

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 12 October 2012

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Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 12 October 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ministerial Transport

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 1609/11-15 and AQW 766/11-15, whether any of the funding referred to in AQW 766/11-15 was utilised to meet the deputy First Minister's need for drivers.

(AQW 14455/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The funding referred to in AQW 766/11-15 was not used for that purpose.

British and Irish Government's National Action Plans

Mrs D Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister if they will request that the British and Irish Government's National Action Plans on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is included in the agenda for the next meeting of the British and Irish Council.

(AQW 14508/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Meetings of the British Irish Council (BIC) are intended to further co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of all eight member administrations, and agendas are drawn up by prior agreement between them. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to seek to use a meeting of the Council for the purpose suggested.

North South Ministerial Council

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister pursuant to AQW 12777/11-15, apart from the NSMC headquarters building, what property in Armagh City is the North South Ministerial Council using, for what purpose, at what cost and since when.

(AQW 14552/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We can confirm that, apart from the NSMC headquarters building, the NSMC is not using any other property in Armagh City.

Ministerial Appointments

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what steps are being taken to dispel the perception of cronyism in Ministerial appointments.

(AQW 14871/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Policy responsibility for public appointments rests with our Department and is based on the overarching principle of selection on merit. The policy also provides for us to appoint an independent Commissioner for Public Appointments whose remit is to regulate, monitor and report on the processes by which Ministerial public appointments are made.

Ministerial appointments to the public bodies that fall within the Commissioner's statutory remit are made in accordance with a Code of Practice published by the Commissioner. The Code sets out the procedures for making Ministerial public appointments and emphasises the need for appointments to be made on merit and in an open and transparent manner with equality of opportunity and equal treatment for all applicants.

A core principle of the Code is that the selection panel that is assessing candidates and making recommendations to Ministers should include a member independent of the Department and the public body to which the appointments are being made.

One of the Commissioner's statutory functions is to audit Departmental public appointment processes to check compliance with his Code of Practice and to publish his findings.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy.

(AQO 2559/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We remain committed to building a united and shared community by continuing to improve community relations across our society. Bringing forward a robust community relations strategy with a clear framework for action will be a critical part of achieving our vision of a better future for everyone.

We very much recognise the importance of translating the Executive's commitment into clear, meaningful action and we have asked the cross-party working group to conclude its work on developing the strategy as a matter of urgency. We expect to receive a report from the working group within the coming weeks, which will allow a final strategy and high level action plan to be published shortly thereafter.

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh Site

Ms McCorley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

(AQO 2568/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following a formal offer of funding from the European Union Peace III Programme for the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre in January 2012, an architectural design team was appointed on 18 June 2012 to take forward the design and related construction procurement for the Centre.

Work is also ongoing with local and international organisations to secure their commitment to use the Centre once it becomes operational.

Steering Groups for the Implementation of the Social Investment Fund

Mr Dunne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the establishment of steering groups for the implementation of the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 2570/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 4 October we announced the names of the community/voluntary, statutory and political members of the steering groups for the nine Social Investment Zones. Details of the membership have been published on the NIDirect website at:

<http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/the-social-investment-fund-steering-groups> .

The remaining statutory representatives will be formally appointed as soon as practicable and two business representatives will be formally appointed to each Steering Group shortly, when priorities are known. This will enable us to ensure that the right people are involved during delivery. We are also

ensuring that mechanisms are in place so that all key statutory organisations are engaged throughout the area planning stage.

Public Appointments

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they review public appointments made by Executive Ministers since 2007 to establish any under-representation from communities and how any imbalance might be addressed.

(AQO 2564/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Each Executive Minister is solely responsible for appointments to the public bodies sponsored by their respective Departments.

These appointments should be made in accordance with public appointment policy and, where applicable, the Code of Practice published by the independent Commissioner for Public Appointments.

Whilst we make appointments to a number of public bodies sponsored by our Department, we have no locus for those appointments to public bodies which fall within the responsibilities of other Executive Ministers.

Both public appointment policy and the Commissioner's Code of Practice are governed by the overarching principle of selection on merit.

As part of its wider policy responsibilities and in the interests of openness and transparency, our Department publishes the Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report.

This Report provides details of the number of applications received and the number of appointments made by each Department broken down into categories such as gender, age, disability and community and minority ethnic backgrounds.

