allow overall Northern Ireland analysis, but when broken down into smaller geographical areas, some areas may not have sufficient samples to allow us to produce meaningful results for total numbers in low income.

During the year 2008/09 the number and percentage of individuals living below the relative poverty line for rural areas is presented in Table 1. The results are produced using the Family Resources Survey datasets for Northern Ireland, and the Urban Rural Report for Northern Ireland.

TABLE 1:

2008/09	Before Housing Costs (BHC)		After Housing Costs (AHC)	
	Number of Individuals in relative low income	Percentage of Individuals in relative low income	Number of Individuals in relative low income	Percentage of Individuals in relative low income
Rural East	..	19	..	21
Rural West	130,400	27	123,800	26
All Rural	190,500	24	189,000	24
Northern Ireland	372,400	21	366,500	21

The Information provided is an Official Statistic. The Production and dissemination of all such Statistics is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Kitchen Replacement Schemes

Mr Moutray asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQO 1327/11-15, to detail the level of investment in each of the kitchen replacement schemes planned for the (i) Craigavon; and (ii) Banbridge areas.

(AQW 9346/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The tables below provide details of the level of investment in kitchen replacement schemes planned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for the Craigavon and Banbridge areas.

TABLE 1 SHOWS PLANNED INVESTMENT IN KITCHEN REPLACEMENT SCHEMES IN CRAIGAVON

Craigavon	Estimated Cost
2011/12	
Ballyoran Estate, Portadown	£456,000
2012/13	
Hospital Estate, Lurgan	£413,000
Drumbeg Estate, Brownlow	£456,000
Redmanville, Portadown	£329,000

TABLE 2 SHOWS PLANNED INVESTMENT IN KITCHEN REPLACEMENT SCHEMES IN BANBRIDGE

Banbridge	Estimated Cost
2011/12	
Primrose Estate, Banbridge	£309,000
2012/13	
Reilly Street, Banbridge	£434,000

All schemes are dependent on available finance.

Regional Infrastructure Programme

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department has taken to advertise the Regional Infrastructure Programme.

(AQW 9367/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Following a review of the Regional Infrastructure Programme, new arrangements to support the voluntary and community sector (VCS) at a regional level across Northern Ireland are due to go live in October 2012.

To publicise this change I can confirm that adverts were placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter on 8 February 2012 seeking expressions of interest for a strategic partner from the VCS to deliver the new Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP) aimed at providing generic support to the sector.

Adverts in respect of regional thematic support for faith sector engagement, voluntary generalist advice and women in disadvantaged areas were placed in Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter on 15 February.

A further advert in respect of regional support for volunteering will be placed in the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and News Letter on Thursday 15 March.

Housing Benefit

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Social Development why the Housing Executive continues to pay Housing Benefit directly to landlords who have not provided a Tenancy Agreement or a rent book to their tenants.

(AQW 9376/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The payment of Housing Benefit requires confirmation of a liability on the part of the tenant to make payments to his/her landlord. The manner in which this confirmation is determined is not specified in the Housing Benefit legislation. The normal method of doing this is by way of a

Certificate of Occupation completed by the landlord and a further section of the application form completed by the tenant. In some cases, the provision of a copy of the tenancy agreement and rent book is an acceptable alternative but not a requirement under the regulations. In the majority of cases, the Housing Executive would not be aware of whether or not such documents have been provided by the landlord and consequently, this would not be a factor in the decision on the payment of Housing Benefit.

For the Housing Executive to withhold payment to a landlord, it would need to determine that the landlord is not a "fit and proper" person to receive payments of Housing Benefit. To establish that this is the case, it would be necessary to show that the landlord has engaged in undesirable activity in relation to Housing Benefit, for example, a refusal to repay an overpayment or confirmed fraudulent activity. Whether or not a landlord has complied with the terms of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006, (which covers the issuing of a tenancy agreement and rent book) is not something that can be taken into account in arriving at such a determination. Responsibility for the enforcement of the terms and conditions of the Private Tenancies (Northern Ireland) Order 2006 rests with District Councils and not the Housing Executive.

Social Housing in the Strabane District Council Area

Ms Boyle asked the Minister for Social Development what steps he is taking to provide additional social housing in the Strabane District Council area to address the need as evidenced by the increase in waiting list applicants from 551 in June 2010 to 652 in June 2011, and the increase in the number of applicants in housing stress from 194 in June 2010 to 240 in June 2011.

(AQW 9382/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In Strabane, the majority of newly arising need for social housing is met through re lets of existing stock. I am however awaiting a complete version of the draft 3 year new build programme and as part of the approval process I will further interrogate the figures to make sure that housing need in Strabane, as well as every other part of Northern Ireland, is being adequately addressed.

