

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 May 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

100th Anniversary of the Ulster Covenant

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in keeping with the precedent of the 50th anniversary of the Ulster Covenant, whether any discussions have been held about marking the 100th anniversary with a public holiday.

(AQW 8411/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): At its meeting on 11 March, the Executive agreed its approach to commemorative anniversaries. A framework within which to consider these occasions was agreed and the Ministers for Culture, Arts and Leisure and Enterprise, Trade and Investment will take the lead in organising events around them.

No discussions have taken place about marking the 100th anniversary of the Ulster Covenant with a public holiday.

Youth Unemployment

Mr D McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what funding their Department has allocated to address youth unemployment to ensure that it does not have a destabilising effect on the political situation.

(AQW 9320/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Executive is considering a Northern Ireland specific approach to tackling youth unemployment. The package proposed by the Minister for Employment and Learning seeks to link economic and social policy in a way that will help to rebuild and rebalance the local economy while continuing to address the social consequences of unemployment among our young people.

OFMDFM has not specifically allocated funding to address youth unemployment. However, addressing the range of issues that can lead to the disengagement of our young people will be a key component of the CSI strategy as it develops, and the finalised strategy will inform any additional actions required in respect of the allocation of resources and funding.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will give a commitment that Freedom of Information requests will remain accessible and free to all as under existing guidelines.

(AQO 1779/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We will abide by the fees regulations made under the Freedom of Information Act, which presently state that requests should be processed without any charge unless the cost involved exceeds £600.

Funding Renewal Process for Community Groups

Mr Hilditch asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the funding renewal process for community groups; and the length of time it takes to reach a final decision on each funding application.

(AQW 10835/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Due process is followed for all applications to funding schemes operated by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to ensure that all funding decisions are subject to robust scrutiny in line with guidance on public expenditure.

We acknowledge that this can impact on the duration of the decision-making process and in recognition of this, are currently considering proposals for a funding scheme which will support projects with a practical impact on departmental priorities particularly in relation to equality of opportunity and good relations.

Social Investment Fund

Mr D McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the Social Investment Fund will become operational.

(AQO 1788/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following the consultation on the proposed operation of the Social Investment Fund, we published a report, on 16 March, which outlines the key issues raised by respondents.

The findings from the report have been extremely useful in helping to inform our consideration of the final operation of the Fund, something which we must get right if the Programme is to have the desired and much needed impact in communities here. We are intending to bring an Executive paper on final policy proposals to colleagues shortly.

We have been continuing to work on the necessary business case and procedural requirements while making preparations for the establishment of delivery mechanisms.

Immigration

Mr McKay asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will make representations to the British Government in relation to the Border Agency's refusal to respond to the concerns of MLAs on matters relating to immigration.

(AQW 11001/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Home Office reviewed its policy on correspondence from Members of the Devolved Legislations in 2010. We wrote at that time to stress the ongoing concerns and difficulties faced by MLAs and their constituents and to ask that the review considered alternative ways that MLAs could make representations on behalf of individual constituents. However, the policy was not amended.

We will continue to make representations to the UK Border Agency and the Home Office regarding the inappropriateness of the current policy and to register our concerns about the negative impact that this policy has on vulnerable sections of our minority ethnic communities.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Agricultural Output

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department plans to address the need for greater volumes of agricultural output to meet the increasing demand.

(AQW 10720/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Agricultural output of commodities such as milk and poultry has increased significantly in the north of Ireland over recent decades. I would hope that market conditions, such as increased demand for food associated with a rising world population, will favour a continuation of these trends in the years ahead. The local industry should position itself to make the most of the opportunities that arise from this increased demand.

The DETI Minister and I have recently established the Agri-Food Strategy Board which has been tasked with developing a longer term strategy for the sector. It is my view that any strategy moving forward is likely to include export led growth as one of its key drivers and it is important that we have the raw materials to support such growth.

Of course, it is for the sector to set its own growth targets within the strategy but government can play a supporting role by funding appropriate education, training, R&D and investment programmes. We will want to consider with the new Agri-Food Strategy Board how to ensure current and future support available to the industry is effective and properly targeted.

Agri-Food Industry

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how she plans to improve the value added to the economy by the Agri-Food industry.

(AQW 10723/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Improving the value added by the agri-food sector to the economy will no doubt be one of the issues considered by the new Agri-Food Strategy Board (AFSB) in developing a longer term strategy for the sector. The DETI Minister and I are in the process of appointing members to the AFSB under the chairmanship of Tony O'Neill, and I expect the Board to be up and running in the very near future.

It should also be remembered that my Department already provides significant support to assist the competitiveness and profitability of the sector.

For example, since 2008, my Department has committed £12.5million to 50 projects under the Processing & Marketing Grant Scheme (PMG) which helps the sector invest in improvements to factory premises and in the purchase of new plant and equipment.

Through our Research Challenge Fund, we have secured total investment to date of some £1m in industry-led, collaborative R&D projects and hope to announce further successful projects later this year. We also fund a range of research at the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute to support and improve efficiency, profitability and long term sustainability in farm and food businesses.

My Department's college, CAFRE, seeks to ensure those entering and those currently employed in the agri-food industry have the appropriate competences and skills. It achieves this by delivering a programme of full-time higher and further education to people planning to enter the industry and a programme of part-time education, training, knowledge and technology transfer and benchmarking programmes to those currently employed in the industry.

We will consider with the new Agri-Food Strategy Board how to ensure current and future government support programmes are effective and properly targeted to assist the industry in achieving its growth targets.

Homeopathic and Herbal Medicines to Treat Animals

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's position on the use of homeopathic and herbal medicines to treat animals in the agricultural industry as an alternative to antibiotics; and to list any funding her Department has provided for the research of these treatments in the last three years.

(AQW 10737/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has no regulatory role in the authorisation of veterinary medicines in the north, nor in the provision of research into the efficacy of such treatments.

Under the provisions of European Commission (EC) and Britain and the north of Ireland legislation, no veterinary medicinal product may be marketed without a Marketing Authorisation. Such authorisations are granted only after a detailed scientific assessment of the data relating to safety, quality and efficacy of the product. In addition, inspection of manufacturing premises is required to ensure that quality of the final product is assured.

Thus any homeopathic and herbal medicines which claim to have similar medicinal benefits to antibiotics in the treatment of animals will require marketing authorisation.

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate provides this function in the Britain and the north of Ireland.

Process by which Farmers Obtain a Cattle Herd Number

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she is considering a simplification of the process by which farmers obtain a cattle herd number; and whether she has considered the approach used by the Scottish Government.

(AQW 10742/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: European Commission regulations require DARD to record cattle keepers on its database and also to maintain a record of the identity of anyone who submits an application to receive EU funding.

In order to comply with this DARD registers cattle herd keepers on the Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) and allocates Business and Customer IDs to link each business with their cattle herd keeper registrations. This integrated process protects payments, increases overall compliance and reduces the potential for fraud.

One of the benefits of the introduction of the DARD Direct Offices is that a person wishing to keep cattle can apply to be registered as a cattle herd keeper and also apply to be allocated a Business / Customer ID in the same office and at the same time, and will be helped through the process by the DARD Direct staff.

I am aware that in Scotland a person wishing to keep cattle must register their holding with the local Scottish Government Rural Payments and Inspectorate Division (SGRPID) office. Once they have passed the necessary checks they will be issued with a County Parish Holding (CPH) number. Then they must apply to the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) for a cattle herd mark. Subject to passing further checks they will be issued with a unique cattle herd mark which allows them to purchase cattle ear tags.

While it is important that DARD staff deal with applications efficiently and register new cattle herd keepers as quickly as possible, it is not possible to further simplify the process. To do so would remove some of the checks involved and would increase the potential for fraud or non-compliance, or result in monies not being paid to the correct claimant or not at all.

My Department has no plans to review the process by which a farmer is registered as a cattle herd keeper but if a review is undertaken in the future my officials will consult with the other Devolved Administrations, including Scotland, and with the south of Ireland to ensure that the burden on keepers is kept to a minimum.

Farming Community

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she will work with the Tourist Board to establish an incentive for the farming community to permit walkers to access their land; and if she is aware of the position in the Republic of Ireland in relation to this issue.

(AQW 10743/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A network of Waymarked walking routes has been created here in the north. However, the issues of access to land and walking routes cut across the responsibilities of several Departments, Agencies and organisations, and their input would be essential in developing any incentive for farmers.

A 'Walks Scheme', aimed at farmers and private landowners, has existed in the South of Ireland since 2008, and is operated by the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government. It provides assistance for farmers to develop and maintain National Waymarked Ways, Looped Walking Routes, and Heritage Routes.

Should there be sufficient demand from farmers here, my Department will consider with other agencies and interested parties what mechanisms may be available to support such a scheme.

Poultry Litter Fuelled Gasification Plants

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to list any examples of successful and viable poultry litter fuelled gasification plants.

(AQW 10748/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In the poultry sector there is one known on-farm gasification plant on a large broiler chicken farm (800 thousand birds/year) in West Virginia, USA. A key justification for the plant was that it could utilise the heat from the gasification process for heating the broiler houses, especially in the winter. This plant has been in place for over 2 years but initial operational problems were reported.

The most successful examples of the use of gasification at a commercial scale are a number of recently opened gasification plants used to treat municipal solid waste in Northern Europe, with gasification plants in Krsko and Celje in Slovenia, Sisak in Croatia and Sarpsborg in Norway. These are close to buildings and can link to district heating systems and so have a high heat recovery potential.

The technical review of poultry litter management and disposal options carried out by my Department and the AgriFood & Biosciences Institute recommend that consideration should be given by the industry to developing a proto-type poultry litter fuelled gasification plant.

Technical Review of Poultry Litter Management and Disposal

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the respective costings of the two options in the technical review of poultry litter management and disposal which was carried out by her Department and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute.

(AQW 10749/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The technical review of poultry litter management and disposal recommended that consideration should be given by the industry to the development of a proto-type poultry litter fuelled gasification plant and that options to reduce the transport cost of poultry litter for export, should be further investigated.

The review examined the potential of a range of alternative technologies as a means of processing poultry litter. Costs of the alternative technologies were not considered as part of this technical review.

In addition to the technologies examined, the review also identified that exporting poultry litter to Britain for land spreading as an organic fertiliser offers some potential. However, this option would incur significant and ongoing costs due to high transport costs and the low financial value of poultry litter as a fertiliser.

Estimated annual costs for this option are between £4 and £6 million, based on export of 200kt of poultry litter per annum. Consequently, the review recommended that options to reduce the transport cost of poultry litter for export, for example use of baling, and the logistics of shipping poultry litter for export should be further investigated.

Mistreatment of Pigs at High Animal Welfare Facilities in Swaffham and Thetford

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the mistreatment of pigs at high animal welfare facilities in Swaffham and Thetford, what assurances can she give

that such activity is not replicated by farmers and livestock owners in Northern Ireland; and how her Department monitors the humane destruction of sick or unsuitable market-destined livestock.

(AQW 10755/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am appalled by the reports from the animal welfare group, Animal Equality, of animal mistreatment at East Anglian Pig Company Units. Here, in the north, my Veterinary Service carries out a significant number of inspections every year under cross compliance and also follow-up visits to any animal welfare complaints. Thankfully my officers have not found any evidence to suggest such mistreatment is practiced here.

Farmers and livestock owners are permitted to kill animals in their care under certain circumstances, including for emergency reasons relating to the welfare of the animals. However, when carrying out these procedures they must ensure animals are spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering.

The responsibility for the welfare of any farmed animal is the owner's and unfortunately, it is a fact of life that there will always be tragic animal welfare cases, such as cases where animals are mistreated or incidents where owners neglect or abandon animals in their keep. I assure you that my officers will respond to any report of poor farm animal welfare and will deal with each situation robustly.

Farm Modernisation Programme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 8939/11-15 and AQW 9801/11-15, whether applicants who were unsuccessful in previous tranches of the Farm Modernisation Programme will receive an additional 10 or 20 points.

(AQW 10877/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As indicated in the recent EQIA consultation on the Farm Modernisation Programme Tranche 3, the marks awarded for this new criterion will be 10 marks.

Farm Modernisation Programme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the final scoring criteria and scoring limits for the next Farm Modernisation Programme.

(AQW 10878/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Selection Criteria scoring for Tranche 3 will be as follows:

Degree of Modernisation:	Top Band	-	60 marks
	Middle Band	-	45 marks
	Lower Band	-	30 marks
Succession Opportunity Young Farmer		-	35 marks
E Communication		-	10 marks
Not successful in previous tranches		-	10 marks
Maximum			115 marks

In response to the views expressed in the consultation, about affording greater prioritisation to those not successful in previous tranches, the tie breaker order will now be: Not successful in previous tranches, Succession Opportunity, Degree of modernisation and finally e-communication.

Staff at Greenmount College, Antrim

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) number; and (ii) grade of staff at Greenmount College, Antrim who have been on long-term sick leave in the last two years.

(AQW 10882/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Based on the NICS Staff Handbook definition of long term sickness as being an absence lasting 20 working days or more the number and grade of staff at Greenmount College on long term sick leave in 2010 and 2011 are set out in the tables below:

TABLE 1 – NUMBER OF STAFF

Number of staff	2010	2011	Sick leave overlapping 2010 and 2011
Non industrial	14	11	4
Industrial	6*	1	1
Total	20	12	5

*number includes individuals who had more than one period of long term absence in the same year.

TABLE 2 – GRADE OF STAFF

Grade of staff *	2010	2011	Absences overlapping 2010 and 2011
AA and analogous grades	3	2	0
AO and analogous grades	1	0	0
E0II and analogous grades	0	0	0
E0I and analogous grades	3	2	1
Staff Officer and analogous grades	5	3	2
DP and analogous grades	2	4	1
Grade 7 and analogous grades	0	0	0
Industrial	6	1	1
Total	20	12	5

* to prevent the identification of specific individuals at particular grades general service and analogous grades have been amalgamated.

European Funding to Tackle BovineTB

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why her Department did not to take the necessary steps to draw down European funding to tackle bovineTB prior to 2009.

(AQW 10921/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD previously applied for co-funding from the EU TB Veterinary Fund in 2004, when some 2 million Euros were secured. DARD was the only administration within Britain and the north of Ireland at that time to apply for this funding.

DARD did not apply for co-funding in the years 2005 until 2009 inclusive; because the EU Commission had made it clear that a funding application would not be successful until applicants complied fully with the requirement of European Commission Directive 64/432 that animals that give an inconclusive result to two consecutive TB tests should be removed as reactors. The policy here and in England, Wales and Scotland at that time was to remove as reactors those animals that gave an inconclusive result to three consecutive tests.

In 2009 a joint application was made to the EU Commission for co-funding from the TB Veterinary Fund in respect of the TB Eradication Plans for 2010 for England, Wales and the north of Ireland. The new

policy on the removal as reactors of animals that give an inconclusive result to a second consecutive test was introduced on 1 January 2010. The funding application for 2010, 2011 and 2012 has been successful, which allows DARD to benefit by some 5 million Euros in respect of each of these years.

Single Farm Payment

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, for each of the last five years, to detail (i) how many farmers have been in receipt of a Single Farm Payment; and (ii) how many farmers are still to receive this year's payment, in the North Down constituency.

(AQW 10971/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) My Department received the following numbers of claims to the Single Farm Payment (SFP) Scheme for each of the last five years:

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of Claims	39,003	38,807	38,627	38,423	38,152

(ii) 222 claims to the 2011 SFP Scheme were received from farmers in the North Down constituency. Of these, 6 have yet to be finalised. Not all of the remaining claims may be due a payment because of ineligibility or the application of penalties under scheme rules.

EU Veterinary Fund

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the successful applications to the EU Veterinary Fund in each of the last three years.

(AQW 10988/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Successful applications to the EU Veterinary Fund have been made for the 2010, 2011 and 2012 Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, TSE and Avian Influenza Programmes.

Compensation Payments for Bovine Tuberculosis Infections

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the cost of compensation payments for bovine tuberculosis infections in the 2011/12 financial year.

(AQW 10989/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: £12.9 million was the total compensation payment for animals removed for the control of bovine tuberculosis infection in the 2011/12 financial year.

Red Meat Strategic Forum

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Red Meat Strategic Forum, including when it will publish updated cost of production figures for local producers.

(AQW 11000/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In answering this question, I want to clarify that the Red Meat Strategic Forum (referred to hereafter as 'the Forum') is an industry-led group which is chaired by the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC).

The Forum continues to meet regularly to consider issues of strategic importance to the red meat industry with a particular focus on industry sustainability and profitability.

One of the issues the Forum has been considering is the modelling of costs of beef and sheep meat production. At its meeting in June 2011 the Forum agreed that cost of production data was of interest and benefit to the industry and that continued efforts should be made to provide these figures on an ongoing basis.

With this in mind, it was agreed that further research was necessary which would allow a re-baselining of these figures and the development of a more robust and sustainable method of calculating costs of production.

The issue was discussed most recently at the Forum meeting in February this year and the LMC continues to work with DARD to calculate costs of production using Farm Business Survey accounts as the basis. This is a complex exercise but one which should ultimately result in cost of production figures which can be updated on an annual basis using a robust methodology.

The exercise is being led by the Forum and, as it requires input from a range of parties, unfortunately it is not possible at this stage to give a definite timescale on when the next cost of production figures will be published.

Down Rural Area Partnership

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why priority is being given to the funding of strategic projects over the issuing of calls for standard projects within the Down Rural Area Partnership.

(AQW 11037/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Priority is not being given to the funding of strategic projects over the issuing of calls for standard projects within the Down Rural Area Partnership. My priority in all seven clusters involved in the delivery of Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme (RDP) is that all monies are spent and no funds are returned to Brussels.

To this end, I have announced a re-focus for Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme driven by the low project spend to date and the high administration costs. DRAP has been allocated funding of £13,498,066 for the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme. To date the cluster has spent £1,909,271 on projects and £975,009 on administration. On current trends the cluster would not spend its full project allocation. I have asked for all areas to urgently examine their progress to date and to re-focus by re-allocating funds to higher investing measures and to larger strategic projects.

An open call for Strategic Projects will be announced shortly and DRAP are making provision to take forward 5 strategic Projects in addition to calls for standard projects but not as a substitute for standard Projects.

Rural White Paper Action Plan

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the introduction of the final Rural White Paper Action Plan.

(AQW 11181/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Work on the development of the Rural White Paper Action Plan has now been completed and it is intended that it will be submitted to the Executive for approval during May 2012. The final Rural White Paper Action Plan will be published following Executive approval.

EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of children who (i) are entitled to; and (ii) have benefited from the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11184/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The number of children who are entitled to and have benefited from the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme in each of the last school years is as follows:-

School Year	Number of children entitled to school milk ¹	Number of children taking milk ²
2006/07	178,794	56,600
2007/08	177,105	57,000
2008/09	323,264 ³	54,600
2009/10	321,830 ³	52,700
2010/11	321,717 ³	52,100

Notes: ¹ Source NI School Census 2006/07 – 2010/11

² The number of children taking milk has been calculated by converting the total quantity of milk on which subsidy was claimed during the term to one-third pints and then dividing this by the number of days in the term. An average is then taken of participation in each of the three terms.

³ Includes secondary schools. From the start of the 2008/09 school year the EU rules were revised to extend the coverage of the Scheme, from children attending nursery and primary schools, to include children attending secondary schools.

EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the success of the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme; and whether her Department is achieving the stated aims of the Scheme.

(AQW 11186/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The EU School Milk Scheme aims to encourage the consumption of dairy products by children. It also has an educational dimension in that it encourages a healthy way of living and sound eating habits at an early age. I support fully this objective and would encourage every school and every parent of a child at school in the north of Ireland to avail of the benefits of this Scheme.

Under EU law we are required to offer this Scheme to school children. However, in view of the positive health benefits of consuming milk at an early age, in addition to the EU subsidy, we also provide a “top-up” subsidy from the Executive’s budget to help reduce the cost for participating children.

In the north I believe that we are achieving the aims of the Scheme and I am pleased to say that all of our Education and Library Boards participate in delivery of the Scheme. I can advise that during the 2010/11 school year 73% of our nursery, primary and special schools participated under the Scheme.

While there is always room for improvement, I believe that the Scheme is meeting its objectives within the current budget available. Also, I am hopeful that the current promotional activities of the Dairy Council for NI, which has received significant funding from both the EU and my Department, will result in a higher level of uptake in our schools.

EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for a breakdown of the amount, and the sources of funding for the EU School Milk Subsidy Scheme in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11187/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: EU and local top-up subsidy paid under the EU School Milk Scheme in each of the last five school years was as follows:-

School Year	EU subsidy £	Local top-up subsidy £	Total £
2006/07	265,086	81,668	346,754
2007/08	270,854	79,732	350,586
2008/09	315,263	76,393	391,656
2009/10	304,107	73,724	377,831
2010/11	286,976	71,631	358,607

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Organisations or Projects in the Sandy Row and Donegall Road and Village Areas of South Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department and its arm's-length bodies have given to organisations or projects in the (i) Sandy Row; and (ii) Donegall Road and Village areas of South Belfast in each of the last ten years; and from which funding streams was each allocation made.

(AQW 10815/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Department did not directly fund any organisation or project in the Sandy Row, Donegall Road and Village areas of South Belfast in the last ten financial years.

Details of funding allocated by the Department's arm's-length bodies in the same period are listed in the table below.

Funding was also provided by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland to organisations or projects in the South Belfast constituency in the last ten years but the body does not retain funding information at the level of detail specified in this question.

Year	Funding (£)	Funding Stream	Organisation
2002/03	0		
2003/04	4,500 *	NI Screen - Made in Northern Ireland Lottery Production	Bandigital Ltd
2004/05	0		
2005/06	25,279	Ulster Scots Agency Financial Assistance Scheme	South Belfast Cultural Society
	40,756	Community Sport Programme	Greater Village Regeneration Trust
2006/07	37,716	Community Sport Programme	Greater Village Regeneration Trust

Year	Funding (£)	Funding Stream	Organisation
2007/08	22,831	Ulster Scots Agency Financial Assistance Scheme	South Belfast Cultural Society Southcity Highland Dance Committee Village Maids Southcity Resource & Development Centre
	38,458	Community Sport Programme	Greater Village Regeneration Trust
2008/09	1,294	Ulster Scots Agency Financial Assistance Scheme	Donegall Pass Community Centre
	34,868	Sport in Our Community	Greater Village Regeneration Trust
2009/10	9,885 *	NI Screen – Made in Northern Ireland Lottery Production	15 Second Film Festival Ltd
	2,475	Ulster Scots Agency Financial Assistance Scheme	Village Maids
	9,068	Awards for Sport	Blythefield Sports Complex
	30,442	Sport in Our Community	Greater Village Regeneration Trust
2010/11	650,000 **	NI Screen - Screen Fund Production	Market Films Limited
	19,500 *	NI Screen - Made in Northern Ireland Lottery Production Production Award	15 Second Film Festival Ltd Generator Entertainment Ltd
	29,526	Sport Matters Capital and Equipment Programme	Totally Trim
2011/12	450,000 **	NI Screen - Screen Fund Production	Zest Films Limited
	2,993	Ulster Scots Agency Financial Assistance Scheme	Sandy Row Cultural Society Greater Village Regeneration Trust
	3,881	Awards for Sport	Greater Village Regeneration Trust

* Funding provided to arm's length body by National Lottery

** Funding provided to arm's length body by Invest NI

Funding for Amateur Boxing Clubs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department and its arm's-length bodies have provided to amateur boxing clubs in each of the last five years; and how much each club was awarded.

(AQW 11017/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI is responsible for the distribution of funding for sport in the north of Ireland. Responsibility for the promotion of boxing rests, in the first instance with the governing body for the sport, the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council (UPBC).

Over the last five financial years, Sport NI has allocated £310,241 of Exchequer funding to amateur boxing clubs as detailed in the table below. The UPBC was also awarded £82,600 of Exchequer funding over the period 2007-12 through the Investing in Performance Sport and Governing Body Plans programmes. In addition, boxing benefited from £212,006 of Exchequer funding over the same period through the Athlete Support/Athlete Investment Programme.

Club	2009	2010	2011	Total
All Saints Amateur Boxing Club		£8,000		£8,000
Banbridge Amateur Boxing Club	£7,394	£1,964		£9,358
Cairn Lodge Amateur Boxing Club	£2,374			£2,374
Canal Amateur Boxing Academy		£21,366	£2,299	£23,665
Castlereagh Amateur Boxing Club		£19,926		£19,926
Derrylin Boxing Club		£8,959	£6,000	£14,959
Eastside ABC			£30,000	£30,000
Gleann Amateur Boxing Club		£16,722		£16,722
Holy Family Boxing Club		£24,344		£24,344
Holy Trinity Youth Club		£24,322		£24,322
Immaculata Amateur Boxing Club		£29,395		£29,395
Ligoniel Amateur Boxing Club	£3,000	£28,826		£31,826
Lurgan Amateur Boxing Club	£7,727	£1,760		£9,487
Monkstown Community Sports Facility	£10,000			£10,000
Oak Leaf Amateur Boxing Club			£0	£0
Poleglass Amateur Boxing Club		£4,245		£4,245
Saints Amateur Boxing Club			£4,980	£4,980
Silverbridge Boxing Club		£1,700		£1,700
St Brigid's Cross Community Boxing Club			£2,024	£2,024
St John Bosco Amateur Boxing Club			£3,800	£3,800
St Paul's Amateur Boxing Club	£9,540	£29,574		£39,114
Total	£40,035	£221,103	£49,103	£310,241

Note: There was no funding to boxing clubs in the two years previous to those reported (2007-08 and 2008-09).

Funding for Football Clubs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the process and criteria by which football clubs with non-designated grounds can apply for capital funding.

(AQW 11065/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Football clubs responsible for grounds that are not designated under the Safety of Sports Grounds (NI) Order 2006 can apply to Sport NI's capital funding programmes provided they meet the eligibility criteria of the individual programmes available. At present, Sport NI has no funding programmes open to which such football clubs can apply.

Funding for Football Clubs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the timescale for the allocation of funding to football clubs with non-designated grounds.

(AQW 11066/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI is responsible for the distribution of funding for sport in the north of Ireland. At present, Sport NI has no funding programmes open to which football clubs, either designated or not designated under the Safety of Sports Grounds (NI) Order 2006, can apply.

Football Clubs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what opportunities exist for football clubs to have their grounds reassessed to qualify for designated status.

(AQW 11069/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The criteria used to determine which football grounds should be considered for designation is prescribed under legislation, namely the Safety of Sports Grounds (NI) Order 2006. Article 4(1) of the Order enables my Department, by order, to designate as requiring a safety certificate, any sports ground which, in DCAL's opinion, has accommodation for more than 5,000 spectators. Any football ground not currently designated under this legislation, but which has accommodation of more than 5,000 spectators may, therefore, be considered by my Department for designation.