The Annual Report is available from the Assembly Library or the OFMDFM website.

In recognition of the fact that some sections of our community are under-represented on the Boards of public bodies, we have put in place a range of measures to increase awareness of appointment opportunities including advertising vacancies on our website, maintaining a mailing list of individuals and organisations interested in public appointments, circulating information on forthcoming vacancies and publishing a guide to the appointments process.

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry.

(AQO 2565/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are pleased to say that, since the Assembly was last updated, significant progress has been made towards the Inquiry's establishment.

The Inquiry's registration scheme was launched on 1 October 2012, through which those who suffered in institutions here as children can register to have their experiences heard by the Acknowledgement Forum. This is an important milestone in the life of the Inquiry and we know it is also a significant moment for victims and survivors.

We would urge all those who spent time as children in institutions here and wish to have any experiences of abuse heard and acknowledged to register by phoning 0800 068 4935. Their information will be treated with the strictest confidence. Information about how to register can also be found on the Inquiry's website (<http://www.hiainquiry.org>) and we are following up this process with public advertisements providing the information.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Relocation of Department's Headquarters

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the cost indicated in the business case for the relocation of her Department's headquarters to Ballykelly; and (ii) how much has been set aside for this purpose in each upcoming financial year.

(AQW 13868/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): I have asked my officials to produce a business case detailing the options and costs to relocate my Headquarters to Ballykelly. The final costs of the project will be dependent upon the configuration of the buildings that best meet the Department's needs. This will take time to consider and agree.

The Department has allocated £0.3m and £13m in the next two financial years.

Proposition for National Parks

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) what is her Department's position on the proposition for National Parks; and (ii) what research has been carried out on how farming practices and farm freedom could be affected, including any cost implications for affected farmers.

(AQW 13873/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) My Department has consistently held the position that farmers and rural dwellers must be fully involved in any debate on establishing National Parks and that their concerns must be taken into account. Also, that no additional controls should be placed on farming activities and a National Park could only proceed with the agreement of the people living in that area.

- (ii) As my Department would not support a National Park proposal that placed additional controls on farming activities, it has not carried out research on how farming practices and farm freedom could be affected.

Convictions for Animal Welfare and Cruelty Offences

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of convictions for animal welfare and cruelty offences in each of the last ten years; and (ii) how many of the people convicted where licensed dog breeders.

(AQW 14145/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) Table A below details the number of convictions for animal welfare offences relating to farmed animals in each of the last ten calendar years.

TABLE A – FARMED ANIMAL WELFARE CONVICTIONS

Year	Number of people convicted
2011	4
2010	16
2009	5
2008	10
2007	13
2006	7
2005	6

Year	Number of people convicted
2004	3
2003	7
2002	0

As my Department enforces the animal welfare legislation only in relation to farmed animals, I therefore sought information from the Department of Justice on the number of convictions relating to other animals.

The Department of Justice has provided the following information:

Animal welfare and cruelty offences span a number of statutes. During the period in question offences were prosecuted under the following legislation:

- Roads (NI) Order 1993
- Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 1972
- Dogs (NI) Order 1983
- Diseases of Animals (NI) Order 1981
- Control of Greyhounds etc Act (NI) 1950

Data is collated under the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.

The number of convictions for animal welfare and cruelty offences in each of the ten calendar years 2000-2009 is set out in table B, as follows:

TABLE B – OTHER ANIMAL WELFARE CONVICTIONS

Calendar year	Number of convictions
2009	14
2008	17
2007	23
2006	18
2005	25
2004	23
2003	24
2002	12
2001	22
2000	30

Data from 2000 to 2006 should not be directly compared with data from 2007 to 2009 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

Data on convictions from 2007 to 2009 is provisional as a verification exercise is taking place. These years are based on a different source of data from the previous years and therefore caution should be used in making direct comparisons.

I understand that work is currently ongoing in the Department of Justice to collate the data from 2010 onwards.

In the meantime, information provided recently by the Public Prosecution Service to my officials shows that since July 2011, 11 people have been convicted for offences under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 in relation to other animals.

- (ii) The Department of Justice has advised that they are unable to distinguish dog breeders from other offenders and therefore cannot supply information regarding how many convictions relate to dog breeders.

Vessel Decommissioning Scheme

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's position on a proposed vessel decommissioning scheme for the fishing industry.