Housing Executive Properties

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development (i) pursuant to AQW 86/11-15 and AQW 201/11-15, what is the asset value of (a) the 12 Housing Executive flats in Rathgill Park, Bangor; and (b) the pensioner bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate, Bangor, which require multi-element improvements and are being considered for transfer to a housing association; and (ii) what was the asset value, at the time of transfer, of the 55 houses in Rinmore, Co Londonderry that were transferred from the Housing Executive to Apex Housing.

(AQW 9403/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I can confirm that the flats in Rathgill Park and the bungalows in Bloomfield Estate were last valued on 31 March 2011. Their values at that time were as follows:

- Rathgill Park flats in Bangor were valued at approximately £376,200;
- The bungalows in the Bloomfield Estate were valued at £2,023,500;
- The asset value of the 55 properties at Rinmore, Co Londonderry was £2,334,306 and the date of transfer to Apex Housing was 31 October 2011.

Changes to the Welfare System

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development what plans his Department has to revise its communications strategy to take account of the need to inform people more effectively about the upcoming changes to the welfare system.

(AQW 9406/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department recognises how important it is to inform people about the upcoming changes to the welfare system. A Welfare Reform Stakeholder Engagement and Communications

Strategy has been developed which includes a Communications Plan, the aim of which is to send clear, timely and relevant messages to all of those people that may be affected by upcoming changes to the welfare system. This strategy is being kept under review to ensure that the messages which are being conveyed are targeted at the right people and that appropriate messages are being issued on the changes to the welfare system.

Changes to the Welfare System

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development what discussions he or his officials have had with advice organisations about the upcoming changes to the welfare system.

(AQW 9407/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has, to date, engaged with in excess of 80 organisations (including advice organisations), through a range of activities such as workshops, project led presentations and speeches, regarding all aspects of the changes to the welfare system. This dialogue has been both general and specific in nature and in all cases has been tailored to the needs of the particular audience.

My Department has in place a Communications plan for Welfare Reform which outlines ongoing engagement activities with advice organisations throughout the passage of the Northern Ireland Welfare Reform Bill through the Assembly. This plan will be kept under constant review to ensure communication activities remain timely and relevant.

Changes to the Welfare System

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development to provide information on the preparedness of third sector organisations, with offices on Northern Ireland, for the upcoming changes to the welfare system.

(AQW 9408/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I cannot comment on the preparedness of third sector organisations that have offices in Northern Ireland for the upcoming changes to the welfare system. However, I can affirm my Department's commitment to stakeholder engagement (AQW 9407/11-15 refers), the aim of which is to send clear, timely and relevant messages to people that may be affected by the upcoming changes to the welfare system and to organisations who provide advice on welfare services.

2010 Craigavon Integrated Development Framework

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 8455/11-15 (i) to detail the infrastructure improvements required in Portadown to allow a development brief to be issued; and (ii) to outline the timeframe and methodology for the completion of the infrastructure projects.

(AQW 9510/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department appointed consultants in June 2010 to undertake a viability study on issuing a development brief for the Portadown Gateway sites. The study concluded that proposals to develop the more attractive sites, primarily publicly owned car parks, would be likely to trigger the need for substantial infrastructure improvements as a condition of securing planning permission.

- (i) The main infrastructure improvements identified were for improved access at West Street on to the Northway and the strengthening of the Shillington Bridge. In addition, the need to replace existing car park provision and supplement that proposed for additional developments would need to be addressed, potentially in a multi-storey facility.
- (ii) Currently, the infrastructure improvements do not appear on any government programme of work. DSD are working closely with Craigavon Borough Council to explore new mechanisms, such as Accelerated Development Zones, which might help to deliver the required infrastructure improvements. Workshops to explore the potential of this approach have been arranged for April 2012.

Empty Homes

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has considered the creation of a scheme to bring empty homes back into use, similar to the UK Empty Homes Scheme.

(AQW 9530/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There is no single scheme for dealing with empty homes in the UK. In Great Britain each jurisdiction and indeed each local authority area uses a variety of interventions, ranging from advice and guidance, through innovative leasing arrangements, to enforcement action, to bring homes back into use and to stop empty houses becoming sources of blight.

The reasons empty homes are left vacant are varied and sometimes complex. However, I am determined that in Northern Ireland all possible interventions are tested so that those that work best can be put into practice. This will ensure that any scope to bring empty homes back into use is maximised.

I have therefore tasked the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to test the effectiveness and cost of various interventions in two pilot areas in Belfast.