Belfast Metropolitan Arts Centre

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding was allocated by the Arts Council, under its Annual Funding Programme, to meet the running costs of the Belfast Metropolitan Arts Centre.

(AQW 11150/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Belfast Metropolitan Arts Centre was awarded £1m through the Annual Funding Programme for the 2012/13 financial year.

Arts Council Annual Funding Programme

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding has been allocated by the Arts Council, under its Annual Funding Programme, to encourage creativity and arts programmes in the Greater Shankill area in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11152/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Using the Neighbourhood Renewal area definition of the Greater Shankill Area as Lower Shankill, Mid Shankill/Woodvale, Upper Shankill, Ainsworth, Glencairn and Ballygomartin Road, the Beat Initiative and the Greater Shankill Partnership would fall within this area.

Arts Council funding to the Beat Initiative over the past 3 years is as follows:

Finance Year	Programme	Project Title	Grant Amount	Fund
2012-2013	Annual Funding Programme	AFP 12/13	£160,000.00	Exchequer
2011-2012	ASOP	ASOP 11/12	£110,000.00	Exchequer
2010-2011	ASOP	ASOP 10/11	£110,000.00	Exchequer

The Arts Council has also provided annual funding to the Greater Shankill Partnership over the period at £100k per annum in 2010/11 and 2011/12 through a ring-fenced sum provided by DCAL.

Sport: South Down

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding is available through her Department or its arm's-length bodies to assist sporting clubs and organisations in the South Down constituency.

(AQO 1916/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI is responsible for the distribution of funding for sport in the north of Ireland. Sport NI has advised that it currently has no funding programmes open to which sporting clubs and organisations in the South Down constituency could apply. However, over the last five financial years, Sport NI has provided a total of £7,495,238 Exchequer and Lottery funding to sports clubs and organisations based in the south Down area. Furthermore, Sport NI has a number of pending applications to its Stadia Safety and Community Capital Programmes which will be considered as and when future funding becomes available.

DCAL: Arm's-Length Bodies

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on advice given to her Department's arm's-length bodies concerning external communications.

(AQO 1918/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department is in discussion with ALBs in relation to finalising the Communications Protocol.

DCAL: Health Promotion

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what measures she is taking, in conjunction with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, to improve and increase health promotion.

(AQO 1924/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) has lead responsibility for improving and increasing health promotion. Nevertheless, I recognise that quality culture, arts and leisure provision can contribute significantly to improved health, both physical and mental, and health promotion. With that in mind, I, along with other Ministers, am supporting DHSSPS in developing a new, cross-cutting Public Health Framework which I understand DHSSPS hopes to complete by the end of this year.

Furthermore, following recent discussions with the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, I have also identified a number of areas where I believe DCAL can contribute to its main suicide prevention strategy, Protect Life. These have been submitted to DHSSPS for consideration within the final version of the refreshed Protect Life Action Plan. In addition, my Department, with the support of DHSSPS, is currently working with a range of culture, arts and leisure bodies, related interest groups

and private individuals to help promote various health improvement issues including suicide prevention, organ donation and physical activity.

Líofa 2015

Mr Chris Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the Líofa campaign, including the next steps.

(AQO 1920/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: More than 1820 people have signed up to the Líofa initiative demonstrating the interest people have in wanting to learn Irish or improve their ability to use it. The initial target of 1000 has been increased to 2015 by 2015 to take account of the high level of interest in the campaign.

A full-time Líofa development officer has been appointed to drive the initiative forward and to support those people who have made the commitment to become fluent in Irish by 2015.

A long term plan is also being drafted and includes meetings with key stakeholders, further Líofa launches and development of a dedicated website.

Northern Visions: Funding

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what her Department is doing to address the funding gap for community-based Northern Visions Media Centre which is threatening its future survival.

(AQO 1922/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department does not fund organisations directly. DCAL funding in support of arts and cultural activities is disbursed through its Arms Length Bodies.

Representatives from my Department, the Arts Council, Belfast City Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund met with Northern Visions on 20 April to discuss the current funding difficulties and to investigate possibilities to help the organisation.

Discussions between my Department, Northern Visions and various funding bodies are also ongoing.

NI Screen: Funding

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the changes to NI Screen funding criteria made in February 2011.

(AQO 1923/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: NI Screen's funding criteria did not change in February 2011.

However in February 2011 NI Screen prepared a Savings Delivery Plan to implement a budget reduction from DCAL and to address the loss of funding from the UK Film Council. NI Screen had previously received £240k per annum from the UK Film Council which was reduced to 160k in 10-11 and to zero from 11-12.

As a result of these reductions NI Screen needed to find savings of £318,500 over the 4 years of the Budget period of which £193,500 had to be found in year one.

NI Screen took the view that applying the cuts evenly across its funded bodies could undermine each organisation. Instead, it chose to prioritise the activities which it funds and cease to fund some activities.

The decision as to which organisations would have their funding reduced was taken with reference to the following agreed criteria:

- Impact on education
- Impact on strengthening the economy

- Number of people impacted
- Geographic spread of people impacted

Sports Stadia: Social Outcomes

Mr P Maskey asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of achieving beneficial social outcomes in the work on the new sports stadia, including the development of Casement Park.

(AQO 1925/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: It is critical that my Department's major capital spend on the new sports stadia is used to maximise wider socio-economic outcomes and returns. Social clauses, and strategies for maximum social returns, will be firmly embedded throughout the procurement and delivery process for all three sports stadia. Relevant clauses and measures will be included on both contracts for professional services and construction works and will contain provision for delivering sustainable economic, social, environmental and equality improvements. My Department has stand-alone statutory and public policy requirements as a public authority in its own right which impose specific obligations, such as the general duty and specific procedural duties attached to Section 75 of the NI Act 1998. I intend that my Department will develop and deliver its obligations to the full.

I am pleased that all of the sporting bodies intend to implement my Department's requirements on social clauses and maximum social returns. I am currently considering the detail of how community participation can be maximised, equality impacts measured and monitored, and significant social returns delivered to the most deprived parts of this society.

The Executive is firmly committed to the use of public money for maximum improvements to the lives of those areas and communities suffering greatest socio-economic inequalities. It is worth noting the words of the now First Minister, when he launched the Executive's guidance on integrating social and equality requirements into public procurement as Finance and Personnel Minister in May 2008. Mr Robinson said: "...opportunities exist within the procurement process for policy makers and procurement professionals to work together with suppliers to promote equality of opportunity and sustainable development in the delivery of our public services". The Executive's May 2008 guidance is the minimum bottom-line guidance to assist Departments on how those opportunities can be maximised. I am requiring that each of the three sporting bodies fully integrates the need for social clauses and socio-economic returns as a "golden thread" within the entire lifetime of each of the stadiums.

Rugby Avenue Stadium, Coleraine

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department will support the proposed development of a new football stadium and sports facility at Rugby Avenue in Coleraine.

(AQO 1926/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware of Coleraine Borough Council's intention to create a master plan for the 'Rugby Avenue' site in Coleraine that could possibly include a new football stadium and the relocation of the swimming pool and leisure centre from the town centre. Such a development appears to fit within the scope of sustainable, community accessible multi sport facilities proposed within my Department's strategy for sport and physical recreation, Sport Matters. In this regard I welcome the proposed development which should, if it proceeds, contribute significantly to the development of community sport both in the Coleraine area and the north more generally.

Department of Education

Annual Review of Co-Ordinated Support Plans

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the review of special education proposals for the Annual Review of Co-ordinated Support Plans, whether the rights of children with Special Educational Needs in special schools will be protected through an optional review process that

takes into account the views of the school and parents, regardless of the stage a child is at in their education.

(AQW 10422/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): I am currently finalising a policy paper in regard to the SEN review. Once my deliberations are complete I will be in a better position to answer this question.

Nursery School Places

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education how he ensures that there is an equitable supply of nursery school places across the education sectors.

(AQW 10731/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While my Department retains policy and budgetary responsibility for the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme, the planning and implementation at local level is the responsibility of the Pre-School Education Advisory Groups (PEAGs) within each Education and Library Board.

These Groups undertake an annual review of provision at local level taking into account factors such as demographic changes and the relocation/closure of settings, in order to ensure that the allocation of places to voluntary/private sector providers continues to meet the needs of each area. I also consider requests for new statutory pre-school provision under the Development Proposal process.

I have made available significant additional funding for new places in voluntary/private settings and have approved the creation of new statutory nursery provision in areas of shortfall in order to meet the growing demand for funded pre-school places across the north of Ireland.

Officials from my Department will continue to work closely with colleagues in the ELBs to make available sufficient funded pre-school places to meet the Programme for Government commitment of ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

Nursery and Pre-school Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children did not obtain a nursery or pre-school place in the first round of applications in 2012.

(AQW 10758/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information sought is in relation to the Pre-School Admissions Process for the 2012/13 academic year. This is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012 and therefore final figures in relation to the number of children in their final pre-school year offered a place during the process will not be available until after that date. However, as I indicated in the Assembly on 23 April, at the end of Stage 1 of the Process 94% of those who had made application had been offered a place. The parents/guardians of the 1,429 children who were unplaced were invited to submit further preferences for the 1,742 places which remained available.

Pre-school and Nursery Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many pre-school and nursery places were available following the first round of applications in 2012.

(AQW 10764/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information sought is in relation to the Pre-School Admissions Process for the 2012/13 academic year. This is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012 and therefore final figures in relation to the number of children in their final pre-school year offered a place during the process will not be available until after that date. However, as I indicated in the Assembly on 23 April, at the end of Stage 1 of the Process 94% of those who had made application had been offered a place. The parents/guardians of the 1,429 children who were unplaced were invited to submit further preferences for the 1,742 places which remained available.

Allocation of Nursery and Pre-school Places

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to ensure that the allocation of nursery and pre-school places more closely meets the areas of demand.

(AQW 10765/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: While my Department retains policy and budgetary responsibility for the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme, the planning and implementation at local level is the responsibility of the Pre-School Education Advisory Groups (PEAGs) within each Education and Library Board.

These Groups undertake an annual review of provision at local level taking into account factors such as demographic changes and the relocation/closure of settings, in order to ensure that the allocation of places to voluntary/private sector providers continues to meet the needs of each area. I also consider requests for new statutory pre-school provision under the Development Proposal process.

I have made available significant additional funding for new places in voluntary/private settings and have approved the creation of new statutory nursery provision in areas of shortfall in order to meet the growing demand for funded pre-school places across the north of Ireland.

Officials from my Department will continue to work closely with colleagues in the ELBs to make available sufficient funded pre-school places to meet the Programme for Government commitment of ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

Pre-School Places

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education to detail the percentage of children who have secured a place at their preferred pre-school provider for September 2012.

(AQW 10827/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information sought is in relation to the Pre-School Admissions Process for the 2012/13 academic year. This is a 2 stage process which will not complete until 1 June 2012 and therefore final figures in relation to the number of children in their final pre-school year offered a place at a places stated as a preference during the process will not be available until after that date. However, as I indicated in the Assembly on 23 April, at the end of Stage 1 of the Process 94% of those who had made application had been offered a place at a setting stated as a preference on their application form.

Pre-School Provision in the Irish-Medium Sector

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education (i) to list the pre-school provision in the Irish-medium sector; and (ii) which units are (a) statutory; and (b) voluntary/private.

(AQW 10828/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is detailed below:-

Statutory nursery units at Irish-medium primary schools

- Gaelscoil na Bhfal, Belfast
- Bunscoil Phobal Feirste, Belfast
- Scoil an Droichid, Belfast
- Bunscoil an Tsleibhe Dhuibh, Belfast
- Gaelscoil Cholmcille, Derry
- Gaelscoil Eadain Mhoir, Derry
- Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh
- Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh, Strabane
- Christian Brothers Primary School (Naíscóil Ard Mhacha), Armagh

Gaelscoil Ui Neill, Dungannon Irish-medium voluntary pre-school providers in receipt of funded places in the 2011/12 academic year

Naíscoil an Chaistil, Ballycastle

- Naíscoil an Chreagáin, Silverbridge
- Naíscoil an Iúir, Newry
- Naíscoil an Lonnáin, Belfast
- Naíscoil An Traonaigh, Lisnaskea
- Naíscoil an tSeanchaí, Magherafelt
- Naíscoil Aodha Rua, Dungannon
- Naíscoil Ard Eoin, Belfast
- Naíscoil Bheann Mhadagain, Belfast
- Naíscoil Chamlocha, Camlough
- Naíscoil Charn Tóchair, Maghera
- Naíscoil Chill Locha, Killough
- Naíscoil Chois Locha, Lurgan
- Naíscoil Colmcille An Charraig Mhor, Carrickmore
- Naíscoil Dhun Padraig, Downpatrick
- Naíscoil Éanna, Newtownabbey
- Naíscoil Eoghain, Cookstown
- Naíscoil Ghleann Darach, Crumlin
- Naíscoil Leim an Mhadaidh, Limavady
- Naíscoil Mhachaire Ratha, Maghera
- Naíscoil Mhaol Íosa, Derry
- Naíscoil Mhic Reachtain, Belfast
- Naíscoil na Banna, Portadown
- Naíscoil na Deirge, Castlederg
- Naíscoil Na Fuisioige, Belfast
- Naíscoil na mBeann, Kilkeel
- Naíscoil na Móna, Belfast
- Naíscoil na Speríní, Draperstown
- Naíscoil Neachtain, Dungiven
- Naíscoil Shliabh gCuilinn, Jonesborough
- Naíscoil Uachtar Tire, Castlewellan

Pre-School Admissions Review

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education how his Department is progressing the Pre-School Admissions Review recommendations.

(AQW 10829/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Pre-School Admissions Review recommendations will introduce changes to improve the Admissions process for children and parents and will impact on policy and practice. When I announced the outcomes of the Review in January, I was clear that the Report should be regarded as a framework for action rather than a list of agreed actions to be implemented immediately.

Work is progressing and, as indicated in my speech to the Assembly on 23 April 2012, I will have the legislation that is necessary to remove the July /August criterion with the Assembly before the summer recess. It my intention that the removal of these criterion will be in effect in time for the 2013/14 Pre-School Admissions Process which will commence in the Autumn.

Further aspects of the review outcomes will also be considered as part of the Early Years Strategy which I announced would be brought to the Assembly before the summer recess.

Some of the actions identified will require further investigation, detailed costings, and possible additional consultation or legislation. Implementation of these recommendations will also be taken into account in considering the steps necessary to deliver the Programme for Government commitment of ensuring that at least one year of pre-school education is available to every family that wants it.

I am committed to ensuring that these important changes will be implemented as quickly and effectively as possible to improve the outcomes for all.

July/August Criterion for Pre-school Applications

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education if, and when, the July/August criterion for pre-school applications will be removed.

(AQW 10830/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As indicated in my speech to the Assembly on 23 April 2012, I will have the legislation that is necessary to remove the July /August criterion with the Assembly before the summer recess. It my intention that the removal of these criterion will be in effect in time for the 2013/14 Pre-School Admissions Process which will commence in the Autumn.

Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the appointment of the Chief Executive of the South Eastern Education and Library Board, to detail (i) when the interviews were held; (ii) when the Commissioners decided who should be appointed; (iii) who was present when the final decision was made; (iv) whether the Staff Commission representative recorded any concerns; and (v) when his Department ratified the appointment.

(AQW 10865/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The interviewing panel for appointment to the Chief Executive Post met on Monday 20 February 2012.

- (ii) The decision was made by the Commissioners on Thursday 23 February 2012.
- (iii) All Commissioners participated in the final decision on the appointment on 23 February 2012; the representative of the Dept of Education and the representative of the Staff Commission were also present when this decision was reached and also throughout the meeting of the interviewing panel on 20 February 2012. The Chair of the Commissioners participated by way of a conference call as he was unable to be physically present due to illness.
- (iv) The representative from the Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards confirmed in a letter to the Department of Education dated 1 March 2012 that he was satisfied that all procedures were observed. No concerns were expressed.
- (v) The Department of Education approved the appointment in a letter to the South Eastern Education and Library Board dated 7 March 2012.

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his Department or its arm's-length bodies, including schools.

(AQW 11024/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A number of schools have purchased defibrillators following a recommendation from a Health Trust or Paediatric Cardiac Specialist when deemed desirable for specific children. In addition, the General Teaching Council has a defibrillator on their premises. My Department has no plans for increased provision at present, but will continue to keep this policy area under review in conjunction with other Departments.

Preparing Pupils for Transfer Tests

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact that primary school teachers who concentrate on preparing pupils for transfer tests rather than on teaching the curriculum might have on pupils achieving adequate numeracy and literacy levels.

(AQW 11039/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Primary schools are centres of education in their own right. A primary school's function is to teach children the curriculum, it is not the function of any primary school to set aside the curriculum to teach to the individual entrance criteria of any post primary school.

Primary schools are responsible and will be held to account for the education of all pupils. All teaching and activities should be designed and delivered to and for the needs of all pupils.

Any departure from a school's statutory duties in delivering the curriculum risks having an adverse effect on standards of literacy and numeracy.

Pre-School Places

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Education how many children in the South Antrim area aged (i) two; (ii) three; and (iii) four currently have a pre-school place.

(AQW 11072/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Information on the numbers of children aged 2 and aged 3 at 1 July 2011 in funded pre-school education located in the South Antrim constituency is detailed in the table below. Children aged 4 at 1 July 2011 are not included because these children will have attained compulsory school starting age.

AGE OF CHILDREN IN FUNDED PRESCHOOL PROVISION IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY 2011/12

School type	Aged 2	Aged 3	Total
Total	6	1,219	1,225

Source: School census

Note:

- 1 Figures relate to children in funded places in voluntary and private pre-school centres, nursery schools, nursery units and in reception classes in primary schools located in the South Antrim constituency.
- 2 Age is at 1 July 2011.
- 3 Individual pupil age data are not collected for voluntary and private pre-school settings. Figures included in the total above relate to those children in funded places, who are assumed to be three years old as at 1 July.

School to Home Bus Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education whether his Department intends to fund the voluntary redundancy packages for employees of the Western Education and Library Board who operate the School to Home bus service.

(AQW 11112/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Voluntary Severance Programme, for which I have set aside resources across the budget period, is intended to support the delivery of key areas of the Savings Delivery Plan and the Resource Allocation Plans.

ALBs have been invited to bring forward proposals which would reduce costs and deliver savings in a number of areas, in particular within Management & Administration and Professional Support Services. The proposals are then assessed against strict criteria and will only be considered where it is clearly demonstrated that there is no diminution, either directly or indirectly, in service delivery and, in particular, in support to children and young people.

To date, no proposal has been received from the Western Education and Library Board relating to employees who operate the School to Home bus service however, if submitted, it will be subject to the same strict criteria that all proposals are in order to secure the necessary funding.

School to Home Bus Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Education how many Western Education and Library Board employees who operate the School to Home bus service have had their contracted hours reduced in the past 6 months.

(AQW 11115/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been advised by the Western Education and Library Board that it has not reduced the contracted hours of any employees who operate the Home to School Transport service within the past 6 months.

NEETs Strategy

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Education, given that the NEETs Strategy is included in the Programme for Government, whether he intends to ensure that (i) the Bytes Project will retain its current level of funding from his Department; (ii) the project receives transitional support, at the current financial rate, if alternative funding streams are developed for the project; and (iii) the project is provided with the certainty and stability of funding in the interest of a more planned, strategic service.

(AQW 11130/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education does not fund the Bytes Project directly; it is one of a number of youth service organisations which receives funding from the Youth Council. It is, therefore, for the Youth Council to determine the level of funding for the organisation in line with DE priorities, its published funding scheme and the available budget.

The Youth Council has advised that it has allocated interim funding of £52,250 to Bytes for the financial year 2012/13. Decisions on further funding will be made following completion of a review by the Youth Council of the operation of Bytes. For future years, Bytes can apply to the Youth Council and/or Education and Library Boards for youth service funding in the same way as all other youth organisations.

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many professionals from (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland have been trained in each of the last three years at the Middletown Centre for Autism.

(AQW 11137/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of professionals in the north and south trained by the Middletown Centre for Autism in the last three years is shown in the table below.

Year	North of Ireland	Republic of Ireland
2011-2012	3,171	2,180
2010-2011	1,356	598
2009-2010	1,452	497

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many children from (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland have been supported by the Middletown Centre for Autism in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11138/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Middletown Centre staff have provided direct interventions to 11 children on a rolling basis through an outreach service to children in the north which offers trans-disciplinary assessment by advice and guidance teams, and have supported some 269 children with outreach support and a further 418 children by helping whole schools develop an ASD competent environment.

No children received support from the centre in the south in the last three years.

Middletown Centre for Autism

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many parents from (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland trained at the Middletown Centre for Autism in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11191/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following numbers of parents availed of training provided by the Middletown Centre for Autism in the last 3 years.

Year	North of Ireland	Republic of Ireland
2011-2012	710	1,854
2010-2011	706	1,416
2009-2010	12	41

Shared Management School of Schools

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how, under present legislation, a shared management school of schools between sectors could be established.

(AQW 11194/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A school under shared management could be established by means of a development proposal under Article 14 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. The management type of the school would be 'voluntary'. At present there are voluntary schools within a number of sectors, including Catholic schools, Irish-medium schools, and a small number of schools owned by the Church of Ireland.

A new school could be jointly owned by the churches and other persons or bodies. The school would be managed by a board of governors that would include persons nominated by the school owners.

Education Other Than At School

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils attending Education Other Than At School projects who achieved five GCSEs at grades C or above, in each of the last three years; and how this compares with the rest of the school population.

(AQW 11224/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The information requested is not currently available. As part of the 2010/11 School Leaver data collection the Department is piloting the receipt of a variable which indicates whether pupils enrolled at grant aided post primary schools are in Education Other Than at School. It is intended that this will become part of the School Leavers Survey data collection exercise in the future.

Department for Employment and Learning

Senior Lecturers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many senior lecturers in each university derive a second income; and of these, how many have declared this to their universities.

(AQW 10812/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): As the Department for Employment and Learning does not hold such information, my officials contacted Queen's University and the University of Ulster for a response. Queen's has stated that it does not hold information on Senior Lecturers who earn additional income through non-University related activities.

The University of Ulster has stated that academic staff at the University are permitted to carry out a limited amount of paid consultancy work. In the most recent year for which complete data is available, the 2009/10 academic year, 26 full-time senior lecturers carried out such work, with the net income being shared with the University.

Shared Future Proofing

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what are the cost implications of his intended introduction of 'shared future proofing' of all major departmental policy decisions; and how this proofing will be conducted and against what criteria or benchmarks.

(AQW 10866/11-15)

Dr Farry: Shared Future Proofing complements the existing suite of tools employed throughout the NI Civil Service to analyse policy proposals, such as equality impact assessment. It is integrated into the existing policy development processes within existing budgets.

Shared Future Proofing is carried out early in the process of developing policy proposals or business cases. The purpose of this process is to determine whether such proposals contribute positively to a shared society or inadvertently reinforce divisions, in which case mitigating measures would be considered. The process provides for officials to consider four key issues: whether the proposed policy promotes individuals from different religious, political, racial or other section 75(1) backgrounds sharing or engaging together; whether the proposed policy would inadvertently create a situation where people categorised in different groups under Section 75(1) backgrounds would be accessing services or facilities on a segregated or separate basis; whether the proposed policy would remove or address any barriers to people sharing; and whether the proposed policy would inadvertently erect any barriers to people sharing?

In relation to each of these questions, officials consider and set out any qualitative or quantitative evidence available, and explore any possible mitigating measures. The cost of the process is negligible as it is an integral part of policy development.

The outworkings of the shared future proofing should lead to reductions in costs.

Education Maintenance Allowance

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the consultation on the future of the Education Maintenance Allowance will commence.

(AQW 10925/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department and the Department of Education are currently considering a range of options for the future of the Education Maintenance Allowance scheme in order to address the current weaknesses of the scheme as identified in the Review and to target the allowance at those in most need.

Once finalised, these options will be presented to the Executive. Subject to securing Executive approval, it is intended that a public consultation will follow early in the summer.

Jobseekers Attending Interviews in the Republic of Ireland

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether assistance is offered to jobseekers who are attending interviews in the Republic of Ireland; and whether his Department has any plans to create travel allowances for the jobseekers.

(AQW 10956/11-15)

Dr Farry: Assistance for unemployed jobseekers to attend interviews is available from my Department under the Travel to Interview Scheme. Following a recent review of its geographical scope the scheme was extended to include job interviews in the Republic of Ireland.

Employment Opportunities for People with a Disability

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to increase employment opportunities for people with a disability.

(AQW 10980/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has a range of pre-employment and employment programmes and services to prepare and support people with disabilities to avail of the employment opportunities that are available.

Specialist provision offered by the Disability Employment Service (DES) includes:

- an Occupational Psychology Service which carries out employment assessments for individual clients seeking employment, as well as retention assessments for existing employees at their workplace;
- the Workable programme which helps people with a disability move into employment and then provides medium to long term in-work support, such as a specialist Job Coach. It can also include disability training and education for employers;
- the Access to Work programme which provides a variety of practical supports such as assistance with travel to work, interpreter support and funding for specialist equipment;
- the Condition Management Programme, delivered by Health professionals to help people with health conditions and disabilities manage and overcome their health related barriers to employment so that they are more ready to make a return to the workplace;
- the Return to Work Credit, a weekly grant of £40 per week, paid to eligible benefit recipients earning less than £15k per annum for their first year back in employment. This financial support is helping people with a disability to make the transition from benefits into employment;
- Supported Permitted Work, disability specialist staff support people in receipt of defined benefits to be able to work for up to 16 hours a week. Often this support will help the disabled employee progress to unsupported employment and enable them to extend their working hours;
- the Job Introduction Scheme, a short job trial of 13 weeks for someone with a disability trying to enter the labour market;

- the Department is about to conclude tendering for delivery of new provision, Work Connect. This programme is aimed at clients on health related benefits and will include a range of flexible pre-employment supports to help clients progress towards and move into work and, if successful, in sustaining this employment.

The Department's provision is delivered on a pan-disability basis by staff, healthcare professionals and specialist providers with the range of expertise required to meet the needs of disabled people looking to progress towards employment or to find and keep a job.

All provision can be accessed through specialist Employment Advisers based in Jobs and Benefits Offices/Jobcentres. Specialist staff from DES provides support and guidance to the Employment Advisers.

In addition, the Department continues to work with the Equality Commission, Employers for Disability Northern Ireland (EFDNI) and Disability organisations to promote people with disabilities to employers and to advocate on behalf of this client group.

Apprenticeship Places in the Creative Industries

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what support his Department has provided for apprenticeship places in the Creative Industries.

(AQW 10985/11-15)

Dr Farry: In order to address specific skills gaps and needs within the Creative Industries sector, my Department has introduced a pilot apprenticeship programme in the sector in conjunction with Belfast Metropolitan College and Creative and Cultural Skills. The pilot commenced in March 2011 and is due to complete on 30 September 2012. To date, all five apprentices are on target to complete their Level 3 Apprentice framework, after which the pilot will be fully evaluated.

Apprenticeships for Electricians

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships for electricians have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 10992/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes, in the electrical and building/construction sectors over the previous five financial years. The electrical figures for ApprenticeshipsNI are inclusive of two Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship participants, one of whom started during 2007-2008 and the other the following year.

While the Jobskills programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

It should be noted that my Department holds validated ApprenticeshipsNI data at sector level based on the Register of Regulated Qualifications classification system. The figures for the building and constructions sectors are therefore inclusive of joinery, plastering, machine operating, tiling and bricklaying occupations.

The number of ApprenticeshipsNI starts next year will again be determined by employers based on the needs of their industry. There are currently 11,342 participants availing of ApprenticeshipsNI training, of which 699 are following construction related frameworks.

ANNEX A**APPRENTICESHIPSNI STARTS**

Start Period	Electrical	Building and Construction
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	397	1014
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	201	737
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	126	708
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	81	546
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	86	394

JOBSKILLS STARTS

Start Period	Wood Occupations, Plastering, Tiling	Brick Occupations - Paving, Stone
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	537	130
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	98	21
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	10	1
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1	0
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0	0

Apprenticeships for Joiners

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships for joiners have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 10993/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes, in the electrical and building/construction sectors over the previous five financial years. The electrical figures for ApprenticeshipsNI are inclusive of two Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship participants, one of whom started during 2007-2008 and the other the following year.

While the Jobskills programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

It should be noted that my Department holds validated ApprenticeshipsNI data at sector level based on the Register of Regulated Qualifications classification system. The figures for the building and

constructions sectors are therefore inclusive of joinery, plastering, machine operating, tiling and bricklaying occupations.

The number of ApprenticeshipsNI starts next year will again be determined by employers based on the needs of their industry. There are currently 11,342 participants availing of ApprenticeshipsNI training, of which 699 are following construction related frameworks.

ANNEX A

APPRENTICESHIPSNI STARTS

Start Period	Electrical	Building and Construction
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1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	201	737
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1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	86	394

JOBSKILLS STARTS

Start Period	Wood Occupations, Plastering, Tiling	Brick Occupations - Paving, Stone
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	537	130
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	98	21
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	10	1
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1	0
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0	0

Apprenticeships for Plasterers

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships for plasterers have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 10994/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes, in the electrical and building/construction sectors over the previous five financial years. The electrical figures for

ApprenticeshipsNI are inclusive of two Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship participants, one of whom started during 2007-2008 and the other the following year.

While the Jobskills programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

It should be noted that my Department holds validated ApprenticeshipsNI data at sector level based on the Register of Regulated Qualifications classification system. The figures for the building and constructions sectors are therefore inclusive of joinery, plastering, machine operating, tiling and bricklaying occupations.

The number of ApprenticeshipsNI starts next year will again be determined by employers based on the needs of their industry. There are currently 11,342 participants availing of ApprenticeshipsNI training, of which 699 are following construction related frameworks.

ANNEX A

APPRENTICESHIPSNI STARTS

Start Period	Electrical	Building and Construction
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1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	201	737
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	126	708
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	81	546
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	86	394

JOBSKILLS STARTS

Start Period	Wood Occupations, Plastering, Tiling	Brick Occupations - Paving, Stone
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	537	130
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	98	21
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	10	1
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1	0
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0	0

Apprenticeships for Machine Operators

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships for machine operators in the construction industry have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 10995/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes, in the electrical and building/construction sectors over the previous five financial years. The electrical figures for ApprenticeshipsNI are inclusive of two Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship participants, one of whom started during 2007-2008 and the other the following year.

While the Jobskills programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

It should be noted that my Department holds validated ApprenticeshipsNI data at sector level based on the Register of Regulated Qualifications classification system. The figures for the building and constructions sectors are therefore inclusive of joinery, plastering, machine operating, tiling and bricklaying occupations.

The number of ApprenticeshipsNI starts next year will again be determined by employers based on the needs of their industry. There are currently 11,342 participants availing of ApprenticeshipsNI training, of which 699 are following construction related frameworks.

ANNEX A

APPRENTICESHIPSNI STARTS

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JOBSKILLS STARTS

Start Period	Wood Occupations, Plastering, Tiling	Brick Occupations - Paving, Stone
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	537	130
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	98	21
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	10	1

Start Period	Wood Occupations, Plastering, Tiling	Brick Occupations - Paving, Stone
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1	0
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0	0

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his Department or its arm's-length bodies, including colleges.

(AQW 11028/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department for Employment and Learning has no plans to increase the number of defibrillators in Departmental buildings or those used by arm's-length bodies and colleges. Weighing risk against cost the provision of defibrillators would not represent value for money.

Apprenticeships in the Construction Industry

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships in the construction industry have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 11087/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes in the construction industry over the previous five financial years. While the Jobskills Programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

The number of ApprenticeshipNI starts in the construction industry next year will again be determined by employers based on their business needs.

However, it is encouraging to note that of the current 11,342 ApprenticeshipsNI participants, 699 are following construction related frameworks.

ANNEX A

APPRENTICESHIPSNI STARTS

Start Period	Building and Construction
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	1014
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	737
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	708
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	546
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	394

JOBSKILLS STARTS

Start Period	Construction
1 Apr 2007 31 Mar 2008	992
1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	171
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	15
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0

Apprenticeships for Roof Tilers

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many apprenticeships for roof tilers have been created in each of the last five years; and how many he estimates will be created next year, given the current economic climate.

(AQW 11088/11-15)

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 and Jobskills programmes, in the electrical and building/construction sectors over the previous five financial years. The electrical figures for ApprenticeshipsNI are inclusive of two Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship participants, one of whom started during 2007-2008 and the other the following year.

While the Jobskills programme was replaced in September 2007 for new starts, existing Jobskills participants continued to progress within Jobskills until their training entitlement was complete.

It should be noted that my Department holds validated ApprenticeshipsNI data at sector level based on the Register of Regulated Qualifications classification system. The figures for the building and constructions sectors are therefore inclusive of joinery, plastering, machine operating, tiling and bricklaying occupations.

The number of ApprenticeshipsNI starts next year will again be determined by employers based on the needs of their industry. There are currently 11,342 participants availing of ApprenticeshipsNI training, of which 699 are following construction related frameworks.

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1 Apr 2008 31 Mar 2009	98	21
1 Apr 2009 31 Mar 2010	10	1
1 Apr 2010 31 Mar 2011	1	0
1 Apr 2011 31 Mar 2012	0	0

Construction Training Schools

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he has any plans to re-open the construction training schools.

(AQW 11090/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is not my intention to re-open the former training centres. A range of training provision across construction related disciplines is currently available, for example within the Further Education Colleges, other training organisations and Universities. In addition, CITB-ConstructionSkills NI organises training in the few specialist areas where mainstream training is not available. CITB-ConstructionSkills NI also pays training grants to employers out of the levy scheme in support of core workers, apprentices and entrant graduates. My Department is also funding schemes to provide accredited qualifications to experienced workers in the construction industry.

EU Students

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the eligibility criteria which determines whether a student is considered to be an EU student for the purpose of tuition fees; and whether owning a passport from an EU country is the sole determinant.

(AQW 11132/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (as amended) detail the various categories of students who qualify to have their fees regulated for undergraduate courses at publicly funded Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland.

In accordance with the Regulations, an EU National (or the family member of such a person) qualifies to have his/her fees regulated provided he/she has been ordinarily resident in the territory comprising the European Economic Area and Switzerland throughout the three year period preceding the first day

of the first academic year of the course. A passport from an EU country is not, therefore, the sole determinant.

Colleges and Community Outreach Centres that Deliver Further Education Courses

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list the colleges and community outreach centres that deliver further education courses, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 11141/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not hold the information requested by the Member.

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

Further Education Courses in the East Antrim Area

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to list the further education courses that are available in the East Antrim area, broken down by community outreach centre and further education college.

(AQW 11143/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department does not hold the information requested by the Member.

I have, therefore, passed this query to the Director of Northern Regional College, who will respond to the Member, directly.

Higher Education Strategy

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department's Higher Education Strategy was approved by the Executive, and, if so, when.

(AQW 11328/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Higher Education Strategy was not submitted to the Executive for approval as it did not cut across the responsibilities of other ministers and, therefore, there was no requirement to do so.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Logistics Solutions for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what work her Department has carried out on improving logistics solutions for small and medium sized enterprises.

(AQW 10721/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): Invest NI works with small and medium sized enterprises to help them to build their capability across their supply chain to make them more competitive in today's challenging environment. This includes:

- Providing direct advice and guidance around best practice supply chain management tools and techniques
- Supporting businesses to review their logistics practices to enable them to develop more innovative solutions in this area
- Implementing a pilot programme in the Aerospace sector to develop the extended local supply base through the adoption of the SC21 (21st Century Supply Chain) model
- Providing supply chain advice and direction to specific sectors e.g. Hospitality sector etc
- Invest NI's Sustainable Development, Trade and Skills & Strategy teams working together on potential FDI projects and co-ordinating meet the buyer events to enable local businesses to

promote their capabilities to the potential new customers with a view of developing the local supply base

- Linking with the local councils to help maximise supply chain opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises on pending capital investment programmes.

It is the intent of Invest NI to continue to develop their supply chain services offering and work at educating, coaching and mentoring small and medium sized enterprises to develop their supply chain capability and competitiveness going forward.

Application for Grant Assistance for Equipping a Tourist Information Centre Facility at Runfurly House, Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council's application for grant assistance for equipping a tourist information centre facility at Runfurly House, Dungannon was unsuccessful; and for her assessment of the quality of the application.

(AQW 10851/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The application to the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) 2011-13 from Dungannon and South Tyrone Council for 'Ranfurly House Arts and Tourist Information Centre' was not unsuccessful.

It was evaluated against the Stage 1 key scoring criteria and has been placed on a reserve list of projects that may be brought forward for detailed Stage 2 assessment and economic appraisal should additional capital funding become available to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).

As I had no involvement in the application process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the quality of the application, however feedback on the stage 1 scoring of the application has been provided to the Council by officials at NITB.

Grant Aid for Tourism Projects

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the total amount of grant aid provided to each local council for tourism projects in the last two years; (ii) the projects that were funded; (iii) the funding provided for each project; and (iv) the percentage that the grant aid represented of the total capital spend on each project.

(AQW 10853/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The table below details the information sought.

Local Authority and Projects (i) and (ii)	Grant Offered £ (iii)	Project Costs £	Percentage % (iv)
Antrim	0.00	0.00	-
Ards	0.00	0.00	-
Armagh	282,815.62	723,580.96	39.09%
St Patrick's Trail, Abbey Street Link	65,000.00	157,000.00	41.40%
Armagh Totem Poles Project	26,688.12	35,584.16	75.00%
Palace Demesne, Armagh	130,922.00	290,408.80	45.08%
Downpatrick Walking Trail, Armagh	20,205.50	40,411.00	50.00%
Saint Patrick's Festival, Armagh	20,000.00	85,000.00	23.53%
Georgian Christmas, Armagh	15,000.00	60,000.00	25.00%
Georgian Day, Armagh	5,000.00	55,177.00	9.06%

Local Authority and Projects (i) and (ii)	Grant Offered £ (iii)	Project Costs £	Percentage % (iv)
Ballymena	230,724.85	498,847.70	46.25%
Portglenone Marina	224,849.85	487,097.70	46.16%
Slemish, Broughshane	5,875.00	11,750.00	50.00%
Ballymoney	0.00	£0.00	
Banbridge	45,000.00	90,000.00	50.00%
Banbridge TIC	45,000.00	90,000.00	50.00%
Belfast	2,060,000.00	5,100,829.81	40.39%
European Pipe Band Championships and Piping is Class Festival	20,000.00	203,182.00	9.84%
Titanic and Maritime Heritage Signage	190,000.00	450,825.81	42.14%
Titanic Festival	1,400,000.00	3,438,822.00	40.71%
MTV EMA's	450,000.00	1,008,000.00	44.64%
Carrickfergus	0.00	0.00	
Castlereagh	0.00	0.00	
Coleraine	600,045.24	3,504,824.50	17.12%
Northern Ireland Community Archive	22,500.00	30,000.00	75.00%
Portstewart Strand Interpretation	15,215.24	30,430.50	50.00%
East Strand Public Art	49,724.00	103,648.00	47.97%
Lansdowne Shelter & Lighting	145,000.00	305,000.00	47.54%
Station Square, Portrush	250,000.00	2,403,484.00	10.40%
East Strand Lighting	51,606.00	103,212.00	50.00%
Northern Ireland International Airshow 2011	6,000.00	169,050.00	3.55%
Olympic Torch Culture, Arts and Sports Festival	30,000.00	130,000.00	23.08%
NI International Airshow 2012	10,000.00	170,000.00	5.88%
Portrush Regatta	20,000.00	60,000.00	33.33%
Cookstown	0.00	0.00	
Craigavon	0.00	0.00	
Londonderry	3,986,686.00	12,409,576.00	32.13%
Walled City Lighting Strategy	1,426,686.00	2,018,168.00	70.69%
Restoration of Guild Hall	2,500,000.00	9,599,436.00	26.04%
City of Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival 2011	30,000.00	285,740.00	10.50%

Local Authority and Projects (i) and (ii)	Grant Offered £ (iii)	Project Costs £	Percentage % (iv)
Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival 2012	20,000.00	274,676.00	7.28%
Banks of the Foyle Halloween Carnival 2011	10,000.00	231,556.00	4.32%
Down	2,656,103.28	7,622,546.33	34.85%
Slieve Patrick	43,514.80	94,529.60	46.03%
Local TIC Points	6,680.00	13,360.00	50.00%
Twelve Arches	58,462.00	116,923.00	50.00%
Inner Bay, Dundrum	93,104.00	186,707.84	49.87%
Dundrum Main Street	54,697.00	109,393.00	50.00%
Greenbanks, Dundrum	21,990.08	43,980.16	50.00%
Mourne Mountain Bike Trails	1,414,691.25	1,894,255.00	74.68%
Downpatrick Walking Trail	20,205.50	40,411.00	50.00%
St Patrick's Grave	4,692.00	9,384.00	50.00%
Down Cultural Development Plan	288,991.00	3,239,991.00	8.92%
Down Arts Centre	390,572.00	1,367,563.53	28.56%
Down Totem Poles	16,438.65	21,918.20	75.00%
Down Walking Routes	186,065.00	372,130.00	50.00%
Preparing for Market - Exporting Tourism	56,000.00	112,000.00	50.00%
Dungannon	0.00	0.00	
Fermanagh	0.00	0.00	
Larne	132,802.50	265,605.00	50.00%
Glenarm&Carnfunnock Visitor Infrastructure	132,802.50	265,605.00	50.00%
Limavady	31,237.50	62,475.00	50.00%
Limavady Explore See Do Arts & Sculpture Trail	31,237.50	62,475.00	50.00%
Lisburn	30,000.00	210,462.00	14.25%
3 Day Hot Air Balloon Festival	15,000.00	93,712.00	16.01%
2012 Northern Ireland Balloon Festival	15,000.00	116,750.00	12.85%
Magherafelt	£0.00	£0.00	
Moyle	315,898.91	644,352.07	49.03%
Ballycastle Town Trails	70,500.00	153,554.22	45.91%
Ballintoy Harbour	37,683.00	75,366.00	50.00%

Local Authority and Projects (i) and (ii)	Grant Offered £ (iii)	Project Costs £	Percentage % (iv)
Ballycastle Seafront	120,655.27	241,310.55	50.00%
Ballycastle Harbour	29,821.86	59,643.73	50.00%
Rathlin Harbour	54,238.62	108,477.25	50.00%
Coolranny	3,000.16	6,000.32	50.00%
Newry and Mourne	310,577.43	623,485.98	49.81%
Annalong Coastal Path	163,268.85	331,321.88	49.28%
Whitewater Visitor Amenity Upgrade	41,659.00	83,318.00	50.00%
Narrow Water & Mill Bill Amenity Signage	16,500.00	33,000.00	50.00%
Bagenal's Castle	48,310.00	96,620.00	50.00%
Donaghaguy Reservoir	37,160.00	74,320.00	50.00%
Bagenal's Castle Totem Pole	3,679.58	4,906.10	75.00%
Newtownabbey	0.00	0.00	
North Down	58,716.58	113,960.00	51.52%
North Down Mourne Coastal Route Improvements	11,891.00	23,782.00	50.00%
North Down Museum	10,386.00	22,771.00	45.61%
North Down Museum Christian Heritage Display	28,232.00	56,464.00	50.00%
North Down Totem Project	8,207.58	10,943.00	75.00%
Omagh	0.00	0.00	
Strabane	0.00	0.00	
Totals	10,740,607.91	31,870,545.35	33.7%

* Results are based on offers made in the requested timeframe.

Application for Grant Assistance on the Extension of the Dungannon Park Tourist Caravan Site

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council's application for grant assistance on the extension of the Dungannon Park Tourist Caravan Site was unsuccessful; and for her assessment of the quality of the application.

(AQW 10855/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The application to the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) 2011-13 from Dungannon and South Tyrone Council for the proposed extension of the Dungannon Park Tourist Caravan Site was not unsuccessful.

It was evaluated against the Stage 1 key scoring criteria and has been placed on a reserve list of projects that may be brought forward for detailed Stage 2 assessment and economic appraisal should additional capital funding become available to the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB).

As I had no involvement in the application process, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the quality of the application, however feedback on the stage 1 scoring of the application has been provided to the Council by officials at NITB.

Funding from NI Screen to Film Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much funding Home Box Office received from NI Screen to film Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 10879/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Game of Thrones is a major international TV series by US based Home Box Office (HBO), arguably the world's most successful international producer of high end cinematic TV productions. Northern Ireland Screen, through its funding support from Invest NI, has provided HBO with assistance of £6.05m, under the Northern Ireland Screen Fund, to secure the pilot episode and the first two series of this award winning medieval fantasy drama. This assistance has generated in excess of £43m direct spend in the local economy.

Game of Thrones is a prime example of the type of production Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen wish to secure for Northern Ireland and is a key element contributing to the continued success of our screen industries. It was recently announced that Series 3 of Game of Thrones will also film here and Northern Ireland Screen is currently in advanced discussions with HBO to secure the maximum economic benefits possible for Northern Ireland from this forthcoming production.

Home Box Office Filming Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an estimate of the financial benefit derived from Home Box Office filming Game of Thrones in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 10880/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Northern Ireland Screen, through its funding support from Invest NI, has provided some £6.05m of financial assistance to Home Box Office (HBO) to secure the pilot episode and the first two series of Game of Thrones. This assistance has generated in excess of £43m of direct spend for the Northern Ireland economy. Direct Northern Ireland spend includes all expenditure generated in the local economy including wages and salaries of Northern Ireland resident cast and crew, hotel bills, facilities hire, transport hire and constructions costs.

HBO has recently announced that Series Three of Game of Thrones will also film in Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Screen is currently in advanced discussions with the award winning US broadcaster to secure the maximum economic benefits possible for Northern Ireland from this forthcoming production.

Throughout its lifespan it is likely that Game of Thrones will deliver the widest media exposure Northern Ireland has ever achieved outside of politics and the Troubles. Tourism Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board have, through this drama series, the opportunity to showcase many tourist attractions including the North Coast, Castle Ward, the Mourne Mountains, and Ballintoy to name but a few.

In addition Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen are utilising Game of Thrones in their international sales pitch. The credibility of association with international projects of this nature and scale has significant added value potential for the Northern Ireland economy.

Filming of a Third Series of Game of Thrones

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department plans to maximise the opportunities resulting from the filming of a third series of Game of Thrones.

(AQW 10881/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen are focussed on maximising the economic value of each series of Game of Thrones to Northern Ireland and in ensuring that HBO continues to utilise Northern Ireland as its primary filming base for all future series of this popular TV drama. Northern

Ireland Screen is also working with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board and Tourism Ireland to explore opportunities to showcase Northern Ireland from a tourism perspective on the back of Game of Thrones and continues to market Northern Ireland as a key production centre through advertising in key trade publications and attendance at key screen industry trade events.

In addition both Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen are utilising Game of Thrones in their international sales pitch. The credibility of association with international projects of this nature and scale has significant added value potential for the Northern Ireland economy.

Extension of the Gas Network

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to provide copies of any research commissioned by her Department on the extension of the gas network.

(AQW 11244/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A copy of the summary report of the 2010 feasibility study, 'Potential Extension of Natural Gas and Related Services in Northern Ireland', which was jointly commissioned by the Department and the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation, is available on the DETI website at http://www.deti.gov.uk/potential_extension_of_natural_gas_and_related_services_in_ni_-_feasibility_study_executive_summary.pdf.

Production Companies

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, further to the announcement about filming the third series of Game of Thrones, what additional steps are being taken to attract production companies to Northern Ireland.

(AQO 1921/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen are focussed on maximising the economic value of each series of Game of Thrones to Northern Ireland and in ensuring that HBO continues to utilise Northern Ireland as its primary filming base for all future series of this popular TV drama.

Northern Ireland Screen actively markets Northern Ireland as a production centre through attendance at key trade events including Kidscreen in New York, MIPTV in Cannes and the Cannes Film Festival among others.

Work is at an advanced stage in Belfast's Titanic Quarter to develop new high end sound stages, to complement the existing Paint Hall facility, as a key tool to attract international productions to Northern Ireland. In addition, Invest NI and Northern Ireland Screen are utilising Game of Thrones in their international sales pitch. The credibility of association with international production projects of this nature and scale has significant added value potential for the Northern Ireland economy.

Department of the Environment

Enforcement Action in the North Down Borough Council Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the average time taken to implement an Enforcement Action in the North Down Borough Council area.

(AQW 9438/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): It is only possible to provide details of a general nature on current and previous enforcement cases. Enforcement investigations are mainly carried out following notification from the public that permission has not been granted or that work has not being carried out in accordance with approved plans, etc. Only a small proportion of investigations result in formal enforcement action. In the current business year to date, four enforcement notices have been served in the North Down Borough Council area. The length of time that was required to reach this stage varied for each one and on average was 3 years and 10 months.

The Department is currently working to up-date data held on every current case in its recently introduced computer system. It is not possible at this point in time to provide up-to-date performance figures or general trends until this exercise is complete.

Electric Cars

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment (i) how many electric cars are used by his Department; and (ii) whether he intends to use an electric car as his Ministerial vehicle or for some of his Ministerial duties.

(AQW 10351/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Transport overall, and the private car in particular, is a major contributor to our greenhouse gas emissions and I recognise the role which electric vehicles could play in tackling this challenge while retaining flexibility over transport choice. Although there are currently no electric cars being used by my Department, I and my Ministerial colleague Danny Kennedy recently agreed to each undertake a short trial of an electric vehicle for our Ministerial duties.

I was very impressed with the electric car and although it may not be suitable for all journeys I have asked my officials to work with their DRD colleagues to develop a business case to determine whether the purchase of a number of electric vehicles would be viable.

The global momentum towards the electrification of transport is gathering and it is encouraging to see that as a result of the “ecar” project several councils have already committed to the purchase of electric vehicles. However I believe we can all do more and I would encourage government Departments and local councils to consider all available opportunities to switch to, and promote, electric vehicle usage.

Statutory Off Road Notification Certificate

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether a Statutory Off Road Notification Certificate must be applied for annually for a vehicle that has been broken for spare parts.

(AQW 10380/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The law required that the registered keeper of a vehicle, including a vehicle that has been broken up or is being kept for parts, must either license it or, if it is being kept off the road, make an annual statutory off-road notification (SORN). SORN indicates that the vehicle is off the public road and therefore not liable for vehicle excise duty.

The keeper must continue to make SORN declarations until the vehicle has been transferred to another keeper or passed to an authorised treatment facility to be disposed off legally.

I understand that the Department for Transport, which has policy responsibility for vehicle licensing throughout the UK, is currently considering the need for annual SORN declarations.

Vehicles Required to be Crushed

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment under what circumstances a vehicle is required to be crushed.

(AQW 10381/11-15)

Mr Attwood: By law, an end-of-life vehicle must be taken to an authorised treatment facility (ATF) to be destroyed in an environmentally friendly way. The ATF notifies the Driver & Vehicle Agency that the vehicle has been destroyed and issues the person presenting the vehicle with a certificate of destruction. This effectively closes down the vehicle record and ends the registered keeper's responsibility for the vehicle.

Where an unlicensed vehicle has been wheelclamped by the contractor and it has not been reclaimed, the contractor, under the terms of the wheelclamping contract, the contractor makes the decision as to whether to sell the vehicle or pass it to an ATF for destruction.

There is no waste legislation which requires the crushing of cars. However, waste operators are required to recycle as much of a vehicle as possible.

End-of-life vehicles (ELVs) are classified as hazardous waste and must be depolluted in accordance with European legislation, prior to dismantling, crushing or shredding.

The End-of Life Vehicles Directive (2000/53/EC), which was adopted on 20 October 2000, introduced measures to promote and increase recycling and to further protect the environment by requiring adequate depollution. It also set minimum technical requirements for the treatment of ELVs.

ELV treatment facilities carrying out depollution must be licensed as ATFs by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The Waste Management Licensing Regulations (NI) 2003 (as amended), Schedule 5, Part II, specify minimum technical requirements for the keeping and treatment of ELVs.

Vehicles Broken for Parts

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment what is the procedure where a vehicle has been broken for parts and is no longer usable.

(AQW 10426/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The law requires that the registered keeper of a vehicle must either license it or, if it is being kept off the road, make a statutory off-road notification (SORN).

If a vehicle keeper has broken up a vehicle but is keeping the parts, they must make a SORN declaration every year to let the Driver & Vehicle Agency know that the vehicle is unlicensed and being kept off the public road.

Only when the parts that remain of the vehicle are presented to an authorised treatment facility and a certificate of destruction has been issued is the vehicle record closed down.

Local Council Staff: Redundancy or Retirement Packages

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 8062/11-15, what position did each person hold prior to their retirement and to what position were they subsequently re-employed.

(AQW 10451/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I can advise that one of the three officers involved was re-employed in the same position and that two were re-employed in a lower position.

I am not able to provide further details since to do so could breach the principles of the Data Protection Act and be unfair to the officers involved.

Proposed Mechanical Biological Treatment and Energy from Waste Facilities

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment when arc21 will announce the preferred bidder for the proposed Mechanical Biological Treatment and Energy from Waste facilities.