The results from the pilots will inform a revised empty homes action plan for Northern Ireland.

Board of the Housing Executive

Ms Ritchie asked the Minister for Social Development how many times he has met with the Board of the Housing Executive since May 2011; and what subjects were discussed.

(AQW 9536/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Whilst I have met the Chairman and other individual members of the Board at various meetings, I have formally met the Board of the Housing Executive once on the 29 February 2012 about the fundamental review of the NIHE and my housing priorities.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has carried out an impact assessment on the proposals contained within the Welfare Reform Bill; and if so, to detail the outcome for each constituency.

(AQW 9561/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the 1998 Act) requires Government Departments to promote equality of opportunity. In order to comply with this requirement and in accordance with Schedule 9 to the 1998 Act my Department carried out an Equality Impact Assessment of the proposals contained in the draft Welfare Reform Bill and issued the findings for consultation on 5 September 2011.

The responses to the consultation are currently subject to Departmental consideration and a completed Equality Impact Assessment will be issued prior to the introduction of the Bill.

Data is not collected on a constituency basis.

Social Housing Development Programme 2011-15

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Social Housing Development Programme 2011-15.

(AQW 9680/11-15)

Mr McCausland: While I am now in receipt of a draft Social Housing Development Programme I am disappointed it remains incomplete and is simply not yet approvable. This is unacceptable and I have advised the Housing Executive of this.

Further meetings have been arranged and I remain hopeful of publishing the new 3 year programme in April/May, subject to the Housing Executive completing the necessary work to allow me to make a proper assessment.

Employment and Support Allowance Claimants

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development how many Employment and Support Allowance claimants in the Foyle constituency have appealed against a decision made as a result of a Work Capability Assessment in the last six months.

(AQW 9681/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is not available by Parliamentary constituency.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Laptops in the Assembly Chamber

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission whether laptops can now be accommodated in the Assembly Chamber.

(AQW 9141/11-15)

Mr McElduff (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): All desks used by MLAs in the Assembly Chamber are fitted with electrical sockets which could allow laptops to be powered during plenary meetings. However, the Committee on Procedures is currently considering the use of electronic devices in the Chamber. If it is recommended that laptops may be used in the Chamber, the IS Office will consider how best to facilitate such use.

MLA Salaries

Mr Beggs asked the Assembly Commission whether a salary is paid to an MLA who receives an MP's salary; and whether any Member, who is also an MP has declined the MLA salary.

(AQW 9830/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): Provision for Members' salaries is contained in the Northern Ireland Assembly (Members' Salaries) Determination 2000 and is subject to the provisions of section 47 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (as amended). If an MLA receives a salary as an MP, no salary as a Member of the Assembly is payable. Any salary payable to the MLA by virtue of holding an Office within the Assembly (for example, a Minister or Chairperson of a Committee) remains in payment.

From 1 April 2012, Members' salaries will be paid in accordance with the Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Salaries, Allowances, Expenses and Pensions Determination as issued by the Independent Financial Review Panel. The provisions of the 2012 Determination mirror those in place under the 2000 Determination.

Given that no salary as a Member is payable to an MLA who is also an MP, such a Member is not in a position to decline his or her MLA salary.

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 23 March 2012

(AQW 5798/11-15)

- (i) No local council staff who had taken redundancy packages has been re-employed by the same council in the last three financial years.
- (ii) Three local council staff who had taken retirement packages has been re-employed by the same council in the last three financial years.

Please note that these figures refer to staff being re-employed by the same council as it is not possible to verify whether they have been re-employed by other public bodies.

(AQW 3975/11-15)

I am writing to correct an error contained in my answer dated 14 November to AQW3975/11-15 and my subsequent response provided you on 31 January, which corrected the original answer.

The answer provided in AQW 3975/11-15, mistakenly, included the cost of £5675 for transporting Robert Black to Northern Ireland from England on 8 September 2011. However, it has now come to light that the total cost of the flight amounted to £4,643.10. This inaccuracy was largely due to a miscalculation in the net amount of costs subject to Value Added Tax (VAT).

The corrected details are:

Non Vatable Net:	£4,563.10
Vatable Net:	£66.67
Total Net:	£4,629.77
VAT:	£13.33
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The cost is therefore reduced by £1031.90.

I am copying this letter to the Editor of Debates and the Business Office.

Please accept my apology for this error.

Mr Attwood: I believe in quotas for female candidates and I am pleased that there has been considerable support for the proposal.

As I have said previously, I am awaiting legal advice on where the legislative competency for the introduction of a quota resides, before considering this matter further.



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