(AQW 10476/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The appointment and announcement of a Preferred Bidder by arc21 remains subject to the completion of several procurement process and governance steps. arc21 currently expect this to be sometime in November or December 2012.

arc21 will make any appointment of a preferred bidder public by an announcement on its website and an appropriate media release issued via its communications advisors.

Proposed Mechanical Biological Treatment and Energy from Waste Facilities

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment when he expects arc21 to submit planning applications for the proposed Mechanical Biological Treatment and Energy from Waste facilities.

(AQW 10477/11-15)

Mr Attwood: arc21 has advised (week beginning 16 April) that its bidder's intention is to submit a draft Environmental Statement in June 2012. Assuming that this date is adhered to and the PAD then commences in the summer, a formal planning application would then be submitted in the first quarter of 2013.

Old Railway Station Building, Cultra

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what steps are being taken to preserve the Old Railway Station Building, Cultra.

(AQW 10483/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Cultra Station House, Cultra, County Down is a grade B1 listed building. The extent of listing covers the former Station Master's house and station, constructed as one building c.1880-1899. A Building Preservation Notice (spot listing) was served on the building on 29 June 2007, and the listing was confirmed on 12 December 2007.

NIEA has been concerned about the condition of the property and has been involved in discussion with the owner. After NIEA first raised concerns some steps to secure the building were taken. However, a further warning letter was sent to the owner on 29 March 2012, seeking additional works to secure the building. A reply was received on 2 April, indicating willingness to carry out any necessary works. A meeting has been arranged on site with the owner, to agree a schedule of works necessary to secure the building. It is expected that some progress will be made in the near future.

In addition, the NIEA Principal Conservation Architect is meeting with Cllr Andrew Muir (Councillor with North Down Borough Council, and Vice Chair of the Alliance Party), Larry Thompson and representatives of both the Holywood Conservation Group and Holywood Old School Preservation Trust on the 16 May, to discuss proposals for the building. This is a follow on meeting from an earlier one with the same individuals and groups plus the Director of Built Heritage in NIEA and a representative from NITB and NMNI (Cultra) at which a way forward was charted, with local interests/groups in the lead and with the offer of advice, support and, ultimately possibly also grant-aid from NIEA.

Expansion of Bridgewater Park, Banbridge

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on his Department's position on the expansion of Bridgewater Park, Banbridge, including the erection of the proposed Tesco Extra Superstore.

(AQW 10498/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Planning permission for this development was granted by the Department on 12 March 2012.

A legal challenge to the Department's decision has been mounted by Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIIRTA). The matter is due to be heard by the High Court on 24 September 2012.

Belfast City Council's 'Further Loughside Community Benefit Statement'

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will consider Belfast City Council's 'Further Loughside Community Benefit Statement' in relation to planning application Z/2009/1607/F, as part of his Department's assessment of the Article 31 planning application for the proposed mixed-use development on lands at Loughside Recreation Centre and playing fields, the former Tramway Depot and the Mount Vernon open space on the Shore Road, Belfast.

(AQW 10519/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am advised by my officials that the 'Further Loughside Community Benefit Statement' formed part of a package of further information that was submitted to the Department in March 2012. The information will be taken into consideration as part of the Department's ongoing assessment of the planning application. I expect to receive a report and recommendation from my officials in respect of the application before end of June 2012.

Planning Applications for Hydro-Electric Power Schemes

Mr Ó hÓisín asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning applications for hydro-electric power schemes are currently in the planning system; and how many have been approved to date.
(AQW 10803/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There are currently 35 planning applications for hydro-electric power schemes in the planning system awaiting decisions.

Since 2003 the Department has received 66 planning applications for hydro-electric schemes. Of these, 27 have been approved, 1 has been refused, 3 have been withdrawn and 35 are under consideration awaiting decisions.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the Review of Public Administration.
(AQW 10870/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am currently managing the reform of local government in line with the 2015 timetable proposed in the Executive's Programme for Government 2011-15.

I am taking forward two main pieces of legislation required to give effect to local government reorganisation, the first of which is the draft Local Government (Boundaries) Order (NI) 2012, which was laid before the Assembly on 24 April 2012. The second is the Local Government (Reorganisation) Bill which, subject to the Executive's agreement, I intend to introduce during the autumn session to give effect to the Executive's decisions on the future shape of local government.

In addition, to progressing the Bill through the Assembly, a programme of subordinate legislation and guidance will be taken forward to give effect to the Bill. This will include subordinate legislation on shadow arrangements, new governance arrangements, the new ethical standards regime and community planning.

I have also established a number of implementation structures to manage and integrate the work required to bring about the delivery of the overall reform programme. These include:

- a Regional Transition Committee (RTC) to provide high level political leadership and act as the main driver for implementing local government reform;
- a Regional Transition Operational Board to support the RTC and co-ordinate operational delivery, which comprises officers and officials from central and local government;
- a number of Task and Finish Working Groups to undertake key areas of work on transferring functions, finance, HR, legislation, programme delivery, communications and systems convergence, and
- local Voluntary Transition Committees to manage operations and commence convergence of their constituent councils on the ground.

The inaugural meeting of the Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, took place on 25 April 2012 and was attended by the Chairs of the 11 Voluntary Transition Committees including representatives of NILGA and officials from central and local government in support.

MOT Test Centres

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on plans for MOT test centres.
(AQW 10875/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The equipment used for vehicle testing at the Driver & Vehicle Agency's 15 test centres is being refreshed in a programme which started in August 2011 and is due to be completed by July 2012. The refresh programme, which involves some replacement of equipment is to ensure the continued reliability and consistency of the service, is provided under the current Private Finance Initiative contract.

Due to the scale of the work involved it has been necessary to close centres for periods of between four and six days depending on the size of the centre and the number of test lanes.

The programme is currently proceeding as planned with 12 of the centres having been completed and with only Newry, Coleraine and Mallusk still to be done.

Recently Implemented Changes to the MOT Process

The changes to the MOT test introduced as a result of European Commission Directive 2010/48/EU involve the addition of a number of new testable items including dashboard warning lights, towbars and trailer sockets.

The changes have been introduced on a phased basis. From 1 February 2012, a vehicle examiner who identified a defect relating to the new standards has been notifying the customer on an advisory basis, while from 1 May 2012 any defect relating to the new standards will be treated in the same way as any other defect. This is in line with the implementation process adopted by the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency in Britain.

Strategic Review

The Department has recently commenced a strategic review of options for the future delivery of vehicle testing in Northern Ireland.

Further details on the review and its findings will be provided to the Environment Committee as progress is made.

The Department continues to monitor European legislation which may have an impact on MOT testing in NI. At this stage, however, there are no immediate proposals which will affect NI's testing regime.

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his department or its arm's-length bodies.
(AQW 10883/11-15)

Mr Attwood: My department currently does not have defibrillators deployed in any of the buildings used by it or its agencies.

I have noted the recent publicity involving cases where the availability of this equipment has proven to be beneficial. Consequently I have asked officials to consult with the Occupational Health Service and report back to me so that I can decide on a policy for the deployment of defibrillators in the Department.

Planning Permissions

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of the Environment, given the economic downturn, whether his Department would consider extending the five year validity period for granted planning permissions.
(AQW 10899/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department would already give consideration to granting planning permission for a longer period of time where an applicant indicates in making a planning application that this may be necessary, and can demonstrate that there are clear and justifiable reasons for doing so. An example of this may be an application for renewable energy development, where additional consents are required to be put in place following issue of planning approval. Requests made in this way would be considered on a case by case basis.

Under current planning legislation, there is the facility for those who do not wish to commence development to apply for the renewal of planning permission as the time limit for implementation of the planning approval approaches. For those who do not wish to apply for renewal of planning permission there is the opportunity to commence development on the site in order to implement the planning permission and prevent the permission from lapsing. To assist and provide clarification, my officials have published guidance on this issue 'Guidance on Renewing Planning Permission and Starting Development' which is available to view at DOE Planning Portal. This guidance includes useful examples of when the Department would accept that development has commenced in accordance with the approved planning permission.

However, I have been considering this particular issue, including practice in this regard in other jurisdictions and a potential reduction of planning renewal fees (as part of a current review of planning fees). This assessment is to acknowledge the current economic circumstances, market demand and banking practice (etc) and to interrogate where planning could act to help.

Proposed Taxi Meters

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he will review the calibration of the proposed taxi meters to reflect local economic constraints in areas such as Derry.

(AQW 10902/11-15)

Mr Attwood: From 23 November 2011 to 17 February 2012 the Department consulted on proposals to introduce a Northern Ireland wide maximum taxi fare; linked to this was a proposed requirement to have all taxis fitted with taximeters. The proposed maximum fare was calculated on the basis that drivers would be able to cover their costs and make a reasonable living. This fare was to be set as a maximum to prevent overcharging of customers; drivers would be able to decide on and offer lower fares if they wished.

From responses to the consultation, it is clear that current fare levels across Northern Ireland vary significantly as does the customer's experience and expectation on the level of charges. There is a particular disparity in fares in the North West and the Department is considering a range of options to address this. Responses to the consultation suggested that the taxi industry would prefer to have taximeters pre-calibrated with the discounted fare rate of their choice; the Department is considering how best to provide for this within the regulatory framework.

Officials are currently completing analysis of the responses to the consultation and, based on this work, I will make my decision on the most appropriate means of bringing forward proposals that will deliver a safe and fit for purpose taxi industry in Northern Ireland that allows those involved in it to make a living from it.

I am aware of the issue and the member's suggestion to which I am giving full consideration.

Narrow Water Bridge Planning Application

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether his Department will process the Narrow Water Bridge planning application before September 2012; and (ii) whether his Department can expedite the application due to the social and economic benefits that would flow from the development of the bridge.

(AQW 10909/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I can advise that the Southern Area Planning Office is already processing the planning application for the Bridge at Narrow Water as a matter of priority. The proposal raises a number of important issues given the sites location including its position adjacent to a scheduled monument, road safety and navigation issues. The application will be dealt with as quickly as possible and I have advised officials to be vigilant in managing the application. Clearly, the timeframe will rely on prompt responses from consultees, the applicant and further engagement with Louth Council.

Independent of this is the issue of funding and the view, for example, of the Special EU Programme Body.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment when the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan will come into effect.

(AQW 10911/11-15)

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 considering the extensive PAC recommendations in order to prepare the Plan for publication. Significant work has been undertaken in relation to the individual Districts within the Plan area, and work on adoption is progressing.

I fully acknowledge that the delay in publishing BMAP is frustrating, and I am considering what steps can be taken to address this issue. I anticipate making a judgement on the matter in the near future.

Clause 24 of the Draft Northern Ireland Marine Bill

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has considered how Clause 24 of the draft Northern Ireland Marine Bill might impact on country sport and leisure.

(AQW 10984/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Northern Ireland Marine Bill will provide for a new national designation process for the establishment of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in our territorial waters to enhance protection for nationally important marine wildlife and habitats.

Clause 24 gives the Department the power to make byelaws for the protection of features of an MCZ. Byelaws will be site specific and made on a case-by-case basis. It is envisaged that most MCZs will be designated primarily for the protection of seabed features and as such any related byelaws will have little impact on country sport.

Byelaws are intended to manage activities which could be detrimental to a MCZ and are not regulated or the responsibility of a government department. Examples of such activities include the use of jet skis, diving, or vessel access/speeds. Also, anchoring by leisure craft could cause impacts by damaging delicate seagrass beds, fanshells and other sensitive marine habitats/species. Byelaws could be used to control this on a seasonal or permanent basis, throughout the whole or part of the site. The level of restriction will depend on the feature(s) being protected.

Planning Management Board Referrals

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 10478/11-15, to detail the cases where a decision was overturned due to the number of residential units involved.

(AQW 11068/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department had concerns in relation to the number of residential units proposed in all five of the Management Board Referral applications cited in AQW10478/11-15. The application numbers and refusal reasons are detailed in the attached annex.

ANNEX 1**F/2007/0432/F**

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD 1 criterion (a) of Planning Policy Statement 7 (Quality Residential Environments) in that the proposed development, if permitted, together with existing and approved apartment schemes will result in unacceptable damage to the environmental quality, residential amenity and local character of the surrounding area.

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD 1 criterion (a) of Planning Policy Statement 7 (Quality Residential Environments) in that the proposed development, if permitted, would create an unacceptable precedent and the cumulative impact of similar development will result in unacceptable damage to the environmental quality, residential amenity and local character of the surrounding area.

Q/2007/0720/F

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD1 of the Department's Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments in that the development would, if permitted, cause unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality and residential amenity of an established residential use and inappropriate layout, scale and massing.

M/2006/1492/F

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD1 of the Department's Planning Policy Statement 7: (PPS 7) Quality Residential Environments and the Dungannon & South Tyrone Area Plan 2010 Plan Policy SETT 1, in that it has not been demonstrated that the proposal is sensitive to the size, character and function of the settlement in terms of scale, form, design and use of materials.

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD1 of the Department's Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments in that the development would, if permitted, cause unacceptable damage to the local character, environmental quality and residential amenity of an established residential area by reason of the intensification of the existing residential use and inappropriate layout, scale and massing.

U/2006/0209/O

The proposal is contrary to Policy QD1 of the Department's Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments in that the development would, if permitted, cause unacceptable damage to the local character of an established residential area by reason of an increase in the scale, form and density of development which represents an overdevelopment of the site and is out of keeping with the character of the area which consists of dwellings with individual curtilages.

W/2005/0668/F

The proposal is contrary to policy QD1(a) of the Department's Planning Policy Statement 7: Quality Residential Environments in that it is out of character with the surrounding context, as the height, scale and massing of the proposed apartments would result in a development that is incongruous in the village of Crawfordsburn and this, when combined with its relationship to other buildings in the vicinity, would be detrimental to visual amenity.

Planning Management Board Referrals

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 10478/11-15, how many of the proposals were (i) solely; or (ii) partly in relation to residential units.

(AQW 11070/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Of the five applications referred to in AQW 10478/11-15 in relation to Management Board Referral cases, (i) four applications were solely for residential development and (ii) one application included residential development as part of a mixed use scheme.

Adria site, Strabane

Ms Boyle asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to change the planning designation of the Adria site, Strabane from industrial use to mix use, to facilitate the development of the site which has become the main focal point for anti-social behaviour and vandalism which affects residents in the adjoining residential areas of Melmount Road and the old Ballycolman areas of the town.

(AQW 11078/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Current planning policy permits the redevelopment of the Adria site, Strabane and therefore it is unnecessary to amend the Area Plan designation which does not specifically zone the site for a particular use. Any proposals may be considered on their merits in line with regional policy (PPS4).

I am aware that the site was previously subject to a planning application (ref J/2006/0907/0) for a mixed use development which was refused planning permission and subsequently dismissed at appeal. The refusal related to concerns at the time that there was a shortage of industrial land available and it was important to maintain this essential industrial land supply.

The need for industrial and business land in Strabane has now been addressed in the short to medium term with the approval of 12 hectares of industrial land at Melmount Road and a mixed use development approved at Strabane/Lifford Road. Therefore a mixed use development would now be acceptable in principle at the Adria site.

The Department is currently considering a planning application on the site for residential development, enterprise units, open space and a school (J/2011/0361/0). This application will be considered on its merits in line with policy.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Expected Growth of the Economy

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 8783/11-15, why Northern Ireland does not have an independent growth forecast for the 2012/13 financial year; and whether he will consider introducing a growth forecast.

(AQW 9761/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) is responsible for producing official, independent growth forecasts for the UK. The OBR does not produce regional forecasts and much of the data required for the national model that is used to generate the UK forecasts is not available at a regional level.

Some local academics and economic commentators provide forecasts for the Northern Ireland economy, however, these are often reliant on a wide range of assumptions about how the economy behaves. While these forecasts provide a useful barometer of local economic conditions, these can vary and are commonly subject to revision.

I do not believe there is any real merit in producing a further DFP forecast that would be firstly costly to develop, and secondly which might not be any more reliable or robust given the regional data limitations that we know exist.

Special EU Programmes Body: Peace III Funding

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, for each of the last three years, to detail (i) how many groups that benefited from PEACE III had their funding withdrawn by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB); (ii) what was the rate or level of disallowance in each case; and (iii) how much the SEUPB has recovered from the groups.

(AQW 10363/11-15)

Mr Wilson: In the last three years, SEUPB has withdrawn PEACE III funding from four organisations in respect of seven separate projects. In each case, the full value of each Letter of Offer has been disallowed, and all of the funding that had been paid to the project is eligible for recovery. This is detailed in the table overleaf. No funds have been recovered to date.

Year Investigation Commenced	Organisation	Project	Letter of Offer value (£)	Percentage of Letter of Offer value disallowed	Amount Eligible for Recovery (£)
2010	FAIR	SACRED	324,628	100%	155,931
	FAIR	CAPABLE	400,725	100%	187,578
	FAIR	EINSTEIN	155,031	100%	25,250
	SAVER / NAVER	Practical Steps Towards Reconciliation	469,686	100%	208,035
2011	SEEDS	One World Centre	60,000	100%	36,951
	Forward Learning	Thin End of the Wedge	1,497,753	100%	429,275
	Forward Learning	Knowing Me Knowing You	309,215	100%	151,789

Special EU Programmes Body

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what processes are followed by the Special EU Programmes Body when it investigates funded groups and subsequently withdraws funding; and (ii) whether the processes in place are natural justice compliant.

(AQW 10365/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) operates within a strict regulatory environment and, as required by European Commission Regulations, adheres to a number of procedures and protocols in relation to the identification and management of financial irregularities. SEUPB's Certifying Authority has the responsibility for reporting irregularities and ensuring that any amount paid as a result of an irregularity is recovered from the Lead Beneficiary. Article 61 of EU's General Provisions Regulation No.1083/2006 outlines the key roles and responsibilities of the Certifying Authority, the most important being that the Certifying Authority must ensure the claims submitted to the European Commission are based on verifiable supporting documents and comply with applicable Community and national rules.

SEUPB has produced formal Guidance Notes on the treatment of irregularities and fraud within the PEACE III Programme. These are available on the SEUPB website at the following locations:

http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/PEACE_III_Guidance_Note_13_-_Treatment_of_Irregularities.sflb.ashx

http://www.seupb.eu/Libraries/PEACE_III_Reports_Pubs/PEACE_III_Guidance_Note_3_-_Guidance_on_Fraud.sflb.ashx

In addition, SEUPB has an internal fraud policy which sets its fraud response plan and whistle-blowing procedures.

All claims submitted by Lead Partners undergo a rigorous vouching and verification process managed by SEUPB's Financial Control Unit.

The Financial Control Unit takes action to follow-up and correct all recorded irregularities, recovering grant where applicable and taking steps to ensure the irregularity is not repeated. Where an irregularity involves an incorrect payment of grant, action must be taken to recover any overpayment. If recovery proves to be impossible, or the Financial Control Unit wishes to recover less than the full amount due, the matter must be referred to the Certifying Authority and the relevant Accountable Departments for consideration for write off and removal from the declared expenditure to the European Commission.

If the Financial Control Unit has a suspicion of fraud, theft or corruption then the details are reported to the SEUPB's Managing Authority and Certifying Authority.

In accordance with its fraud policy, SEUPB ensures that investigations into potential fraud or corruption are investigated vigorously and promptly. SEUPB holds a Service Level Agreement for the provision of fraud investigation services with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Central Investigation Service. Upon notification of a suspected fraud the SEUPB will consult with the Central Investigation Service and appropriate audit authorities and arrange for an investigation. The body carrying out the investigation is responsible for collating evidence and documentation and interviewing key members of the organisation. SEUPB informs the Member States and relevant Accountable Departments, and refers to the Northern Ireland Audit Office and the Comptroller and Auditor General in the Republic of Ireland. If appropriate, SEUPB will also make contact with the police.

During routine audits, funded groups will be afforded every opportunity to respond to the queries raised. However, if the police take the investigation forward, SEUPB cannot have any further contact with the project until that investigation has concluded.

SEUPB must take the appropriate legal and/or disciplinary action in all cases where that would be justified; and make any necessary changes to systems and procedures to try to ensure that similar frauds will not happen again.

The SEUPB considers that its procedures are natural justice compliant.

Civil Service: Essential Car Users

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many Civil Service staff currently receive a payment for being an essential car user.

(AQW 10531/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As at March 2012, 111 non-general service civil servants in the Youth Justice Agency of the Department of Justice received a payment for being an essential car user. These staff transferred to the NICS from the former NIO on 12 April 2010 on the devolution of policing and justice functions. The total cost paid to these staff is shown for the two financial years since that date.

Financial Year	Total spend
2010/ 2011	£127,919.11
2011/ 2012	£128,815.88

Civil Service: Essential Car Users

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the cost of payments to staff in the Civil Service who are essential car users in each of the last five years.

(AQW 10532/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As at March 2012, 111 non-general service civil servants in the Youth Justice Agency of the Department of Justice received a payment for being an essential car user. These staff transferred to the NICS from the former NIO on 12 April 2010 on the devolution of policing and justice functions. The total cost paid to these staff is shown for the two financial years since that date.

Financial Year	Total spend
2010/ 2011	£127,919.11
2011/ 2012	£128,815.88

Orange Order Event to be held in the Stormont Estate

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the approval for an Orange Order event to be held in the Stormont Estate on the centenary of the Ulster Covenant (i) which groups his Department consulted; (ii) which departmental branch carried out the consultation; (iii) what criteria his Department used to decide whether this event could take place; (iv) whether his Department will use the same criteria for all future requests for the use of the Stormont Estate; and (v) what restrictions are in place for the event.

(AQW 10790/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Department has not consulted any groups in relation to this event.

The event was approved “subject to the detailed arrangements and relevant paperwork in relation to the event being agreed with the Department’s Estate Management Unit and other relevant authorities” and the same criteria are used for all major events.

Possible Job Losses at the First Trust Bank

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the discussions he has had with the Minister for Finance, Michael Noonan TD, and the senior management of the Allied Irish Bank Group in relation to the possible job losses at the First Trust Bank.

(AQW 10840/11-15)

Mr Wilson: While both Minister Noonan and I did not attend the recent North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Institutional Meeting on 27 April 2012, the First and Deputy Ministers did discuss the issue of job losses in First Trust and the wider banking sector with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade and stressed our concerns regarding the impact job losses would have in Northern Ireland. Irish Ministers indicated that the downsizing of staff as a result of bank restructuring – including in the Allied Irish Bank Group / First Trust Bank – was a concern for them also and advised that the Irish Government was working with the banks on this.

I plan to follow up on this matter with Michael Noonan TD in the margins of the next North-South Ministerial Council plenary meeting in June 2012. In my previous discussions with Mr Noonan (and his predecessor) regarding the potential impact of bank restructuring we have agreed that Northern Ireland should not be disproportionately affected by any restructuring.

While I have not discussed the issue of redundancies directly with senior management in Allied Irish Bank / First Trust I met with Mr Larry Broderick, General Secretary Irish Bank Officials Association (IBOA), on 1 May 2012 and got an update from the IBOA on the ongoing situation regarding job losses in our local banks. While this situation is largely outside of the Executive’s influence, I will be monitoring it very closely and will continue to engage with all parties involved as and when appropriate.

Possible Job Losses at the First Trust Bank

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action his Department is taking in relation to the possible job losses at the First Trust Bank.

(AQW 10841/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The First and Deputy Ministers discussed this issue with the Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade the North-South Ministerial Council (NSMC) Institutional Meeting on 27 April 2012 and stressed our concerns regarding the impact job losses would have in Northern Ireland. Irish Ministers indicated that the downsizing of staff as a result of bank restructuring – including in the

Allied Irish Bank Group / First Trust Bank – was a concern for them also and advised that the Irish Government was working with the banks on this.

I plan to follow up on this matter with Michael Noonan TD in the margins of the next North-South Ministerial Council plenary meeting in June. In my previous discussions with Mr Noonan (and his predecessor) regarding the potential impact of bank restructuring we have agreed that Northern Ireland should not be disproportionately affected by any restructuring.

I also met with Mr Larry Broderick, General Secretary Irish Bank Officials Association (IBOA), on 1 May 2012 and got an update from the IBOA on the ongoing situation regarding job losses in our local banks. While this situation is largely outside of the Executive's influence, I will be monitoring it very closely and will continue to engage with all parties involved as and when appropriate.

Tourism Industry in Co Fermanagh

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the total number of people employed in the tourism industry; (ii) the number of people employed in the tourism industry in Co Fermanagh; (iii) the percentage of the total number of people employed in the tourism industry that were employed in Co Fermanagh, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 10889/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Official statistics are not collected on the number of persons employed in the tourism industry at County level. However, an estimate of the number of employee jobs in key tourism related sectors is available biennially between 2003 and 2009 and in 2010, at District Council level.

The number of employee jobs in such sectors in Fermanagh District Council area and Northern Ireland is shown in the table overleaf.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEE JOBS IN THE 'TOURISM INDUSTRY'¹ FOR FERMANAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL AND NORTHERN IRELAND, 2003 TO 2010

Year	Standard Industrial Classification System	Total number of employee jobs in the Tourism Industry in Northern Ireland	Total number of employee jobs in the Tourism Industry in Fermanagh District Council	Percent
2010 ²	SIC(2007)	55,075	1,983	3.6%
2009 ³	SIC(2007)	54,290	1,775	3.3%
2007 ³	SIC(2003)	54,079	1,727	3.2%
2005 ³	SIC(2003)	52,025	1,766	3.4%
2003 ³	SIC(2003)	50,419	1,797	3.6%

1 The 'tourism industry' is defined as comprising the following Standard Industrial Classifications (2007) 'Libraries, archives, museums and other cultural activities', 'Gambling and betting activities', Sports activities and amusement and recreation activities', 'Travel agency, tour operator and other reservation service and related activities', 'Accommodation', 'Restaurants and mobile food service activities' and 'Beverage serving activities'.

2 Source: Business Register and Employment Survey 2010

3 Source: Census of Employment, 2003 – 2009

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much money under the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme has not been claimed in each of the last two years.

(AQW 10903/11-15)

Mr Wilson: No money has been unclaimed under the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme in each of the last two years as there is no application procedure for Small Business Rate Relief. Relief is applied automatically by Land & Property Services to all businesses that qualify.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in relation to the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme, to detail (i) the cost to the Exchequer; and what percentage of the costs have benefited the National Federation of Retail Newsagents.

(AQW 10904/11-15)

Mr Wilson: As at 31st March 2012 relief totalling almost £13.8 million (covering the years 2010/11 and 2011/12) has been discharged against rating debt as a result of properties qualifying for the Small Business Rate Relief.

Information on the percentage of costs that have benefited the National Federation of Retail Newsagents is not available as information is not collected that would allow properties related to the National Federation of Retail Newsagents to be identified.

Narrow Water Bridge Project

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of Louth County Council's decision to appeal the decision taken by the Special EU Programmes Body not to proceed with the Narrow Water Bridge Project, what action his Department intends to take to support the project.

(AQW 10907/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Louth County Council applied to the INTERREG IVA Programme for funding for the Narrow Water Bridge project. It was the INTERREG IVA Steering Committee, rather than SEUPB alone, that assessed the application. And it was the Committee, not SEUPB alone, that agreed the project did not meet all of the agreed selection criteria and should not therefore proceed to the next stage of the assessment process.

All applications for INTERREG IVA funding are assessed by the Steering Committee, which is a subgroup of the Programme Monitoring Committee. The Steering Committee is chaired by the SEUPB and comprises social partners, elected representatives and officials from government departments, including DFP. Using the information provided by the applicant, the Committee scores applications against the agreed selection criteria and reaches its decisions on a consensus basis.

I understand that Louth County Council has appealed the Steering Committee's decision not to fund the Narrow Water Bridge project and that SEUPB has, in response, initiated the agreed review process. A Review Panel will be convened and will comprise three members of the Programme Monitoring Committee and one independent representative, none of whom were members of the Steering Committee that took the original decision.

Review Panel members do not support or otherwise the projects that come to them. The purpose of the review will be to consider the reasonableness of the original Steering Committee decision based on the evidence that was provided in the application.

Performance Bonuses to Public Servants

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, since coming into office, to detail (i) the proposals he has (a) received; and (b) approved for the payment of performance bonuses to public servants; and (ii) how much was paid on each occasion to each office holder.

(AQW 10939/11-15)

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

North/South Bodies: Annual Spend

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the annual spend on each of the North/South bodies since each came into existence.

(AQW 10941/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I refer the Member to my response to question AQW 2960/11-15 answered on 17 October 2011. The position remains as set out in that answer – the information requested is included in the departmental Resource Accounts that were laid in the Assembly each year.

Rating Review

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he intends to provide any further emergency aid for town centre businesses in advance of the rating review scheduled for 2015.

(AQW 10963/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Currently there are no further plans for special relief for town centres. Such provision presents major difficulties in terms of choosing exactly where to designate it and the impact it is likely to have, in terms of the unfair competitive disadvantage it may create for those outside the chosen areas and the likelihood of causing displacement. Furthermore, even if I wanted to intervene in this way, the risk of someone successfully challenging such a policy is unacceptably high. I would rather direct resources to the business community than waste them on defending well meaning schemes which are vulnerable to challenge through the courts.

I prefer a broader approach. This includes continuing to freeze the regional rate in real terms and alleviating the impact of rates on the smallest businesses; which currently pay a disproportionate amount, regardless of location. The recent extension to the small business rate relief scheme was achieved by charging the very largest retail premises a levy. This is rather than imposing an additional burden on local business ratepayers, which is the way similar schemes are paid for in other parts of the UK.

I will be considering extending the scope of the scheme, again at no cost to other ratepayers. What I am able to do will depend on the outcome of my Department's evaluation of the scheme which will be carried later this year. That evaluation will include consideration of how best to recycle the savings which have been achieved through exclusion of ratepayers with multiple premises.

Other measures have been introduced this year to help regenerate town centres. This includes a concession which allows new occupiers of long term empty retail premises to receive a 50% rebate on their rates for 12 months. In addition, the use of any empty shop window displays for non-commercial purposes will be disregarded for rating purposes. These measures are unique to Northern Ireland.

Rating Review

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the rating review scheduled for 2015 might result in new rates valuations being applied.

(AQW 10965/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Revaluation is an exercise that redistributes the rating burden amongst business ratepayers and all 72,500 non domestic rateable properties in Northern Ireland will be revalued at 2013 rental value levels.

The same amount of money still has to be raised from the system and so the tax rate, or rate in the pound, adjusts accordingly following revaluation.

This means that areas and business sectors that have fared better than others over the period since the previous revaluation exercise will face higher rate bills from April 2015, even if values have declined across the board since the downturn. Occupiers of business premises that have experienced rental value decreases more than the average will pay less following a revaluation and vice versa.

Many will find their rate bills not changing much. The last time a general revaluation took place in 2003 almost three quarters of business ratepayers' rates bill went up or down by less than 20%.

Revaluations are a regular feature of the business rates system, and make sure that liability for rates is fairly spread across all sectors in line with up to date rental values.

Land & Property Services will shortly begin the work to assemble the evidence and begin the process of revaluing non-domestic properties in Northern Ireland.

Outsourced Work to the Private Sector

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what proportion of the work of Departments and arm's-length bodies is outsourced to the private sector.

(AQW 10970/11-15)

Mr Wilson: In 2010-11 my Department (including its arm's-length bodies) spent 7.6% of its budget on services that are contracted out to the private sector.

This response is provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only, as information is not held centrally for the wider Civil Service and arm's-length bodies. The Member should contact individual departments for their information.

Economy in Recession

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the economy is in recession.

(AQW 11002/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Data released by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) last month revealed that Gross Domestic Product for the UK as a whole contracted by 0.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2012. This is the second successive quarter of negative economic growth which means that the UK is now technically in recession.

At a local level, it is not possible to say whether Northern Ireland is also in recession as regional output data for 2012 is not yet available from ONS. Clearly however, falling output in the UK as a whole will impact negatively on economic conditions in all regions including Northern Ireland. While it is obviously disappointing that the UK is once again in recession, we can however take some encouragement from the fact that the Office for Budget Responsibility still forecasts that the UK economy will grow overall in 2012, albeit only marginally.

PEACE III Funding for Amateur Boxing Clubs

Mr Allister asked of Finance and Personnel to detail the level of funding, provided under PEACE III, to assist amateur boxing clubs, including the amount awarded to each club.

(AQW 11014/11-15)

Mr Wilson: No PEACE III funding has been awarded to amateur boxing clubs.

Processing Payments for Domestic Rates by Credit or Debit Card

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 10413/11-15 and AQW 10754/11-15, to detail (i) the name of the payment provider that processes Land and Property Services payments; and (ii) how much has been paid to the payment provider in each year since the introduction of the option to pay by credit/debit card.

(AQW 11092/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Santander is the organisation that provides internet and telephone payment services to LPS.

The total amount paid by LPS to Santander for debit card transactions from 1st April 2010 to 31st March 2012 is set out in following table.

TABLE: TRANSACTION COSTS PAID TO SANTANDER 2010 TO 2012 FOR DEBIT CARD PAYMENTS

Year	Cost	No. of Transactions
2010-11	£1,462.52	4,958
2011-12	£7,837.85	26,663
Total	£9,300.37	31,621

Transaction fees for credit card payments are charged directly to the customer by Santander. LPS does not pay or administer these charges. As LPS is not invoiced for these charges, it cannot provide exact figures as for debit card payments. However, on the basis of the amount of money collected by LPS from credit card payments, it is estimated that charges to customers in 2011-12 were approximately £32,000 for 2,498 transactions. Vacant Domestic Properties in the Mid Ulster Area

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the (i) number; and (ii) location of vacant domestic properties in the Mid Ulster area.

(AQW 11123/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of vacant residential properties is not available at constituency level as data is collated at district council and ward level only. The attached tables indicate the number of vacant residential properties for each ward within the Cookstown, Dungannon & South Tyrone and Magherafelt Council areas as at 29th April 2012.

VACANT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA AS AT 29TH APRIL 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Ardboe	51
Coagh	45
Dunnamore	83
Gortallowry	36
Killycolpy	67
Killymoon	29
Lissan	57
Moneymore	74
Newbuildings	58
Oaklands	58

Ward	Number of Properties
Oldtown	31
Pomeroy	103
Sandholes	41
Stewartstown	34
The Loop	65
Tullagh	57
Cookstown DC Total	889

VACANT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE DUNGANNON & SOUTH TYRONE BOROUGH COUNCIL AREA AS AT 29TH APRIL 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Altmore	110
Augher	97
Aughnacloy	122
Ballygawley	106
Ballysaggart	66
Benburb	74
Caledon	95
Castlecaulfield	76
Clogher	128
Coalisland North	91
Coalisland South	68
Coalisland West	56
Coolhill	87
Donaghmore	61
Drumglass	46
Fivemiletown	66
Killyman	79
Killymeal	88
Moy	105
Moygashel	42
Mullaghmore	96
Washing Bay	78
Dungannon & South Tyrone BC Total	1,837

VACANT RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES IN THE MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA AS AT 29TH APRIL 2012

Ward	Number of Properties
Ballymaguigan	39
Bellaghy	65
Castledawson	48
Draperstown	77
Glebe	31
Gulladuff	43
Knockcloghrim	50
Lecumpher	37
Lower Glenshane	53
Maghera	56
Swatragh	62
Tobermore	57
Townparks East	25
Townparks West	19
Upperlands	54
Valley	51
Magherafelt DC Total	767

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Transporting Children in Need of Paediatric Care from the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of transporting children, due to capacity pressures, who were in need of paediatric care from the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children to hospitals in the UK and the Republic of Ireland in (i) 2009/10; and (ii) 2010/11.

(AQW 10683/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Transporting Children in need of Paediatric Care from Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of transporting children, due to capacity pressures, who were in need of paediatric care from Altnagelvin Hospital to hospitals in the UK and the Republic of Ireland in (i) 2009/10; and (ii) 2010/11.

(AQW 10685/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Transporting Children in need of Paediatric Care from Craigavon Hospital

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of transporting children, due to capacity pressures, who were in need of paediatric care from Craigavon Hospital to hospitals in the UK and the Republic of Ireland in (i) 2009/10; and (ii) 2010/11.

(AQW 10686/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Transporting Children in Need of Paediatric Care Outside Northern Ireland

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of transporting children and their families, due to capacity pressures, who were in need of paediatric care outside Northern Ireland to hospitals in the UK and the Republic of Ireland in (i) 2009/10; and (ii) 2010/11.

(AQW 10687/11-15)

Mr Poots: This information can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Northern Ireland Cost Investigation Working Group

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why representatives of the community pharmacy sector have not been selected to serve on the Northern Ireland Cost Investigation Working Group.

(AQW 10770/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has undertaken to carry out further cost investigations with respect to community pharmacy services provided in Northern Ireland.

The Board has now developed the Terms of Reference and the High Level Methodology for the cost investigation and these have been shared with the community pharmacy contractor representative body, Community Pharmacy NI (CPNI). It should be noted that within the Terms of Reference it is clearly stated that the Board will seek representations from CPNI at appropriate key stages of the process in order to obtain views and to ensure that CPNI feedback is fully considered. The process will be open and transparent at all stages.

Private Finance Initiative Contract

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to each currently active Private Finance Initiative contract in each Health and Social Care Trust, to detail (i) the contract start and expiry date; (ii) the name and address of the business holding the contract; and (iii) the nature of each contract.

(AQW 10786/11-15)

Mr Poots: The details regarding the currently active Private Finance Initiative contracts with HSC Trusts are detailed in the table below:

HSC Trust	PFI Contract	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Company Name & Address	Nature of Contract
Belfast HSC Trust	RGH Car Park	01/04/1997	30/03/2017	Car Park Services 36 Great Patrick Street Belfast BT1 2LT	Provision of Car Parking at RGH site

HSC Trust	PFI Contract	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Company Name & Address	Nature of Contract
Belfast HSC Trust	Cancer Centre	01/01/2006	31/12/2030	Partners in Healthcare Technology Ltd Lagan Villas Dromore Co Down BT25 1LN	Provision , maintenance and replacement of medical equipment
Belfast HSC Trust	BCH Renal Unit	01/11/1998	31/10/2013	Graham Gambro Ltd Lagan Mills Dromore Co Down BT25 1AS	Provision of dialysis building, equipment, maintenance and consumables
Belfast HSC Trust	RGH Managed Equipment Service	01/10/2006	30/09/2021	Philips Medical Systems UK Philips Centre Guildford Business Centre Guildford GU2 8XH	Provision , maintenance and replacement of medical equipment
Northern HSC Trust	Renal Dialysis Service, Antrim Hospital	17/4/2000	16/4/2015	Baxter Healthcare 1 West Bank Road Belfast BT3 9JL	Provision of a renal dialysis service at Antrim Hospital.
Western HSC Trust	Laboratory and Pharmacy Services Centre at Altnagelvin	January 2007	January 2032	United Healthcare Land Company Ltd 4 Lovat Lane London EC3R 8DT	The contract is for 25 years for the design, build, operation and maintenance of a Laboratory and Pharmacy Centre at Altnagelvin. This facility includes provision of five specialist laboratory areas, along with a new pharmacy department which incorporates special cancer drug dispensing facilities.

HSC Trust	PFI Contract	Contract Start Date	Contract Expiry Date	Company Name & Address	Nature of Contract
Western HSC Trust	South West Acute Hospital at Enniskillen	May 2012	May 2042	NIHG SW Health Partnership Marlborough House 30 Victoria Street Belfast	The contract with Northern Ireland Health Group is a 30 year PFI contract to design, build, operate, maintain and finance the New Acute Hospital for the South West on a green field site within the development to the north of Enniskillen.
All HSC Trusts	Northern Ireland Picture Archiving and Communications System and Radiology Information System (NIPACS)	September 2008	September 2018	Sectra Ltd Baird House Seabank Place Knowhill Milton Keynes MK5 8FR	This is a managed service contract for radiology information. It provides information and images across the region and ensures that images and radiology reports are always available to clinical users irrespective of their location.

Gay Men's Clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 10355/11-15, to detail (i) how many consultants applied for the position; and (ii) the number of people that attended the Gay Men's Clinic in each of the last three years.

(AQW 10848/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has advised that one consultant applied for the advertised post. The Department collects information on outpatient attendances at specialty level but does not hold information on attendances at specific clinics.

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his Department or its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 10886/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no legal requirement for employers to provide defibrillators in their buildings. However, in 2003, my Department took the lead among NI Departments in providing defibrillators in buildings where staff worked.

Currently there are three defibrillators in Castle Buildings and there are no plans to increase this number.

My Department's Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) are a diverse group of organisations ranging from large Health and Social Care Trusts to small organisations such as the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. Each ALB is responsible for determining its own requirements in respect of the number of defibrillators required, and for their provision.

Haematology Unit at Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr McCartney asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans for a haematology unit at Altnagelvin Hospital which would service the North West region.
(AQW 10888/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is currently a Haematology unit at Altnagelvin hospital which provides full clinical and laboratory Haematology services to the population of Limavady, Derry, Strabane and Omagh district council areas. There are currently no plans to expand the existing service.

Ambulance Service Vehicles

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Ambulance Service vehicles have bull bars fitted.
(AQW 10890/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have been advised by NIAS that none of its vehicles has bull bars fitted.

Referrals for Heart Surgery

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number referrals for heart surgery to (i) the Mater Private Hospital, Dublin; (ii) the Blackrock Hospital, Dublin; (iii) Guys Hospital, London; (iv) HCI International Medical Centre, Glasgow; and (v) any other hospital in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 10929/11-15)

Mr Poots: The table below shows the number of referrals for heart surgery to (i) the Mater Private Hospital, Dublin; (ii) the Blackrock Hospital, Dublin; (iii) Guys Hospital, London; (iv) HCI International Medical Centre, Glasgow; and (v) any other hospital in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland, in each of the last three years.

Number of referrals for heart surgery to:	Year		
	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Mater Private Hospital, Dublin	184	154	163
Blackrock Hospital, Dublin	6	6	14
Guys Hospital, London	38	50	63
HCI International Medical Centre, Glasgow	0	0	0
Other Hospitals in Great Britain or the Republic of Ireland	73	4	3
Total	301	214	243

Source: Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Board

Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many beds and cots are available for children at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children.
(AQW 10947/11-15)

Mr Poots: During April – December 2011, the average number of available beds for children at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children was 92.7P

P The data shown for 2011 is provisional and may change.

Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of staff employed at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, broken down by post.

(AQW 10951/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of staff employed at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children was provided by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and is given in the table below.

Number of staff employed at the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children as at 31 March 2012

Occupational Family	Grade	Headcount	WTE
Administration & Clerical	Medical / Personal Secretary	37	31.98
	Other Admin & Clerical staff	72	58.04
Support Services	Domestic / Catering	83	55.18
Nursing	Qualified Nurses	366	291.26
	Nurse Support	62	47.45
Social Services	Social Workers	12	9.14
Professional & Technical	Dieticians	11	8.52
	Occupational Therapists	3	2.50
	Physiotherapists	16	12.04
	Radiographers	15	13.48
	Speech & Language Therapists	9	5.57
	Support to Allied Health Professions	6	4.53
	Play Specialist / Support	16	11.35
	Psychologists	10	8.70
	Scientific staff	8	7.91
Medical & Dental	Consultants	34	31.66
	Staff Grade / Associate Specialist / Specialty Doctor	9	7.40
	Training Grades	59	54.46
Total		828	661.17

Source: Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Notes:

- 1 WTE = Whole-time Equivalent.
- 2 Medical training grades include Foundation House Officers and Specialty Registrars.

Promoting Cycling and Walking

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Regional Development to ensure that his Department's plans to promote cycling and walking correlate with the level of funding for cycling infrastructure.

(AQW 10958/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has had no specific discussions on plans to promote cycling and walking to correlate with the level of funding for cycling infrastructure. However both Departments have discussed the promotion of walking and cycling within the context of the Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022, entitled A Fitter Future for All and through both Department's participation in the Active Travel Forum and the development of DRD's Active Travel Strategy for Northern Ireland ('Building an Active Travel Future for Northern Ireland').

Cycling has benefitted from several years of investment and the cycling infrastructure, as set out in the Regional Transport Strategy and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, is well established. In the 10 year period, up to the end of the last financial year, DRD's Road Service has invested almost £9 million in the provision of 230km of cycle lanes.

A Fitter Future for All was launched for implementation on 9 March 2012 and

the Framework contains outcomes regarding the increase and promotion of physical activity in general within a variety of settings including the outcome 'Active Travel Strategy developed for Northern Ireland' for which the Department of Regional Development is listed as the key delivery partner.

The development of the new updated Strategic Framework for Public Health will also provide an overarching Framework for meaningful cross-departmental and cross-sectoral collaboration and actions within the Active Travel Strategy will also contribute to this achievement.

Uptake of Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to increase the uptake of cycling to tackle obesity and other health issues.

(AQW 10959/11-15)

Mr Poots: Being physically active, including through cycling, can contribute to maintaining a healthy weight and also improving mental health, promoting self-esteem, boosting the immune system, and helping to prevent heart disease, cardiovascular disease, and Type 2 diabetes. It is therefore important that we encourage and support people to be more physically active.

On 9 March 2012, I launched the cross-sectoral Framework for Preventing and Addressing Overweight and Obesity in Northern Ireland 2012-2022, entitled A Fitter Future for All. This Framework contains outcomes specifically to promote and increase participation in physical activity within a variety of settings. Particularly relevant outcomes include supporting the development of the Active Travel Strategy for Northern Ireland; promoting and disseminating the new CMO Physical Activity Guidelines; and ensuring more people are aware of, and have access to, local facilities and opportunities for organised and non-organised physical activity.

The Public Health Agency (PHA), who is leading on the implementation of the Framework, continues to promote and develop projects and programmes to increase participation in physical activity, including cycling. Many of these initiatives are taken forward by local health improvement teams in conjunction with partners across a range of sectors, including local government, health, education, community and voluntary sectors.

These initiatives include:

- Bike It! - supporting Sustrans for the Bike It! programme in a number of schools.
- Promotion of the Cycle to Work Scheme for all employees.

- Development of a public information campaign on the prevention of obesity which will promote the importance of physical activity and healthier eating for adults.
- Supporting DRD in the implementation of the Active Travel Strategy.
- Dissemination of the information on the new CMO guidelines on physical activity to ensure professionals and the public are aware of recommended physical activity levels at each life stage.

Average Ambulance Downtime

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average ambulance downtime at each Accident and Emergency Unit in the last month.

(AQW 11003/11-15)

Mr Poots: For the purposes of this question, it has been assumed that ambulance downtime refers to the turnaround time measured from when an ambulance arrives at a hospital until it has 'cleared' the location or 'stood down'. This includes the time taken for patient handover to relevant clinical personnel and ensuring the vehicle is ready for the next call.

The average ambulance turnaround time during March 2012 is detailed below for each hospital with an emergency care department:

Hospital	Average Turnaround Time
Altnagelvin	00:20:43
Antrim Area	00:27:27
Ards	00:20:21
Armagh Community	00:00:00
Bangor	00:00:10
Causeway	00:19:28
Craigavon Area	00:30:26
Daisy Hill	00:24:59
Downe	00:20:40
Erne	00:19:46
Lagan Valley	00:25:44
Mater	00:26:52
Mid Ulster	00:19:38
Mullinure	00:12:51
RBHSC	00:20:34
Royal Victoria	00:36:48
South Tyrone	00:14:17
Tyrone County	00:17:28
Ulster	00:38:38

Source: Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS)

Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

(AQW 11007/11-15)

Mr Poots: Most of the provisions in the Sunbeds Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 came into force on 1 May 2012. The Act and subsequent associated regulations have had full cross-party support in the Assembly and reflect the contributions made by the Health Committee during the passage of the Bill.

The measures introduced in the Act will deliver significant public health benefits in the longer term, in particular to reduce the number of cases of, and deaths from, skin cancer.

The Department has helped sunbed operators to comply with the measures by providing initial supplies of the poster that must be displayed, information sheets which must be provided to sunbed users, and a guidance booklet which describes fully and clearly what sunbed operators are required to do in order to comply with the Act, and what to expect from District Councils in terms of enforcement.

The Department has also assisted in a training event for District Council officers on the requirements of the new legislation.

Although the measures have only been in force for a short time, the early indications are that sunbed operators are seeking to comply fully with the new law.

General Dental Services

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 4877/11-15, to detail the timescale for the consultation with stakeholders.

(AQW 11034/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department is finalising consultation documents and associated impact assessments on these proposals. In addition, to the pre-existing engagement with the British Dental Association, my Department will be consulting on these proposals with the British Dental Association, the Patient Client Council, wider dental profession and public. The Committee on Health, Social Services and Public Safety will be notified in advance of the launch of the consultation. It is intended that the consultation process will begin in May 2012.

Organisations that Support Victims of Rape and Sexual Abuse

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding his Department has provided to organisations that support victims of rape and sexual abuse in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11040/11-15)

Mr Poots: DHSSPS has provided the following amount of funding to organisations that support victims of rape and sexual abuse in each of the last three years.

	09/10	10/11	11/12
Sexual Violence Funding	£718k	£525k	£525k

Circa £2m capital has also been provided for the development of the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) over this period.

Health Service Dentists

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the maximum length of time his Department expects to take in granting Health Service dentists permission to carry out dental work that requires prior approval.

(AQW 11042/11-15)

Mr Poots: The average length of time to process a prior approval application is 8 weeks. If, however, the dental officer considering the application requires more clinical information, radiographs, photographs or other evidence, the application will be returned to the dental practitioner.

Dental practitioners are able to proceed with treatments that would normally require an application for prior approval in emergency situations, such as when it is necessary for the relief of pain.

System of Prior Approval for Dental Work

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an estimate of the cost of administering the system of prior approval for dental work.

(AQW 11043/11-15)

Mr Poots: The estimated annual cost of administering the system of prior approval for dental work is £280k. This includes administrative and dental staff time and goods and services.

Dental Treatments

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many dental treatments, which have been categorised as treatments requiring prior departmental approval, have been administered by Health Service dentists in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11044/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information to answer this question is set out in the table below:

Year	Number of claims seeking approval ¹	Number of claims paid
2009/10	37,710	22,620
2010/11	48,859	26,470
2011/12	46,576	25,536

- 1 Claims seeking prior approval may be processed a number of times due to the need for additional clinical information to be submitted by the practitioner. The figures represent the number of times claims are processed.

Prior approval applications frequently reflect complex treatments and require the Business Services Organisation (BSO) to seek further evidence, such as radiographs and photographs, of the need for these proposed treatment plans. Consequently these claims are handled more than once by administrative and professional staff in BSO. Furthermore, due to the complex nature of such treatments, receipt of a payment claim may be in a different financial year from the original application for prior approval.

Requirement on Dentists to Seek Prior Approval

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to provide an estimate of the savings that are made as a result of the requirement on dentists to seek prior approval from his Department.

(AQW 11045/11-15)

Mr Poots: In order to address the pressures on the General Dental Services budget, my Department has made a series of proposals. One of these is a proposed move to a core of services that would be available under the Health Service. The available treatments would focus on those which improve oral health, rather than those which are more cosmetic in nature such as certain types of bridgework and veneers. However, there may be occasions where a treatment, normally excluded from the core service, would be clinically justified and cost efficient. In these circumstances, the practitioner would be able to apply to the BSO dental committee for prior approval. Under the current arrangements for the delivery of General Dental Services, Dental practitioners are already required to seek prior approval for certain treatment items or where a course of treatment will cost more than £280.

The move to a core service is supported by my Department's Primary Dental Care Strategy and is consistent with the proposed model for the new General Dental Services contract. It is estimated that this proposal would save approximately £2 million per annum.

Prospective Foster Carers

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average waiting time for prospective foster carers to be assessed in each Health and Social Care Trust area. **(AQW 11073/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Figures detailing the average waiting time for prospective foster carers to be assessed in each Health and Social Care Trust area are not centrally available, and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

People with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis in the North Down Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what services are available for people with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis in the North Down area. **(AQW 11086/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The variability of symptoms in patients with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)/ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS) mean that they will need to access different parts of the health service, depending on their specific symptoms and the severity of their condition. The focus of treatment in Northern Ireland is therefore centred on close co-operation between patients, carers and the relevant health and social-care professionals, which is essential for ensuring that sufferers obtain the most suitable treatment for their needs.

Whilst the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, covering the North Down area, does not have a specialist ME service, patients may be seen by consultants and referred on to the Belfast Trust or back to GPs, with a treatment plan which may include referral to psychology services in primary care for cognitive behavioural therapy.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the rationale behind the proposals for Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service; and whether it is in line with his Department's reform and modernisation agenda. **(AQW 11099/11-15)**

Mr Poots: The HSCB and five HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. This initiative follows the recommendations contained within the Social Services Inspectorate Child Protection Inspection Report in 2006 and the Independent Review in 2008 by Mr Henry Toner into the death of Mr McElhill and his family. In addition, the Agenda for Change: HSC On-Call Circular (HSC (JMF)(8) 2011) was introduced on 1 October 2011. This Circular had implications in relation to on-call payments, particularly for social workers, making the current out-of-hours arrangements untenable into the future. More recently, Out-of Hours Social Services was identified as a priority in the DHSSPS Social Work Strategy (2012) which recognises the need to design a model and produce regional standards for a dedicated out-of-hours service.

It is anticipated that the Project Team will produce a consultation document in the near future which will outline the detail of the proposed regional model. Any future model of service delivery will be in keeping with my Department's reform agenda.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) to list the agencies which received the consultation document on Out-of-Hours Social Work Service; and (ii) whether the current Out-of-Hours co-ordinators and responders have been consulted on the proposed changes; and (iii) whether they are in agreement with the proposals.

(AQW 11100/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model, which will include staff and staff-side organisations. This consultation has not happened as yet, but is expected to take place in the near future.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there will be any job losses as a result of the changes proposed for the Out-of-Hours Social Work Service.

(AQW 11102/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has received an assurance from the HSCB which is responsible for the review of Out-of-Hours Social Work Services that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of any new staffing arrangements pursuant to the review and the introduction of a regional out-of-hours service.

Social Care Providers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for his assessment of the effectiveness of private residential dwellings becoming social care providers; and (ii) to provide a list of the private dwellings that have become social care providers in the South Antrim constituency in each of the last five years.

(AQW 11105/11-15)

Mr Poots: The effectiveness or suitability of using a private dwelling as a setting for providing social care could only be assessed by allowing a full inspection of the premises by The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA).

Any person who carries on or manages such an establishment or care service must make an application to RQIA, and once granted, is issued a certificate of registration. RQIA maintains a register of all approved establishments and care services.

With regards to part (ii) of the question, this information is not collected centrally and is not available in the format requested.

Air Ambulance Provision

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 9625/11-15, (i) for an update on the feasibility study; (ii) when the Health and Social Care Board expects the consultants to present a final report; (iii) why the consultants did not meet the previous timescale for the presentation of the report in April 2012; (iv) when he expects the report to be submitted to his Department; and (v) when his Department will publish the report.

(AQW 11107/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have been advised by the HSC Board that the feasibility study on the need for and sustainability and affordability of an air ambulance for Northern Ireland has been submitted to the Board in final draft form and is awaiting approval for subsequent submission to the Department.

As I advised previously in my response to AQW 9625/11-15, the consultants were expected to present their final report to the HSC Board in April this year. They submitted their final draft report in accordance with this timetable. The Board expects to submit the report to the Department by the end of May 2012.

As I have not yet seen the report, I cannot advise when it is likely to be published. I should be in a position to do so when I have had a chance to consider its findings.

Health Service Staff in the Derry Area

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of full-time Health Service staff in the Derry area who have (i) had their hours reduced; and (ii) had their employment terminated in the last 12 months.

(AQW 11114/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i) It has not been possible to provide this information as service requirements can dictate the hours that some staff work. Details of when the hours worked fluctuate regularly could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost.
- (ii) 27 staff (19.03 whole time equivalents) in the Derry area, including Limavady, have had their employment terminated by the Western HSC Trust in the last 12 months.

Podiatry Appointments

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the average length of time between podiatry appointments for senior citizens in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area who are (i) diabetic; and (ii) non-diabetic.

(AQW 11140/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available centrally within the DHSSPS and in reply to a request for this information, the Southern Health and Social Care Trust stated that whilst patients are reviewed on average at 3-4 month intervals, the length of time between review appointments is decided following the carrying-out of a clinical risk assessment with each patient. Diabetic patients may, on assessment, be identified as being at higher clinical risk although this is not universally the case. Those patients assessed as being at higher risk are seen most frequently. Referrals classed as urgent are prioritised at all times.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how the current out-of-hours social work service is managed; (ii) what are the current supervision and training arrangements in each Health and Social Care Trust; and (iii) how calls are prioritised within the system.

(AQW 11142/11-15)

Mr Poots: Two systems of Out-of-Hours Social Work Service currently operate in Northern Ireland. Belfast and South Eastern Trusts combine their service into a dedicated Emergency Duty Team which is managed by the Belfast Trust. The Northern, Western and Southern Trusts each use a 'co-ordinator/responder' model where staff undertake these roles in addition to their substantive posts. These services are managed within the structures of the respective Trusts.

Emergency Duty Team staff receive professional supervision from the manager of the service and their training needs are identified through training needs analysis and ongoing appraisal. Staff who provide out-of-hours social work services in the remaining Trusts receive supervision and training through their substantive posts within Health and Social Care.

Across all of the Trusts, calls to the Out-of-Hours Services are dealt with on the basis of the need for an emergency response, where that response cannot wait until the next working day.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the new proposed out-of-hours social work service is based on a new service model or whether it is intended to be an extension of the current Belfast scheme, which is primarily urban-based.

(AQW 11144/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

Any decisions regarding the configuration of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the catalyst which led to the proposed changes to the out-of-hours social work service; (ii) any significant issues which triggered the review; and (iii) the recommendations for the service.

(AQW 11145/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and five HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. This initiative follows the recommendations contained within the Social Services Inspectorate Child Protection Inspection Report in 2006 and the Independent Review in 2008 by Mr Henry Toner into the death of Mr McElhill and his family. In addition, the Agenda for Change: HSC On-Call Circular (HSC (JMF)(8) 2011) was introduced on 1 October 2011. This Circular had implications in relation to on-call payments, particularly for social workers, making the current out-of-hours arrangements untenable into the future. More recently, Out-of Hours Social Services was identified as a priority in the DHSSPS Social Work Strategy (2012) which recognises the need to design a model and produce regional standards for a dedicated out-of-hours service.

The Project Team established to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional out-of-hours service will issue a consultation document in the near future which will provide details of the proposed model.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, for each of the last five years, (i) to provide a breakdown of the operation costs of the out-of-hours social work service in each Health and Social Care Trust area; and (ii) the number of people employed in the service in each Trust area.

(AQW 11146/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has been advised by the HSCB that the operational costs of the current Out-of-Hours Social Work Service is approximately £1.6m across the five Trusts. The present configuration of the different out-of-hours services means that it is not possible to accurately quantify the number of staff employed in the delivery of the service.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost of the proposed new out-of-hours social work service and from where the funding will be sourced.

(AQW 11147/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

Any decisions regarding the configuration and potential cost of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Blood Drives

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many blood drives have been carried out due to low blood stocks in each of the last 24 months, broken by constituency.

(AQW 11174/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion issued 2 appeals for blood donors in the last 24 months. The first in December 2010 due to severe weather, and the second in January 2012 due to Christmas /New Year depletion of stocks.

The appeals are province-wide and therefore cannot be broken down by constituency. Legislative Programme

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's legislative programme for the next 18 months, including the timescales for introduction.

(AQW 11207/11-15)

Mr Poots: As indicated in my response to AQW 10636/11-15, I have stated my intention, subject to the agreement of the Executive, to bring forward a number of Bills during the current Assembly mandate. At this stage, I am not in a position to provide dates for the introduction of the Bills.

Interim Report on the Pseudomonas Infection

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the publication of the interim report on the pseudomonas infection, whether he will now provide the information requested in (i) AQW 8803/11-15; (ii) AQW 8805/11-15; (iii) AQW 8807/11-15; (iv) AQW 8810/11-15; (v) AQW 8585/11-15; (vi) AQW 85861/11-15; and (vii) AQW 8587/11-15.

(AQW 11228/11-15)

Mr Poots: Although the interim report has been published, the review is ongoing and the technical areas in these questions continue to form part of the investigations of the review team. I cannot therefore comment on these areas until the review investigations have been completed and I have received the final report at which time I will bring the report to the Assembly.

Pseudomonas Incident in Altnagevlin Area Hospital

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 7493/11-15, whether the date of the submission on the pseudomonas outbreak, namely 13 December 2011, was the date on which he became aware of the incident, and if not, on what date he became aware of the incident.

(AQW 11229/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can confirm that 13 December 2011 was the date I became aware of this incident.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what added value the proposed new out-of-hours social work service will have; and how it will benefit local populations.

(AQW 11236/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

The intended outcome of the review of the Out-of-Hours Social Work Service is to produce a standardised system across NI which will facilitate improved governance arrangements and enhance the delivery of high quality social work services to the public.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of calls received by out-of-hours social work teams in the Health and Social Care Trusts in each of the last five years; (ii) how these calls were managed; and (iii) the current response times from receipt of a call in each Trust area.

(AQW 11237/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

A consultation paper on the proposed new model for out of hours social work services is to be produced by the HSCB. The paper will outline the proposed staffing arrangements to support the implementation of the HSCB and HSC Trusts' new model for delivery of out of hours services. It is anticipated that the new model will build upon much of the work already undertaken within the Department, HSCB and Trusts to enhance the delivery of high quality social work services to the public.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) how the new out-of-hours social work service will be staffed; (ii) how calls will be managed; (iii) how the new service will be resourced and from where the funding will be sourced; and (iv) the estimated additional cost of the new service.

(AQW 11242/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

Any decisions regarding the configuration and potential cost of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the current management arrangements for out-of-hours social work services in each Health and Social Care Trust area; and (ii) how this will change under the proposals.

(AQW 11243/11-15)

Mr Poots: Two systems of Out-of-Hours Social Work Service currently operate in Northern Ireland. Belfast and South Eastern Trusts combine their service into a dedicated Emergency Duty Team which is managed by the Belfast Trust. The Northern, Western and Southern Trusts each use a 'co-ordinator/responder' model where staff undertake these roles in addition to their substantive posts. These services are managed within the structures of the respective Trusts.

The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

Any decisions regarding the configuration of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, since the closure of the Accident and Emergency Department at Belfast City Hospital, how many patients have been discharged from triage in the Accident and Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast by staff nurses.

(AQW 11276/11-15)

Mr Poots: Between 1st November 2011 and 30th April 2012, 218 patients were discharged from triage in the Royal Victoria Hospital emergency care department, by staff nurses.

Ambulance Service Station Officers

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of 999 calls that required Ambulance Service Station Officers to attend emergency situations, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 11284/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is shown in the table below:

Year	Station Officer attendances
2009/2010	719
2010/2011	591
2011/2012	520
Total	1,830

Source: Northern Ireland Ambulance Service

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the out-of-hours social work service links with other local agencies.

(AQW 11300/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Out-of-Hours Social Work Service links with other statutory and voluntary sector organisation's as required, including PSNI, NI Housing Executive and Social Security Agency.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) whether staff engaged in the out-of-hours social work service will be automatically transferred into the proposed new system at each locality; (ii) whether there will be any job losses as a result of the implementation of the proposed new system; and (iii) how the proposed changes will contribute to his Department's Decentralisation Policy.

(AQW 11301/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

My Department has received an assurance from the HSCB, which is responsible for the review of Out-of-Hours Social Work Services, that there will be no compulsory redundancies as a result of any new staffing arrangements pursuant to the review and the introduction of a regional out-of-hours service.

Any decisions regarding the configuration of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Out-Of-Hours Social Work Service

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what potential risks and problems have been identified in the new proposals for out-of-hours social work service; and how these will be addressed.

(AQW 11302/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSCB and HSC Trusts have established a Project Team to develop proposals for the introduction of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service. When those proposals have been developed there will then be a consultation about the proposed model. This consultation is expected to take place in the near future.

Any decisions regarding the configuration of a regional Out-of-Hours Social Work Service will be taken after consultation has occurred.

Kangaroo Birth

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of 'kangaroo birth' and whether it is there is a policy in maternity units to promote 'kangaroo birth' for premature and non-premature babies.

(AQW 11342/11-15)

Mr Poots: Kangaroo care is the practice of skin-to-skin contact between a mother and her newborn baby, which encourages bonding, breastfeeding and early discharge from hospital.

Although there is no formal Departmental or Trust guidance specifically on kangaroo care, all Trusts encourage skin-to-skin contact for all newborn babies where appropriate.

Department of Justice

Release of Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to Thomas Ward being permitted to return to reside in Coalisland, (i) on what date was permission granted; (ii) at which court; (iii) what release or bail terms were imposed; and (iv) who was the presiding judge.

(AQW 10762/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Mr Ward did not require permission to return to reside in Coalisland.

At Belfast Crown Court on 20 December 2010, Her Honour Judge Smyth granted him Crown Court Bail on a number of motoring offences, subject to the following conditions:-

- (i) That he complies with curfew restrictions;
- (ii) That he does not enter licensed premises or consume alcohol;
- (iii) That he resides at an address in Coalisland;
- (iv) That he does not enter a designated area of West Belfast; and
- (v) That he must not travel in a motor vehicle unless accompanied by a Probation Officer.

This bail remained in force until 2 February 2011.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Justice what agencies or organisations are represented in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences model of intervention.

(AQW 10804/11-15)

Mr Ford: The key agencies who attend MARACs include Police Service of Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trusts, Education and Library Boards, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and voluntary organisations.

The role of voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, is to share relevant information they hold and to volunteer actions to assist in the creation of an effective safety plan to protect the victims and their children. Actions, as part of the safety plan, may also be allocated to voluntary organisations.

Pending finalisation of a MARAC Information Sharing Agreement, and on the recommendation of the Information Commissioner's Office, the MARAC Operational Group agreed, with effect from 6 April 2012, that voluntary organisations will only attend MARACs for those cases being referred and presented by them.

Further discussions to finalise the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement have been scheduled with the Information Commissioner's Office. Such discussions will include agreement on the limitations to be placed on the sharing of information. The issues of representation at MARAC, including the role of voluntary organisations and how they share information, are currently under consideration by the MARAC Operational Group.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Justice how voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, are involved and included in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences.

(AQW 10806/11-15)

Mr Ford: The key agencies who attend MARACs include Police Service of Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trusts, Education and Library Boards, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and voluntary organisations.

The role of voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, is to share relevant information they hold and to volunteer actions to assist in the creation of an effective safety plan to protect the victims and their children. Actions, as part of the safety plan, may also be allocated to voluntary organisations.

Pending finalisation of a MARAC Information Sharing Agreement, and on the recommendation of the Information Commissioner's Office, the MARAC Operational Group agreed, with effect from 6 April 2012, that voluntary organisations will only attend MARACs for those cases being referred and presented by them.

Further discussions to finalise the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement have been scheduled with the Information Commissioner's Office. Such discussions will include agreement on the limitations to be placed on the sharing of information. The issues of representation at MARAC, including the role of voluntary organisations and how they share information, are currently under consideration by the MARAC Operational Group.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Justice in instances where a voluntary organisation makes a referral to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference, what limitations are placed on sharing information, concerning the referral, with that voluntary organisation.

(AQW 10807/11-15)

Mr Ford: The key agencies who attend MARACs include Police Service of Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trusts, Education and Library Boards, Probation Board for Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and voluntary organisations.

The role of voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, is to share relevant information they hold and to volunteer actions to assist in the creation of an effective safety plan to protect the victims and their children. Actions, as part of the safety plan, may also be allocated to voluntary organisations.

Pending finalisation of a MARAC Information Sharing Agreement, and on the recommendation of the Information Commissioner's Office, the MARAC Operational Group agreed, with effect from 6 April 2012, that voluntary organisations will only attend MARACs for those cases being referred and presented by them.

Further discussions to finalise the MARAC Information Sharing Agreement have been scheduled with the Information Commissioner's Office. Such discussions will include agreement on the limitations to be placed on the sharing of information. The issues of representation at MARAC, including the role of voluntary organisations and how they share information, are currently under consideration by the MARAC Operational Group.

Youth and Juvenile Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many youth and juvenile cases are currently in the court system in which the accused are (i) remanded in custody; and (ii) resident or bailed to a care home.
(AQW 10813/11-15)

Mr Ford: As at 27 April 2012, there were 434 active cases involving 332 youth defendants before the Youth Court and Crown Court who were in custody or on bail. 20 were remanded in custody and 312 were remanded on bail. It is not possible to determine the residence of each defendant without incurring disproportionate cost.

HMP Magilligan Employees

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice how many people are employed in HMP Magilligan; and how many of the employees live within the Limavady Borough area.
(AQW 10825/11-15)

Mr Ford: Four hundred and forty four staff currently work at Magilligan Prison.

One hundred and twenty seven of those staff currently reside in the Limavady Borough area. Of those staff who reside in the Limavady Borough area, 18 are considered to be non mobile grades.

Circumstances of the Fire in HMP Maghaberry

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the circumstances of the fire in HMP Maghaberry on 23 April 2012, including (i) in which area the fire occurred; (ii) whether any staff or prisoners were injured as a result of the fire; (iii) what started the fire; (iv) the extent of the damage caused; and (v) whether anyone has been charged in connection with the fire.
(AQW 10858/11-15)

Mr Ford: At 18.40hrs on 23 April 2012 a small fire was discovered in a recreation room on landing five in Erne House. The fire was confined to a cupboard containing some books and stationary and was extinguished by staff and some prisoners. One officer went off duty after inhaling smoke. The fire was confined to the cupboard and there was minimal damage caused. The matter is the subject of an ongoing police investigation and no one has been charged at this time.

Non-Payment of Fines

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been committed to prison for non-payment of fines in each of the last five years; and what percentage this group represented of the total prison population in each year.

(AQW 10874/11-15)

Mr Ford: The number and percentage of people committed to prison solely for non-payment of fines across the last five years for which data is available is provided in the Table below.

New Committals	Year				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Fine Default Nos.	1,724	1742	1,247	1,891	2,179
Fine Default percentages	28%	28%	28%	35%	36%
All Other Prisoners	4337	4443	3,133	3,461	3,825
Total	6061	6185	4,380	5,352	6,004

Data for 2007 and 2008 should not be directly compared with data from 2009 to 2011 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked Minister of Justice what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his Department or its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 10895/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice currently has defibrillators in a number of buildings occupied by the Department, Agencies and arm's length bodies.

We will continue to keep health and safety matters under review through our annual buildings inspection programme and further defibrillators will be obtained if needed.

Cases Involving the Taking, Possession, Making or Distribution of Indecent Photographs of Children

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases involving the taking, possession, making or distribution of indecent photographs of children are currently in the court system, broken down by court division.

(AQW 10933/11-15)

Mr Ford: The table below details the number of active cases in the court system in Northern Ireland involving the taking, possession, making or distribution of indecent photographs of children.

	Number of Cases
Court of Appeal	1
County Court Divisions:	
Antrim	5
Ards	4
Armagh and South Down	1
Belfast	20

	Number of Cases
Craigavon	4
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1
Londonderry	3
Total	39

Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the recent claims by the Head of the Prison Officers Association that the situation in prisons ‘is a mess’ and that it will get worse due to staff cuts and that the Strategic Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme has ‘dismantled the Prison Service’.

(AQW 10935/11-15)

Mr Ford: The objective of the Strategic Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme is to reform not dismantle the Northern Ireland Prison Service. In line with a series of external reports which highlight the need to deliver an efficient and cost-effective Service, NIPS is committed to the introduction of modern working practices, a more streamlined management structure and the delivery of a focused approach to reducing the risk of reoffending.

The Strategic Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme is being delivered in a measured way with change being implemented incrementally in line with the four-year implementation framework outlined in the NIPS Corporate and Business Plan. I do not accept that the Prison Service is “in a mess” and I welcome the fact that NIPS management have reached an agreement with the Prison Officers’ Association in terms of a series of reform measures which will be implemented over the coming months.

In the context of such a wide-ranging change programme, it must be recognised that it will take time for the benefits of the process we have commenced to be fully realised.

Legal Aid

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) what is the current total in legal aid granted in the case of the five remand prisoners from HMP Maghaberry, who initiated a judicial review of the decision to take them for further questioning by police in relation to alleged terrorism charges; (ii) what is the estimated final legal aid total of this case; and (iii) how many (a) legal firms; and (b) counsel were instructed.

(AQW 11033/11-15)

Mr Ford: To date £2,010 has been paid to a firm of solicitors. The payment comprises £1,500 in solicitor profit costs, £300 in VAT and £210 in disbursements.

One legal aid certificate was granted to a prisoner in respect of the judicial review proceedings. The certificate allows for one solicitor, one junior counsel and one senior counsel.

As yet the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has not received a full claim in respect of the certificate, so I am unable to comment on the final legal aid cost of this case.

Cases of Dishonestly Using Electricity

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 10609/11-15, how many of these cases relate to cannabis factories.

(AQW 11052/11-15)

Mr Ford: Pursuant to my answer to AQW10609/11-15, of the 63 cases referred to, 38 cases had other charges associated with the cultivation and possession of cannabis.

Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many times Thomas Ward was visited or interviewed by his Designated Risk Manager after his return to Coalisland and prior to his arrest for an incident in February 2011, broken down by month.

(AQW 11053/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not give detailed information on the risk management procedures adopted for specific individual cases, as to do so could undermine the effectiveness of those measures. Visits and interviews are carried out only as part of a comprehensive risk management plan and cannot be considered in isolation from other aspects of that overall plan.

Sexual Offences Prevention Order

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many people are currently under a Sexual Offences Prevention Order in each court division; and how many have (i) breached their Order; and (ii) been charged with breaching their order.

(AQW 11058/11-15)

Mr Ford: Table 1 below details by County Court Division the number of people who were subject to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) as of 3 May 2012.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DEFENDANTS WITH A SEXUAL OFFENCES PREVENTION ORDER

County Court Division	Number of Defendants
Antrim	73
Ards	75
Armagh and South Down	38
Belfast	145
Craigavon	60
Fermanagh and Tyrone	63
Londonderry	72
Total	526

Data is provisional and may be subject to change.

It would not be possible to identify which of these specific orders had been breached without an extensive manual tracking exercise for each individual record which would incur disproportionate cost.

Table 2 below details by County Court Division the number of defendants convicted of a breach of a SOPO in each of the last five years.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF DEFENDANTS CONVICTED OF BREACHES OF SOPO

County Court Division	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*	1st January 2012 – 3rd May 2012 *	Total
Belfast	2	7	18	23	14	7	71
Londonderry	0	3	1	0	3	0	7
Antrim	1	4	1	2	3	3	14

County Court Division	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*	1st January 2012 – 3rd May 2012 *	Total
Fermanagh and Tyrone	2	0	1	5	1	0	9
Armagh and South Down	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
Ards	4	2	3	2	7	4	22
Craigavon	0	1	1	2	2	4	10
Total	9	17	25	34	33	19	137

* Data is provisional and may be subject to change.

Table 3 below details the number of defendants currently charged with breach of a Sexual Offences Prevention Order.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF DEFENDANTS WITH CURRENT BREACH PROCEEDINGS

County Court Division	Number Defendants
Antrim	2
Ards	3
Armagh and South Down	1
Belfast	5
Craigavon	1
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1
Londonderry	5
Total	18

Data is provisional and may be subject to change.

Prisoners Residing in Magilligan Prison

Mr McClarty asked Minister of Justice to detail the number of (i) prisoners who are currently residing in Magilligan Prison whose address, prior to imprisonment, was within a 50-mile radius of Magilligan Prison; (ii) prisoners who are currently residing in Magilligan Prison whose address, prior to imprisonment, was outside a 50-mile radius of Magilligan Prison and; (iii) staff who are working in Magilligan Prison who live within a 50-mile radius of the prison.

(AQW 11060/11-15)

Mr Ford:

- (i) 156 prisoners currently reside in Magilligan Prison who, prior to imprisonment, had an address that was within a 50-mile radius of the prison prior to imprisonment.
- (ii) 354 prisoners had an address that was outside a 50-mile radius of Magilligan Prison prior to imprisonment.

A further 19 prisoners were identified as having No Fixed Abode.

(iii) A total of 439 staff currently work in Magilligan Prison. 422 staff live within a 50-mile radius of the prison.

It should be noted that a 50-mile radius includes most of County Tyrone and County Antrim, though not Greater Belfast.

Republican Separated Prisoners Protest

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 10338/11-15, given that the Compact signed by separated republican prisoners states, in Point 14.1, that charges and disciplinary proceedings will be held if rules are broken, how many of these prisoners, who are on protest, have been charged or are subject to disciplinary proceedings as a result of their actions, since the protest began.

(AQW 11063/11-15)

Mr Ford: Of those 29 prisoners currently participating in the ongoing protest action at Maghaberry, 25 have been subject to disciplinary proceedings since the protest began. All prisoners on protest are being managed under prison rule 32 (restricted association).

When deemed necessary for the maintenance of good order or discipline, or to ensure the safety of officers, prisoners, or any other person, the governor may arrange for the restriction of a prisoner's association. The governor has determined that rule 32 is the most effective and appropriate manner in which to manage those on protest. Each individual prisoner has regular reviews in regard to continuation of rule 32. All those prisoners subject to the restrictions under rule 32 can avail of their basic entitlements to visits; telephone; and one hour of daily exercise.

Orders Prohibiting Publicity on the Granting of Injunctive Relief

Mr Allister asked Minister of Justice (i) how many orders have been made by the High Court of Justice prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief since 26 May 2011; (ii) when each order was made; (iii) how many are still extant in Northern Ireland; and (iv) whether any such orders have been discharged since 23 June 2011.

(AQW 11075/11-15)

Mr Ford: Two orders prohibiting publicity on the granting of injunctive relief have been made in the High Court since 26 May 2011. One is still extant and one has been discharged.

As one of the orders is extant further information cannot be provided without risking contravening the terms of the order.

The order that has been discharged was made on 8 December 2011.

Parades

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice how many (i) unionist; (ii) republican; and (iii) other parades have taken place in each of the last two years.

(AQW 11077/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is not responsible for parading.

Statistics in relation to parades may be obtained by contacting the Parades Commission directly.

Medical Records of Interned and Sentenced Prisoners

Mr Sheehan asked the Minister of Justice whether the medical records of interned and sentenced prisoners that were held in Maze/Long Kesh in the aftermath of the fire and riots in October 1974 are still in existence.

(AQW 11098/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service does not hold the medical records dating from the incidents in 1974 in a readily retrievable format. There may still be some prisoner custody files in existence which would hold some medical information however it is impossible to say with certainty which files these would be. In the event that an ex-prisoner from that time wishes to obtain a copy of their prison records they should make a subject access request under the terms of section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998. On receipt of such a request, the Records and Information Management Team of the Northern Ireland Prison Service will carry out a comprehensive search of the archives in accordance with their duties under that Act. All subject access requests will be dealt with on an individual basis and any records found will be provided to the data subject.

Historical Enquiries Team Cases

Mr Copeland asked Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 7487/11-15 (i) for a breakdown of the £1,588,898 expenditure, including an overview of the cases involved; and (ii) how much of this expenditure has led to convictions; and (iii) to detail the cases to which these convictions relate.

(AQW 11101/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Historical Enquiries Team is a matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Northern Ireland Policing Board. I am committed to respecting the operational independence of the Chief Constable and the role of the Policing Board.

You may therefore wish to direct your question to the PSNI.

Witness Service and Young Witness Service Officers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many (i) Witness Service; and (ii) Young Witness Service officers are available in each court division; and for his assessment of the value of this service to people attending court.

(AQW 11117/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Witness Service has a team of ninety nine volunteers providing support to witnesses across the seven court divisions. There is one staff member available to co-ordinate support in each of the court divisions with the exception of the Belfast division, where two staff members are available, and the Craigavon division and Armagh and South Down division, where one staff member is responsible for both.

The Young Witness Service has a team of forty-two volunteers providing support to young witnesses across the seven court divisions. There is one full time and one part time staff member available covering two court divisions with the exception of the Belfast division, which has two full time staff members.

These services play a significant role in assisting witnesses to give their best evidence at court and this is reflected in the high level of satisfaction reported by users.

Cases Involving Alleged Sexual Assault

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 10611/11-15, for a breakdown of the figures by (i) youth/juvenile; and (ii) adult defendants.

(AQW 11124/11-15)

Mr Ford: Table 1 below details the number of active cases involving sexual offences in the Magistrates' Court and Crown Court broken down by County Court Division and by youth and adult defendants as

at 2 May 2012. These figures will differ to those provided in AQW 10611/11-15 because they are extracted from a live database and cases are added or disposed of daily.

TABLE 1

County Court Division	Magistrates' Court		Crown Court		Total	
	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth	Adult	Youth
Antrim	28	2	25	3	53	5
Ards	17	0	18	3	35	3
Armagh and South Down	10	0	14	0	24	0
Belfast	87	10	73	3	160	13
Craigavon	21	2	19	0	40	2
Fermanagh and Tyrone	20	1	16	1	36	2
Londonderry	30	2	19	0	49	2
Total	213	17	184	10	397	27

Table 2 details the number of active cases involving sexual offences that are currently being appealed before the Court of Appeal and County Court broken down by youth and adult defendants as at 2 May 2012.

TABLE 2

	Adult	Youth
Court of Appeal	18	0
County Court Divisions:		
Antrim	1	0
Armagh and South Down	1	0
Belfast	3	0
Fermanagh and Tyrone	1	0
Total	24	0

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Justice how many applicants to each Policing and Community Safety Partnership have been rejected on the basis of their criminal record background checks.

(AQW 11177/11-15)

Mr Ford: The process of appointing independent members to Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (DPCSPs) is a restricted function of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

However, the Board has confirmed that no applicants to PCSPs or DPCSPs were rejected on the basis of their criminal record background checks.

Withholding of Information about the Commission of a Criminal Offence

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice (i) whether the withholding of information about the commission of a criminal offence remains an offence in Northern Ireland, and was so in 1975; (ii) if he can confirm that there is no time limit prosecution for withholding information; and (iii) whether he

will enquire, and report to the Assembly, on any police action taken in regard to the issues surrounding Cardinal Brady, as highlighted in the recent BBC 'This World' programme.

(AQW 11192/11-15)

Mr Ford: Under Section 5 of the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967, which came into force on 29th August 1967, the withholding of information, without reasonable excuse, which is likely to secure, or to be of material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for an offence attracting a sentence of five years or more is an offence. There is no time limit for a prosecution under section 5 of that Act. Actions that the police may take regarding the issues raised in the recent BBC programme are an operational matter for the Chief Constable, who is accountable to the Policing Board. I would encourage anyone with information about child abuse, past or present, to bring it to the immediate attention of the police.

Case 11/039234 at Dungannon Magistrates Court

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 10656/11-15, whether the recording of this matter by the Court Service, at the time of dismissal, is contradictory to that which was recorded by the Public Prosecution Service, which claimed that it had agreed to provide an adult caution but that this agreement was later withdrawn; and for a detailed timeline of this case as it progressed through the court system.

(AQW 11208/11-15)

Mr Ford: As stated in my answer to AQW10656/11-15, the issues associated with case number 11/039234 are a matter for the Public Prosecution Service and I cannot comment on how they recorded the outcome of this case.

The timeline of the case as it progressed through the court system is set out in the table below.

Date	Case Event
20 May 11	Case First Listed - Adjourned
27 May 11	Defendant Pleaded Not Guilty - Adjourned
10 June 11	Case Adjourned
22 July 11	Case Adjourned
19 August 11	Case Adjourned
15 September 11	Contested hearing. Case Dismissed - On Merits
03 April 12	Charge re-instated at request of the Public Prosecution Service
18 April 12	Charge Withdrawn

Department for Regional Development

RAF Base in Ballyhornan, Co Down

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what assessment Roads Service has made of adopting roads at the former RAF base in Ballyhornan, Co Down.

(AQW 10714/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): I have personal knowledge of this site, having visited the former Bishops court RAF base last year. The base is adjacent to Ballyhornan village and was vacated by the RAF in 1990. It included a number of small, single storey, accommodation buildings which, although having pitched roofs, are similar in size to the 'Nissen' huts erected during the war.

The access roads in the base have never been brought up to an adoptable standard and consequently have not been adopted into the public road network. To be adopted, the roads would have to be brought up to the standards indicated in the Department's 'Creating Places' document, which gives guidance on layout and access requirements. Public money is not available to undertake this work. A recent study by Roads Service found that there were some 600 km of unadopted roads in Northern Ireland, serving five properties or more. It would cost some £300 million to bring these roads up to adoption standards

Unfortunately, therefore, the owners/frontagers of the site would have to complete this work, at their own expense, before Roads Service could consider the access roads for adoption into the public road network.

Applications for Roads to be Gritted

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to list (i) the applications for roads to be gritted that have been received by (a) Ballymoney; and (b) Ballymena Borough Councils in each of the last ten years; (ii) the vehicle-per-day rate on each of these roads; and the applications that were successful.

(AQW 10738/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it holds records of gritting applications received from Ballymoney Borough Council for a seven year period (2005-2012) and for a five year period (2007-2012) in respect of Ballymena Borough Council. Details of those applications are set out in the table below:

Ballymoney Borough Council				
Date	Road Name	Comment	Traffic Count	Approved
Jan 2010	Mullan Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No
Dec 2010	Ballinlea Road, Stranocum	Not main through route; (currently salted to Bushvalley school)	1192	No
Feb 2008	Ballyveely Road, Cloughmills	Not main through route	1835 (incl bus seat factor)	No
June 2010	Ballyweany Road, Cloughmills	Not main through route	None available	No
Jan 2010	Duneany Road, Rasharkin	Not through route/ parallel salted route available	917 (incl bus seat factor)	No
Mar 2012	Gortahar Road, Rasharkin	Not through route / parallel salted route available	975	No
Sept 2010	Station Road, Dunloy	Not main through route	1468 (incl bus seat factor)	No
Jun 2010	Galdanagh Road, Dunloy	Not main through route	N/A very minor rural road	No
Dec 2006	Corkey Road, Loughguile	Not main through route	None available	No
Jul 2005	Tullaghans Road Dunloy	None	1500	Yes

Ballymoney Borough Council				
Date	Road Name	Comment	Traffic Count	Approved
Jan 2011	Bendooragh Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No
Dec 2008	Vow Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	1199 minor rural road	No
Dec 2011	Carncullagh Road, Dervock	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No
Jan 2010	Topp Road, Stranocum	Not main through route	N/A very minor rural road	No
Dec 2010	Tamlaght Road, Rasharkin	Not main through route	N/A very minor rural road	No
Jan 2009	Moneycannon Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A very minor rural road	No
Jul 2007	Taughey Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	2102	Yes
Jan 2005	Coolkeeran Road, Armoy	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No
Oct 2006	Gracehill Road, Armoy	None	1856	Yes
Dec 2010	Lislagan Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A very minor rural road	No
Nov 2011	Loughill Road, Cloughmills	Not main through route	N/A minor rural / part urban	No
Jan 2007	Carnamenagh Road Loughguile	Not main through route	N/A Very minor rural road	No
Nov 2006	Fivey Road, Stranocum	Short Link	None available	Yes
Mar 2006	Moneyleck Road, Rasharkin	Short Link	None available	Yes
Dec 2011	Westgate, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A urban housing cul-de-sac	No
Dec 2009	Bamford Park, Rasharkin	Not main through route	N/A urban housing cul-de-sac	No
Jan 2010	Intermediate Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A urban housing cul-de-sac	No
Jan 2010	Greengage Lane, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A urban housing cul-de-sac	No
Jun 2007	Castlehill, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A urban housing cul-de-sac	No
Dec 2010	Macfin Road, Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No

Ballymoney Borough Council				
Date	Road Name	Comment	Traffic Count	Approved
Feb 2009	Seacon Rd., Ballymoney	Not main through route	N/A minor rural road	No

Ballymena Borough Council				
Date	Road Name	Comment	Traffic Count	Approved
Feb 2012	Taylorstown Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	1084	No
Jan 2012	Lisnamanny Road, Martinstown, Ballymena	None	1129	No
Jan 2012	Carneaney Road, Ballymena	None	506	No
Jan 2012	Castle Tower School	Not RS Property	Not Applicable	No
Dec 2011	Duneaney Road, Cullybackey, Ballymena	None	981	No
Feb 2011	Carnalbanagh Road, Ballymena/Larne	Parallel Route	Not Available	No
Jan 2011	Ballybollen Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	920	No
Nov 2010	Lisnamanny Road, Ballymena	None	1129	No
Jan 2010	Cloughwater Road, Clough, Ballymena	Parallel Route	Not Available	No
Jan 2010	Magheralane Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	888	No
Jan 2010	Slaght Road, Slaght	Parallel Route	1257	No
Jan 2010	Garvaghy Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	1169	No
Jan 2010	Ballyconnelly Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	1365	No
Dec 2009	Duneaney Road Cullybackey, Ballymena	None	917	No
Dec 2009	Duneaney Road, Cullybackey, Ballymena	None	917	No
Jan 2009	Carnalbanagh Road, Ballymena/Larne	Parallel Route	Not Available	No
Jan 2009	Garvaghy Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	1169	No

Ballymena Borough Council				
Date	Road Name	Comment	Traffic Count	Approved
Dec 2008	Craigdunloof Road, Newtowncrommelin, Ballymena	Link to Hamlet	Not Applicable	Yes
Dec 2009	Lisnahunshin Road, Portglenone, Ballymena	Parallel Route	784	No
Nov 2007	Ballbollen Road	Parallel Route	920	No
Oct 2007	Cloughwater Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	Not Available	No
Aug 2007	Dunminning Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	1152	No
June 2007	Cloughwater Road, Ballymena	Parallel Route	Not Available	No

Roads Service Gritted Network

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how much it costs on average to grit a (i) mile; and (ii) kilometre of the Roads Service gritted network.

(AQW 10739/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the average cost for salting a mile of the salted network is £20.62 per mile and £12.81 for salting a kilometre of the salted network.

Salt Bins in the North Antrim Area

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to list (i) the requests that were received, and scored, for salt bins in the North Antrim area in the last five years; (ii) the score that each request achieved; (iii) the criteria for which points were awarded; and (iv) the requests that resulted in the provision of salt bins.

(AQW 10740/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of requests for the provision of salt bins in the North Antrim area, the scoring of each, where applicable, and the decision taken are shown in the table below.

To qualify for consideration for the provision of a salt bin, the gradient of the road must be equal to or greater than 5% with no reasonable alternative route available. The points scoring system also takes account of further factors such as geometry, community welfare and usage characteristics.

Ballymoney & Moyle Council Areas			
Road Name/Location	Comment	Score	Approved
Agherton Park, Ballymoney	Assessment sheet missing		Yes
Ballyveely Road, Cloughmills	Existing boxes close to site		No
Ballyvenaght Road, Ballycastle	Existing boxes close to site		No
Balnamore Road, Ballymoney	Gritted Route		No
Bannfields, Ballymoney		21.12	No
Bayview Park, Waterfoot		12	No

Ballymoney & Moyle Council Areas			
Road Name/Location	Comment	Score	Approved
Beckett Avenue, Ballymoney		13.08	No
Beech Hill, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment		No
Bellaghy Park, Dunloy		25	No
Blackpark Cottages, Ballyvoy	Existing boxes close to site		No
Braeside Park, Dunloy		19.2	No
Bush Gardens, Bushmills	Flat, no assessment		No
Cambourne Drive, Ballymoney		0	No
Carness Drive, Dunloy		23.04	No
Chestnut Grove, Ballymoney		19.2	No
Church Hill, Cloughmills		44.02	No
Churchfield, Rasharkin	Not adopted by Roads Service		No
Churchill Avenue, Cloughmills		25.27	No
Clady Road, Cushendall		7.8	No
Cloneen Drive, Ballymoney	Existing boxes close to site	34.32	No
Cypress Park, Cloughmills		19.44	No
Dalriada Drive, Cushendall		16	No
Donnelly Park, Bendooragh Road	Flat, no assessment.		No
Downview Drive, Ballymoney		16	No
Drumavoley Grange, Ballycastle	Not adopted by Roads Service		No
Drumavoley Road, Ballycastle	Salt pile provided instead	8.93	No
Drumvale Drive, Ballymoney		0	No
Dunamallaght Road, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment.		No
Eagry Gardens, Bushmills		51.48	Yes
Eastburn Avenue, Ballymoney	Existing boxes close to site		No
Fairhead Crescent, Ballycastle		0	No
Fassagh Park, Dunloy		14.4	No
Feigh Road, Stranocum	Flat, no assessment.		No
Fenton Park, Cloughmills	Flat, no assessment.		No
Fernmount Park, Armoy		52.42	Yes
Gaults Road, Cushendall		15	No
Glebe Avenue, Derrykeighan	Flat, no assessment.		No
Glebe Park, Derrykeighan	Flat, no assessment.		No
Glenann Road, Cushendall		16	No

Ballymoney & Moyle Council Areas			
Road Name/Location	Comment	Score	Approved
Glendun Road, Cushendall		16	No
Glenmore Gardens, Ballymoney		52.8	Yes
Gortamaddy Drive, Ballycastle	Flat, no assessment.		No
Gortamaddy Park, Ballycastle	Flat, no assessment.		No
Greenans Road, Ballycastle		48.8	Yes
Greenville Avenue, Ballymoney	Existing boxes close to site		No
Greenwood Park, Rasharkin	Flat, no assessment	-	No
Hawthorn Crescent, Dunloy		52.4	Yes
Hawthorn Park, Dunloy	Not adopted by R.S.		No
Hillside Drive, Dunloy	Existing boxes close to site		No
Hollybrook, Drumahiskey Road, Ballymoney		18.48	No
Knocklayde Park, Ballymoney		52.75	Yes
Layde Road, Cushendall		16	No
Leyland Heights, Ballycastle		9.36	No
Margaret Avenue, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment		No
Margaret Square, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment		No
McClelland Park, Dunloy	Disabled child.	41.0	Yes
Meadow View, Ballymoney	Existing boxes close to site		No
Mill Street, Ballycastle		57.3	Yes
Millbrook Manor, Ballymoney		19.2	No
Millfields, Balnamore	Flat, no assessment.		No
Millgrange, Ballymoney		21.12	No
Mount Edwards Hill, Cushendall	Assessment sheet missing		Yes
Mountview Crescent, Ballybogey		13.2	No
Moyle View, Cushendall		20.8	No
Mullan Road, Rasharkin		31.2	No
Newhill Drive, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment.		No
Nursery Ave, Ballymoney	Not adopted by R.S.		No
Park View, Ballymoney	Existing boxes close to site	28.6	No
Parklands, Ballymoney		19.2	No
Parkview Close, Ballymoney		50.92	Yes
Postboys Walk, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment.		No

Ballymoney & Moyle Council Areas			
Road Name/Location	Comment	Score	Approved
Princess Gargens, Cloughmills		19.2	No
Raceview Drive, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment		No
Rathlin Avenue, Ballycastle	Flat, no assessment.		No
Richmond Crescent, Ballymoney		21.12	No
Rosemount, Cloughmills		13.2	No
Seymour Street, Ballymoney		31.44	No
Shelton Road, Loughguile		52.5	Yes
Springhill Manor, Cloughmills		14.52	No
St James' Road, Ballymoney		64.27	Yes
Station Cottages, Dervock	Not adopted by R.S.		No
Strand Park, Cloughmills		52.42	Yes
Sunnyside Drive, Rasharkin		21.12	No
The Birches, Rasharkin	Not adopted by R.S.		No
The Brambles, Dervock		34.32	No
Trinity Drive, Ballymoney	Flat, no assessment.		No
Tullaghgore Road, Seacon	Assessment sheet missing		No
Wallace Park, Rasharkin	Flat, no assessment.		No
Westfield Park, Seacon	Flat, no assessment.		No
Westoncroft, Ballymoney		52.75	Yes
Whitepark Court, Ballycastle	Existing boxes close to site		No

Ballymena Borough Council Area			
Road Name	Comment	Score	Approved
Parklands	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Douglas Road		37	No
Wellbourne Grove	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Millwater Court	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Thornbrook	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Parkmount	Box nearby	Not Applicable	No
Carnvale	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Galgorm Hall	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Maybin Park	Box nearby	Not Applicable	No
Whinsmour	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Long Common	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No

Ballymena Borough Council Area			
Road Name	Comment	Score	Approved
Kirk Gardens		42	No
Mansfield Heights	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Fenaghy Heights	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Ballyloughan Heights	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Chichester Park East	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Long Common	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Woodcroft Heights	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Long Common	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Crosshill View		42	No
Lantara		36	No
Carnvale		33	No
Chichester Park		25	No
Deramore Crescent	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Farm Lodge	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Thornbrook	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Sourhill	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Rathmore Heights	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Kew Link/ Kew Gardens	Box nearby	Not Applicable	No
Staffa Drive	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Millfield	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Brackley Manor		36	No
Brackley Manor	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Brooklands	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Mill Hollow		59	Yes
Raceview Ind. Estate	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Kew Gardens	Box nearby	Not Applicable	No
Tullymore Dale	Not adopted	Not Applicable	No
Millfield	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Shane Manor	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Ballybollen Road	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Dunclug Gardens	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Hillside Park	< 5% Gradient	Not Applicable	No
Fenagh Road	Private property	Not Applicable	No

Salt Bins

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the average cost of (i) providing a salt bin; and (ii) stocking a salt bin on an annual basis.

(AQW 10741/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the average cost of supplying and maintaining a grit box is approximately £167.00 for the first year. This cost includes the capital costs of the grit box and the costs associated with the average winter replenishment cycle.

Detailed costs cannot be provided for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

Contractual Arrangements for Pension Schemes

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development how much Translink has paid to senior management as part of contractual arrangements for pension schemes, in each of the last five years; and what elements of these payments were additional.

(AQW 10776/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink advise that they have not paid anything directly to senior managers as part of contractual arrangements for pension schemes. Employer contributions are made for all staff and paid directly to pension schemes. Note 21 of Translink's annual reports and accounts details Directors and Employees' Staff Costs.

Warrenpoint Harbour Authority

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development how many full-time workers are employed by Warrenpoint Harbour Authority.

(AQW 10901/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are 46 full time equivalents (FTEs) employed at Warrenpoint Harbour Authority. Of these 37 are full time workers with a further 20 employed on a part time basis to provide the further nine full time equivalent jobs.

Impact of the A5 on Future Roads Programmes

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact of the A5 on future roads programmes; and whether it will necessitate the delay of any proposed road schemes in the Five Year Programme.

(AQW 10934/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Member will be aware that the Executive agreed to proceed with two sections of the A5 which includes 14km of new off-line dual carriageway between New Buildings and Strabane and approximately 21km between Omagh and Ballygawley. A 1.5km single carriageway bypass of New Buildings is also proposed. Final decisions on the extent of the works will depend on the outcome of the Public Inquiry process.

Future funding for further sections of the A5 will be agreed through the structures of the North South Ministerial Council. This, along with the funding envisaged through the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21, and that confirmed through subsequent budget settlements, will determine the timing of delivery of other schemes in the Strategic Road Improvement Programme.

Penalty Charge Notices Fine

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development to explain the rationale behind the plans to increase the Penalty Charge Notices fine from £60 to £90.

(AQW 10942/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: During my recent briefing to the Committee for Regional Development, I indicated that I have approved an increase to the amount of a parking Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) from £60 to £90, with a 50% reduction for early payment if the charge is paid within 14 days.

While this increase has not yet been implemented, I consider the increase is necessary to act as a strong deterrent to those who park illegally and to ensure it is those road users who contribute more towards the considerable cost of providing parking services. I should stress that this increase will not affect those who park legally and abide by the law.

The proposal to increase the amount of a PCN is included in my Department's Budget 2011-15.

Penalty Charge Notices

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Penalty Charge Notices have been issued in (i) Bangor town centre; (ii) the Donaghadee area; and (iii) the Holywood area, in each year since 2006.

(AQW 10943/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued on behalf of my Department's Roads Service in Bangor, Donaghadee, and Holywood in each financial year since 2006, are set out in the table below:

	2006/07*	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Bangor	1,519	4,456	4,464	3,672	3,156	3,411
Donaghadee	10	211	142	171	352	234
Holywood	690	977	1037	1,201	1,865	1,657

* Decriminalised Parking Enforcement was introduced at the end of October 2006.

Car Parking Charges

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development why car parking charges are going to be introduced in (i) Abbey Street West; (ii) Dufferin Avenue; and (iii) Central Avenue car parks in Bangor.

(AQW 10944/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I updated the Committee for Regional Development on 18 April 2012 on my proposals to implement the Savings Delivery Plans detailed in my Department's four year budget 2011-15. This included the introduction of charging to some car-parks.

The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan 2015 sets out a range of measures to control the demand for parking within the Belfast Metropolitan Area. It identified an area of parking restraint within Bangor, and the Abbey Street West, Dufferin Avenue, and Central Avenue car parks all fall within this area.

Car Parking Charges

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development, given the changes in car parking charges introduced in 2011 and the proposed changes currently being introduced, to provide an estimate of the difference in total income from all car parks in 2013 compared with 2010.

(AQW 10952/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the total income received from all car parks in 2010 was £10.7 million and that the projected income for 2013 is some £12.9 million, representing an estimated difference of some £2.2 million.

The figure for 2013 includes income from the 25 car parks where tariffs are due to be introduced in June 2012 and increased tariffs which were implemented in August/September 2011.

Funding for Cycling Infrastructure

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding has been allocated for the cycling infrastructure in each year of the 2011-15 budgetary period.

(AQW 10960/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is committed to provide safer roads for all road users, particularly for vulnerable road users such as pedestrians and cyclists. My Department aims to achieve this by utilising a range of measures, such as road safety education and engineering, traffic calming and enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network.

Cyclists have benefited from several years of investment in cycling infrastructure which, as set out in the Regional Transport Strategy and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, is well established. In the 10-year period, up to the end of the last financial year, my Department's Roads Service has invested almost £9 million in the provision of 230km of cycle lanes.

In the financial year 2011/12, some £0.95 million was allocated for the provision of cycling infrastructure and provided 6.3km of cycle lanes. Roads Service proposes to invest a further £140k to provide an additional 1.6km of cycle lanes in the 2012/13 financial year.

Detailed budgets for the remainder of the 2011-15 budget period have not been finalised. While I am currently unable to provide details of future programmes, the Member will be aware that capital budgets for the remaining budget period are under pressure and my Department is faced with the difficult task of maximising outputs from the limited resources available. In the prevailing circumstances, it will not therefore be possible to continue to fund all of our functions at the same levels as in previous years.

Cycling Measures

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the proportion of the roads budget that has been spent on cycling measures in each of the last five years.

(AQW 10961/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service's budget includes expenditure for both capital investment on, and maintenance of, the road, pedestrian & cycle network.

While capital investment on cycling measures, which includes paths that are shared between pedestrians and cyclists, can be identified separately, information on costs associated with the maintenance of these cycling paths is not recorded separately.

Details of expenditure on roads and cycling measures, in the last five financial years for which information is available, are set out in the table below:

EXPENDITURE ON ROADS AND CYCLING MEASURES OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS £'000

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Total Roads Service Capital and Maintenance Expenditure	260,104	219,876	222,042	246,416	198,333
Cycling Measures	1,151	1,056	1,360	981	311

Outturn for the financial year 2011/12 is currently being finalised. However, I can advise that information on completed and proposed cycle path schemes for the 2011/12 financial year, can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

Roads Programmes

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how his Department prioritises (i) new roads programmes; and (ii) roads maintenance programmes.

(AQW 10962/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The current programme of road improvements has been identified as part of a process which has evolved over the last decade and is based upon a number of key strategies and documents.

The Regional Development Strategy (RDS), first published in 2001 and revised in 2012, sets out the development of Northern Ireland over the period to 2035. The RDS is supported by the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS), which was endorsed by the Northern Ireland Assembly in 2002, to make a significant contribution towards achieving the longer term vision for transportation. It has also been reviewed and a new document "Ensuring a Sustainable Transport Future – A New Approach to Regional Transportation" was published in March 2012.

The RTS is delivered by three transport plans The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan, the Sub Regional Transport Plan and the Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan. These plans have been enhanced through the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Strategic Road Improvement Programme has been developed from this framework, and embraces the five key assessment criteria of environment, safety, economy, accessibility and integration. Accordingly, priority has been given to upgrading the key transport corridors, then the link corridors and the remainder of the trunk road network.

With regard to the roads maintenance programme, Article 8 of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, places a duty on my Department's Roads Service to maintain all public roads and footways in a safe and serviceable condition as far as is reasonably practicable. In recognition of its duty of care, Roads Service has put in place a set of Maintenance Standards for Safety and an inspection programme, to ensure that roads have a satisfactory level of skidding resistance which reduces the risk of uncontrolled skids and improves braking efficiency. These standards, which are designed to ensure a consistent service level and a safe highway, while offering value for money, are based on best practice, research and consultation with both the public and other professional bodies and Industry.

The Safety Standards and procedures currently in operation establish frequencies for road and footway inspections dependent on traffic / pedestrian volumes and specify response times for the repair of defects. Inspection frequencies vary between daily cycles for motorways to four-monthly cycles for carriageways carrying low volumes of traffic. Response times specified for the repair of defects are dependent on the severity of the defect and range from one calendar day to routine inclusion in the next work programme for that particular route. These systems and procedures are recognised and accepted by the courts as being robust given the finite level of funding available. The Standards were last reviewed in 2006 and continue to provide a systematic approach to road maintenance management.

Surface defects which are identified outside of these inspection regimes will be dealt with according to the above standards and remedial work arranged as necessary. If it becomes apparent that the relevant response time cannot be met or is not appropriate, then the Department has the option of installing signs to warn road users of a possible danger.

The regular safety inspections help identify the condition of roads and footways and aid the preparation and prioritisation of Roads Service's annual reconstruction and resurfacing programme. The programme is prepared on the basis of a number of factors encompassing usage, general surface condition, structural deformation, public enquiries and public liability claims.

Special Rapid Electricity Chargers

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development where he plans to install special rapid electricity chargers which can charge electrically powered vehicles to 80 percent of their capacity in 25 minutes.

(AQW 10964/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: ecar is a consortium of public and private sector partners working together to bring electric vehicle charging infrastructure to Northern Ireland with grant funding from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles. It is jointly led by my Department and the Department of the Environment.

In 20011/2012, ecar installed three rapid charge posts:

- Jamsies Garage, Glenshane Pass, Magherafelt;
- Fiveways Shops and Service Station, Newry; and
- Donnelly Group Garage, Dungannon.

Officials from my Department are working with ecar consortium partners to determine the number and location of rapid charge posts to be installed in 2012/2013. The aim is to provide a strategic network of rapid charge posts across Northern Ireland.

A bid is also being prepared for EU funding for 5 rapid charge posts on the TENT-T network in Northern Ireland.

As charge points are installed, their details will be published on the NIDirect website www.nidirect.gov.uk/ecar

War Disablement SmartPass

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people have a War Disablement SmartPass for concessionary travel.

(AQW 10966/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm that, as of 30 April 2012, there were 1,444 individuals who had a War Disablement SmartPass.

Half-Fare SmartPass

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development how many people have been in receipt of a Half-Fare SmartPass due to being in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 10967/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is not possible to answer this question in the manner specified: the card management database can only provide information on a snapshot basis, and cannot produce historical data. I can confirm, however, that as of 30 April 2012 there were 9,564 individuals in receipt of a Half-Fare SmartPass issued under the Disability Living Allowance category.

Upgrade on the A5

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to the upgrade on the A5 (i) whether the upgrade will be on the existing A5; and (ii) why a decision was made ahead of the report being published.

(AQW 10972/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that the scheme proposed by my Department at the Public Inquiry in summer 2011 involves construction of a new off-line dual carriageway on a route generally remote from the existing A5 route. However, adoption of the scheme is subject to the outcome of the Public Inquiry process, at which the issue of on-line widening was discussed in depth.

The Inspector's Report from the Public Inquiry has been received by the Department and is currently being considered. I plan to publish a Departmental Statement outlining my response to the Report's findings and recommendations in early summer 2012. The report will also be made available to the public at that time.

My announcement of the upgrade of two stretches of the A5 to dual carriageway standard is part of a balanced package of improvements to the Strategic Road Network in Northern Ireland. The announcement is part of a collective decision taken by the Executive. The timing of this decision was necessary in order to give all NI Departments clarity on their budgets.

Free of Charge Car Parks in Bangor

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the anticipated annual revenue that will result from the decision to charge drivers to use three previously free of charge car parks in Bangor.
(AQW 11025/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is estimated that the annual revenue accruing from the decision to introduce charging at the car parks in Bangor, that were previously free of charge, will be approximately £24,000.

Car Parks

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the anticipated annual revenue that will result from the decision to charge drivers to use car parks that were previously free of charge.
(AQW 11026/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is estimated that the annual revenue accruing from the decision to introduce charging at a number of car parks, that were previously free of charge, will be approximately £178,000.

Translink: Train Fares

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the anticipated additional annual revenue that will result from Translink's decision to increase train fares.
(AQW 11027/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that based on the level of average fare increase implemented, they anticipate that the additional annual revenue which will result from the decision to increase train fares is circa £1m.

Motorcycle Speeds

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development whether motorcycle speeds can be detected by speed cameras; and if not, how he plans to tackle the issue of motorcycles travelling at excess speeds.

(AQW 11119/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is not responsible for the operation of speed cameras and the recording of motor cycles travelling at excess speeds.

Information in relation to these issues may be obtained by contacting PSNI directly by writing to the Chief Constable.

Price Rises by Translink

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of the publicised price rises by Translink, why return tickets have been replaced by the Daysaver Fare.
(AQW 11175/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have advised that assuming your question relates to town services, there had previously been a Day Ticket and no Day Return available. Translink believe that the DaySaver fare will prove more popular with customers and is actually a reinstatement of previous arrangements.

The Day Ticket provides unlimited travel for those making more than two journeys in a day or making cross-city journeys, which offers good value for money. For those who travel only twice in the day or do not use the Day Ticket, the best value is to use Smartlink at only £0.90 per journey. (A minimum of five

journeys are purchased at a time, to be used in twelve months (the equivalent per journey cost on the Day Return was £1.00).

Rural Community Transport Organisations

Mr Givan asked the Minister for Regional Development when the Rural Community Transport organisations will receive information from his Department on their grant allocations for the 2012/13 financial year.

(AQW 11190/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Information regarding the level of funding for 2012/13 to each of the rural community transport organisations will be made available to them week commencing 7 May 2012.

Water Bills for Charitable Shops and Services

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to having an exemption from, or a reduction in, water bills for charitable shops and services, particularly those whose bills are based on valuation rather than by metered usage.

(AQW 11239/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Under the existing legislation the setting and approving of water and sewerage tariffs is the responsibility of NI Water subject to the approval of the Utility Regulator. Both are obliged to ensure that there is no undue discrimination against any class of customers and should keep tariffs under review to see if adjusting tariffs could result in a better reflection of costs. If charitable organisations were to be exempted from water and sewerage charges other customers would bear the cost unless there was additional government intervention.

I have every sympathy with those bodies which are trying to manage in the current economic climate. However, Budget 2010, which the Executive has agreed, does not anticipate providing the additional funds that would be needed to support the increased subsidies (unmeasured non-domestic consumers already receive a 50% subsidy) which would result from introducing exemptions or reductions in water bills. It would be necessary to reduce funding to other services to pay for exemptions and reduction. While I would not want to rule out looking at non-domestic charging issues in the future it would not be appropriate for me to consider at this time.

20mph Speed Limits

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost to his Department of enforcing ad-hoc 20mph speed limits in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 11299/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is not responsible for the enforcement of ad-hoc 20mph speed limits.

Information in relation to these issues may be obtained by contacting PSNI directly by writing to the Chief Constable.

New Belfast Transport Hub

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on Translink's plans for a new Belfast transport hub.

(AQW 11317/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The plans to construct a new Transport Hub in Belfast are still at an early stage. Translink has submitted a Strategic Outline Case which my Department and the Department of Finance and Personnel have approved. Translink is now in the process of developing the Outline Business Case for the project. When complete this will also be submitted to my Department for approval.

Narrow Water Bridge Project

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Regional Development, in light of Louth County Council having decided to appeal the decision by the Special EU Programmes Body not to proceed with the Narrow Water Bridge project, to outline any objections his Department made to the funding application.

(AQO 1893/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that my Department did not raise any objections to the funding proposal for the Narrow Water Bridge proposal.

A26 Dual Carriageway: Farmers

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development how he intends to make provision for farmers along the route of the proposed dualling of the A26.

(AQO 1883/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that I fully support the proposed A26 dualling scheme and would welcome any support the Member, and indeed other Members, can bring in respect of lobbying for funding for the scheme.

However, while my Department has responsibility for transportation and road infrastructure, I fully recognise the significant contribution that agriculture makes towards our economy. I am also mindful of the sensitivities relating to disturbance to farm businesses arising from the development of new schemes.

The proposed A26 dualling scheme would provide an all-purpose dual carriageway. Landowners and farmers will be able to access it from either left in - left out junctions or from one of the adjacent full movement side road junctions.

Appropriate accommodation works, such as, fencing, hedging, gates and laneways will also be provided as a result of the scheme.

Where land is required for the scheme, landowners will be compensated in accordance with the Land Compensation (Northern Ireland) Order 1982. The purpose of this compensation is that the landowner is put, as far as money can do it, in the same position as if the land or property had not been taken. Compensation matters are dealt with directly by the Department of Finance and Personnel's Land and Property Services on behalf of my Department.

Delivery of this project will be determined by the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21.

A6: Upgrade

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the upgrading of the A6 road.

(AQO 1892/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that I am highly supportive of this particular scheme and indeed would welcome any support he or other Members can offer to secure additional funding for this proposal.

My Department's Roads Service has advised that planning for improvement of the A6 is well advanced. A Public Inquiry held in November 2007 approved construction of a dual carriageway between Randalstown and Castledawson and I am awaiting the outcome of a supplementary Inquiry, held in February 2012, to further examine junction provision at Castledawson. It is expected that a Public Inquiry will be held later this year to examine the case for and against the construction of a dual carriageway from Londonderry to Dungiven, including a dual carriageway bypass of Dungiven.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to allocate any funds from the 2011-2015 budget for either of the A6 schemes. Spending beyond the current budget period on schemes such as the Randalstown to Castledawson and Londonderry to Dungiven dual carriageway schemes will depend on funding issuing from the 2011-2021 Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Translink: Fare Increases

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the proposed fare increases by Translink.

(AQO 1895/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My role, and that of my officials, is to consider and approve the assumptions underpinning the cost and revenue changes included in the Translink Corporate Plan for each of Metro, Ulsterbus and Northern Ireland Railways. In my assessment of any proposed fare increases I have to balance social considerations against the commercial obligations placed on Translink. I agree any fare increase is unwelcome but equally, significant service cuts or job losses at a time of economic difficulty are not something I can endorse.

Given the current financial climate and in particular increasing costs of fuel, I believe an average fare increase below inflation combined with significant improved services on rail is a positive outcome. Obviously fare increases are not welcome but we must remember the context where Translink has not put fares up since June 2010, which contrasts markedly with the position in the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. A recent survey in the UK shows, for example, that average fares have increased by nearly one tenth (10%) over the last 2 years. In addition, as: Concessionary Fares will remain in place; 20 new trains are being introduced to service; the Londonderry to Coleraine track project will begin this July and we expect 77 million passenger journeys to take place on the Translink services this year, there are a lot of positives to report.

Parking Charges

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the impact of car parking charges in various towns.

(AQO 1896/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's budget, which was approved in March of last year, included a number of savings delivery plans, one of which was to introduce on-street parking charges to approximately 30 towns and cities across Northern Ireland.

Having inherited the proposal to introduce on-street parking in these towns I consulted widely on the issue and as Members will be aware, in September last year I announced that I was not proceeding with this proposal.

Prior to making that decision, I had met with and listened carefully to concerns expressed by elected, local and traders' representatives, including Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association (NIRTA), across Northern Ireland about the potential impact on city and town centre trading.

My decision not to extend on-street charging results in a shortfall in revenue of £8.8m during the 2011-15 budget period. While I have identified the majority of the savings required from within my Department's budget, just over £2m will be required from increases to other car parking charges, including the introduction of charging in some car parks that are currently free.

Increased off-street parking charges are therefore necessary to help offset the shortfall in funding as a result of my decision not to extend on-street charging. This protects frontline services such as essential road maintenance and ensures that local traders and shoppers can benefit from free on-street parking.

Department for Social Development

Cost of Producing Consultation Documents and Official Reports

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development what was the cost to his Department of producing (i) consultation documents; and (ii) official reports in the 2010/11 financial year.

(AQW 10600/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The table below provides details of the cost of producing consultation documents and official reports in 2010/11.

Document Type	Cost £ 2010/11
Consultation Documents	109,796
Official Reports	13,646

Redevelopment of the Former Police Station in Belcoo

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update of the redevelopment of the former police station in Belcoo, including the planned date for the commencement of work and the proposed completion date.

(AQW 10692/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Ark Housing Association has been nominated to take this scheme forward through the public sector clearing house process. The Association is currently in discussion with Land and Property Service to reach an agreed valuation. The discussions are expected to conclude within the coming months. In the event that a valuation can be agreed and the scheme remains financially viable, it could potentially go on site towards the end of this financial year.

Personal Independence Payment on Disability Living Allowance Claimants

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the potential impact of the new Personal Independence Payment on Disability Living Allowance claimants.

(AQW 10736/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Personal Independence Payment will replace Disability Living Allowance for people of working age only (aged 16-64). Children will continue to receive Disability Living Allowance provided they satisfy the conditions of that benefit until they reach age 16 and people over the age of 65 who are already receiving Disability Living Allowance will continue to receive the benefit.

Whilst the legislative framework underpinning Personal Independence Payment has already been set out in the Welfare Reform Act in Great Britain, it is too early to meaningfully estimate the impact given the differences in the Disability Living Allowance caseload between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. It is also important to highlight work to finalise key elements of the new benefit, including the assessment criteria and proposed thresholds for Personal Independence Payment, is still ongoing. Public consultation exercises have already been undertaken on the assessment criteria and proposed thresholds for Personal Independence Payment and one is currently undergoing on the design of the new benefit. This will close on 30 June 2012. I fully understand and appreciate that existing working age Disability Living Allowance customers may be anxious and concerned about the change and my Department, through the Social Security Agency, will be working to fully support them on an individual basis as they encounter the new benefit.

Disability Living Allowance

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development whether he is aware of the concerns of Disability Living Allowance claimants, who are partially sighted, that the new Personal Independence Payment does not adequately recognise the daily impact of sight loss.

(AQW 10751/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I acknowledge that many people have concerns about the proposed reform of Disability Living Allowance. You will be aware that Personal Independence Payment will assess a person's ability to perform a range of everyday tasks – entitlement will not be based on their specific disability or condition. The proposed assessment criteria, weightings and entitlement thresholds for the new benefit are intended to reflect and differentiate between the barriers and extra costs faced by disabled people. They are designed to take into account that impairments can affect people in

different ways. Development work on the proposals for the assessment criteria has been undertaken in conjunction with a group of independent specialists in health, social care and disability, which includes RNIB and Action for Blind People. The assessment looks at the impact of sensory, mental and cognitive impairments, for example, by taking account of the ability to plan and follow a journey.

I should emphasise that the development of the proposals is an iterative process and changes have already been made to the assessment criteria as a result of earlier informal consultation, for example, to reflect the need for supervision from another person and to include specific references to the need for support dogs in the mobility criteria. Formal consultation on the assessment criteria and proposed entitlement thresholds ended on 30 April and we have received responses from a number of organisations who work with blind or visually impaired people. I will consider these and all other responses carefully.

Restoring the SS Nomadic

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development (i) how much funding has been spent on restoring the SS Nomadic; (ii) by how much has this sum exceeded the initial contract price or projection; (iii) why has the restoration taken 6 years; (iv) what are the projected maintenance and running costs; and (v) how these costs will be met.

(AQW 10816/11-15)

Mr McCausland:

- (i) the projected cost for restoring the SS Nomadic amounts to £5.129million; (ii) this amount includes £169,000 for additional works related to cleaning, painting and steelworks; (iii) the restoration has taken 6 years as it has taken this length of time for the Nomadic Charitable Trust, a voluntary body, to raise the necessary funding and complete the procurement for the restoration works; (iv) the estimated projected maintenance and running costs for the initial three years of operation once the vessel opens as a visitor and industrial maritime heritage attraction amounts to £1.55million; and, (v) it is anticipated that these costs will be met from a combination of admission income, corporate sponsorship, venue hire, dining and café income, retail and booklet sales and a £535,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Housing Executive's Multi-Element Improvement Scheme

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Social Development how many district office areas are not included in the Housing Executive's Multi-Element Improvement Scheme; and to detail the reason for each area not being included.

(AQW 10823/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are currently no Multi Element Improvement Schemes planned for any Housing Executive District Office area as the programme ended in 2008/09 because of funding pressures on the capital budget available to the Housing Executive for these of major improvement schemes.

I have however asked the Housing Executive to bring forward a substantial programme outlining the homes that need significant capital upgrading that could potentially be delivered by Housing Associations, subject to tenant support. I am expecting details of that Programme in the coming weeks and will be happy to publish it at that time.

Grounds Maintenance Contracts

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Social Development why grounds maintenance contracts between his Department and the Housing Executive have been allowed to expire before new contracts are put in place.

(AQW 10837/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are no grounds maintenance contracts between my Department and the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive grounds maintenance procurement process is due

to complete with the renewal contracts commencing on 1 June 2012. This will coincide with the completion of the current contracts.

Defibrillators in Buildings

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what action his Department is taking to increase the number of defibrillators in buildings used by his Department or its arm's-length bodies.

(AQW 10884/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department and its arm's-length bodies do not have defibrillators in any of their buildings and there are currently no plans to introduce them.

Applications for Social Housing

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development, in light of the 40,000 applications for social housing that are currently lodged with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the annual rate at which this number is increasing, for his assessment of the period of time it will take to bring this number under control, given the projected rate of provision of new social homes.

(AQW 10983/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have just published plans to deliver 4,600 new social homes over the next three years as part of our Programme for Government commitment to deliver 8,000 new social and affordable homes by 2015.

The construction of more new social housing will of course help to meet housing need, but we must also recognise that up to 9,000 existing homes are re let each year to those on the waiting list and this contribution must not be underestimated.

However social housing alone cannot and will not meet the needs of all those in need of housing. Many applicants, particularly the thousands with no assessed points whatsoever, will never qualify for social housing and for them we need to make sure there are viable alternatives, either in terms of more affordable housing or in the Private Rented Sector.

My forthcoming announcement on the new Housing Strategy will provide more detail on this.

Social Housing in the Banbridge Area

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development (i) what steps he intends to take to provide more social housing in the Banbridge area; (ii) what discussions have taken place on developing the Brookfield Factory site; and (iii) when he expects to provide additional social housing in Banbridge, given that at March 2011 there were 677 people on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's waiting list in the Banbridge area, with 446 of them awaiting housing in Banbridge town.

(AQW 10991/11-15)

Mr McCausland: During the last financial year (20011/12) we completed 49 new homes in the Banbridge District Office area. In addition to these new homes, we also re-let approximately 200 further homes from our existing stock to help meet housing need in the area.

The Social Housing Development Programme for the next 3 years has just been published and provides details of 48 new homes for the Banbridge District of which 36 are located in the Town. This will be further complemented throughout the year by the re-letting of existing homes.

In respect of the Brookfield factory site, the Housing Executive has not received any proposal from a Housing Association for the development of social housing on this land, nor has any discussion taken place on this.

Social Housing in Tiger's Bay, North Belfast

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister for Social Development (i) whether there are any plans to make the vacant houses at Halliday's Road in North Belfast habitable; (ii) the level of social housing in Tiger's Bay, North Belfast, including how many properties are owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Housing Associations; and (iii) for his assessment of the suitability of the housing stock in the Tiger's Bay area in relation to the needs of local people.

(AQW 11108/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Tigers Bay Estate comprises of 491 dwellings of which 69 have been sold to sitting tenants under the House Sales Scheme. There are currently no Housing Association properties in this area. There is a range of housing in the estate including 1 and 2 bedroom flats, bungalows and 2, 3, and 4 bedroom houses.

In September 2009 the Board of the Housing Executive and my Department approved the regeneration plan for Tigers Bay. This regeneration plan has the full support of local residents and elected representatives.

To date 37 dwellings have been demolished by the Housing Executive. The remaining 10 at Halliday's Road, although vacant, remain standing at the request of the community, to provide a security buffer at the interface. Environmental improvements have been completed in 3 areas of the estate, Mackey Street, Lawlor Court and Edlingham Street.

The 10 void properties at Limestone Road and Halliday's Road have been transferred to Apex Housing Association and will now be replaced with new family housing. Work has already commenced on site.

A further phase of new build for 12 units has been included in the Social Housing Development for 2013/14.

This regeneration plan should, on completion, ensure that the housing stock on the estate will meet the existing and future housing needs of this community.

Flats at Kilclief Gardens, Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the timescale for demolishing the flats at Kilclief Gardens, Kilcooley Estate, Bangor.

(AQW 11162/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department gave the Housing Executive approval to demolish these flats in February. However, seven of the twenty four flats are still occupied and the District Office are working to relocate these tenants as quickly as possible. The demolition of the flats will commence when the tenants have all been re-housed.

Public Sector Jobs in Omagh

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department or the Housing Executive has any plans to reduce or increase the number of public sector jobs in Omagh.

(AQW 11267/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Neither my Department nor the Housing Executive currently has any plans to reduce or increase the number of public sector jobs in Omagh.

Welfare Reform

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development to provide an estimate of the number of people that will be affected by the changes to Disability Allowance with the introduction of Welfare Reform.

(AQW 11338/11-15)

Mr McCausland: All existing Working Age customers (aged 16-64) currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance, of which there are approximately 121,000, will be affected by the introduction of

Personal Independence Payment. All such customers will be required to claim and be assessed for Personal Independence Payment. Children will continue to receive Disability Living Allowance provided they satisfy the conditions of that benefit until they reach age 16 and people over the age of 65 at 8 April 2013 who are already receiving Disability Living Allowance will continue to receive the benefit.

Whilst the legislative framework underpinning Personal Independence Payment has already been set out in the Welfare Reform Act in Great Britain, it is too early to estimate meaningfully the impact given the differences in the Disability Living Allowance caseload between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. It is also important to highlight that work to finalise key elements of the new benefit, including the assessment criteria and proposed thresholds for Personal Independence Payment, is still ongoing. Public consultation exercises have already been undertaken on the assessment criteria and proposed thresholds for Personal Independence Payment and one is currently ongoing on the design of the new benefit. This will close on 30 June 2012. I fully understand and appreciate that existing working age Disability Living Allowance customers may be anxious and concerned about the change and my Department, through the Social Security Agency, will be working to fully support them on an individual basis as they encounter the new benefit.

Welfare Reform: Blind or Partially Sighted Claimants

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the impact of the proposed Welfare Reform changes on benefit claimants who are blind or partially sighted.

(AQO 1906/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A key part of the proposed welfare reforms will be the replacement of DLA with a new benefit - Personal Independence Payment (PIP). PIP will assess the impact a person's condition or disability has on their ability to undertake a range of everyday tasks such as preparing a meal, communicating or planning and undertaking a journey. Claimants will be able to tell their story to a healthcare professional as part of the assessment and can have support with them if they need it.

Entitlement will not be based on a claimant having a particular condition or disability. A condition or disability may impact on people in different ways and it would therefore be unhelpful to generalise about the impact on individuals before they are assessed. As the assessment is still being developed, it is not yet possible to predict the likely impact of PIP on people who are blind or partially sighted. I accept that some individuals will have a condition that is unlikely to change, such as blindness, and this will be reflected in decisions about the duration of an award. However, people who are visually impaired will be able to qualify for the enhanced rate of the mobility component of PIP, for example, if they need or use supervision, prompting or a support dog to get to a familiar location.

The Department has consulted widely on the criteria and will carefully consider the responses received.

Welfare Reform: Children and Families

Ms J McCann asked the Minister for Social Development, given the report by the Commissioner for Children and Young People that children and their families will be most affected by Welfare Reform, to outline any discussions he has had with his Executive colleagues to mitigate the impact.

(AQO 1907/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Executive Ministers are continually considering how best to militate against the negative impacts arising from Welfare Reforms through the Executive Sub-Committee, which I established in January of this year. Since its establishment, the sub-committee have met on 5 occasions to consider the wider key issues in relation to Welfare Reform, with particular focus on militating against the negative impacts, developing proposals to achieve potential long term benefits for the people of Northern Ireland and ensuring that operational flexibilities are being maximised in the introduction of Welfare Reform.

Whilst recognising that there are both negative and positive aspects to Welfare Reform, I believe that the recent reports by the Commissioner for Children and Young People on Welfare Reform did not properly reflect on the available evidence as to the impact of Welfare Reform in Northern Ireland. My

Department, working with their Department for Work & Pensions counterparts, has already published information showing that Universal Credit will lift 34,000 people, including 10,000 children, out of poverty in Northern Ireland by 2017. In addition, by that timeframe, current indications estimate Universal Credit will lead to an additional benefit spend of £110m in Northern Ireland. It is estimated that there are 60,000 (15%) children in Northern Ireland currently living in households where no adults are in employment. Universal Credit will help many parents in these households to move into work, thereby not only improving their financial situation but also providing the other positives attributes for children that come from parents being in work.

Town Centre Regeneration: Dromore

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Social Development to outline any plans for the development of Dromore Square and the surrounding buildings to help with the regeneration of the town centre as a hub for local shoppers and businesses.

(AQO 1908/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department has recently approved funding of £150,000 for a Revitalisation Scheme for Dromore town centre which includes Market Square. The approved scheme consists of a paint scheme for Church Street, window panels for vacant properties and a shop front improvement scheme in Church Street, Bridge Street and Market Square. In addition, tourism information panels and additional planting in tubs and baskets are planned for Market Square. A garden seating area is also planned for a derelict site in Market Square which will help to make the centre more attractive for local shoppers and businesses.

Investment: Coleraine

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Social Development what future investment is planned for the Coleraine area.

(AQO 1910/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department is working on a number of projects and schemes in the Coleraine Borough which will either involve direct public funding or lever in investment from the private sector.

The specific projects and schemes being worked on by my Department include the following –

- 10 educational, health and community based projects in the Coleraine Neighbourhood Renewal Area requiring grant input of £2.3 million;
- An extensive regeneration programme for Portrush which would involve investment of up to £60 million from the public and private sectors;
- Two development schemes in Coleraine town centre which would involve private sector investment of approximately £100 million;
- A public realm upgrade for Portstewart estimated to cost up to £1 million; and
- Six housing schemes to provide 63 units as part of the Social Housing Development Programme.

Any funding for these projects to be provided by my Department will be subject to a satisfactory appraisal being completed and sufficient budget cover being made available to my Department.

In addition the Department has commissioned a masterplan for Coleraine town centre which includes an action plan involving some 61 initiatives over the next 15 years, to be delivered through a partnership of public and private stakeholders led by Coleraine Borough Council.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr Cree asked the Minister for Social Development how many recipients of Disability Living Allowance have qualified as a result of suffering from the legacy of the past.

(AQO 1911/11-15)

Mr McCausland: This information is not held by my Department. Entitlement to Disability Living Allowance is based on an assessment of how much help someone needs with personal care and/or mobility needs because of their disability. Whilst information is held on what is known as primary disabling conditions for Disability Living Allowance recipients, information is not held on the causes of the disability.

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

Minutes of the Meetings of the Assembly Commission

Mr Allister asked the Assembly Commission to explain the delay in publishing the minutes of the meetings of the Assembly Commission on the Assembly website.

(AQW 11074/11-15)

Mr Weir (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Assembly Commission is not aware of a delay in publishing minutes of previous meetings of the Commission on the Assembly website. The Commission usually meets on a monthly basis, on the last Tuesday of each month. The Commission held its last monthly business meeting on 20 March 2012. The Commission did not meet on the last Tuesday of April 2012. The minutes of the March business meeting will be considered by the Commission at the next monthly business meeting which is scheduled to take place on 29 May 2012. Following agreement, those minutes will be published on the Assembly website in good time.

Laptops in the Assembly Chamber

Mr McKay asked the Assembly Commission why laptops are not allowed to be used in the Assembly Chamber.

(AQW 11080/11-15)

Mr McElduff (The Representative of the Assembly Commission): The Committee on Procedures considered the use of electronic devices in the Chamber on a number of occasions and reached a decision at its meeting on 27th March 2012. The Committee subsequently wrote to the Speaker informing him of their decision and asking him to issue a ruling.

Members of the Committee were concerned that the use of laptops posed risks in relation to the smooth running of Assembly business. These risks included the potential for noise interference from laptop hardware and software, limited battery life and the hazards of trailing leads arising from the need to provide mains power.

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