(AQW 14173/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The rationale for having a decommissioning scheme is that the financial performance of the vessels that remain would improve because they would benefit from the fishing quotas released by those vessels that opt for decommissioning. However any decommissioning scheme must have inbuilt safeguards to prevent the fleet sector from growing in size subsequently otherwise that would negate the purpose of public investment. The Department proposed to prevent this from happening by restricting the number of "special fishing permits" available to the fleet which would be fixed at that time of decommissioning to those that already have a special permit and those dormant licenses that would be entitled to a special permit if the dormant license is used to acquire another vessel. This would mean that new vessels can only be introduced to the fleet in future if there is a transfer of an existing Special Permit to the incoming vessel.

Earlier this year my Department developed a business case to restructure the nephrops and whitefish sectors of the local fishing fleet on these lines and submitted it to DFP for approval. DARD also took the opportunity to canvas the views of the industry on the scope and terms associated with the proposed scheme.

Comments received from our two Producer Organisations indicated that they opposed a scheme that would, through the introduction of a restrictive permit scheme, limit the future size of the fleet. Additionally, they suggested that there was insufficient financial incentive to decommission. For these reasons, both organisations concluded that the proposed scheme would, at best, have very limited uptake and may be detrimental to the long term development of the industry.

Controlling the future size of the fleet is absolutely fundamental to the proposal for a decommissioning scheme. The industry is strongly opposed to this but without such a control mechanism it would be impossible to produce a robust business case that would demonstrate that public investment in fleet restructuring represented good value for money. As a consequence I have decided not to proceed with a decommissioning scheme.

Vessel Decommissioning Scheme

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, if a vessel decommissioning scheme is not agreed for the fishing industry, will the reserved funding be reallocated within the overall European Fisheries Fund budget to allow for other projects.

(AQW 14174/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department is currently completing a review of all funding allocations within the European Fisheries Fund to ensure that funding is fully utilised and reallocated to other measures where demand for funding support is likely to exceed the approved budgets.

This review will include consideration of how best to utilise the funding that had been earmarked for decommissioning.

Slurry Tanks

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department has carried out research into the safety measures used at slurry tanks in other (i) EU countries; and (ii) jurisdictions of the United Kingdom.

(AQW 14346/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Research on slurry gas hazards under local conditions has been carried out. This research was commissioned by the Health and Safety Executive NI (HSENI) in 2003 and 2006 and undertaken by the Agri Food and Biosciences Institute. The findings of this research remain valid.

The need for additional research in relation to safety and slurry handling is currently under consideration by my Department in conjunction with HSENI and the Ulster Farmers Union through the Farm Safety Partnership.

Spreading Period for Slurry and Farm Yard Manures

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has had any discussions with the Minister of the Environment in regards to extending the closed spreading period for slurry and farm yard manures.

(AQW 14588/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I recognise that the recent wet weather and ground conditions mean that some farmers may be unable to spread slurry before the start of the closed period. My Department and the Department of the Environment have been liaising on this issue and appreciate the practical difficulties that some farmers are facing due to the exceptional weather.

I welcome Minister Attwood's announcement on 28 September which detailed the provisions available to farmers who may need to spread slurry after the deadline of 15 October.

Staff Facing Criminal Charges or Criminal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many departmental staff are currently (i) suspended due to criminal charges or criminal investigations; and (ii) not suspended whilst facing criminal charges or criminal investigations.

(AQW 14610/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As at 1 October 2012 DARD has (i) no officers suspended due to criminal charges or criminal investigations and (ii) one officer currently not suspended whilst facing criminal charges.

Eradication of Tuberculosis

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how the £4 million which was highlighted in the Programme for Government for the eradication of tuberculosis is to be spent.

(AQW 14634/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Funding of around £4 million has been allocated in my Department's budget to conduct TB and wildlife research and studies to provide the evidence base to underpin strategies to address the issue of cattle to cattle spread of TB as well as the wildlife issue. It is important that we do not duplicate the expensive research work that is ongoing in other areas, but that we draw down the lessons from that work and also collaborate where appropriate.

In order to identify the priority evidence needs, my Department commissioned 5 Literature Reviews, which were completed in 2011/12 on TB tests in cattle; TB tests in badgers; cattle to cattle transmission; badger to cattle transmission; and badger vaccination. We discussed the evidence needs with industry and wider stakeholders to help develop the options for research and studies.

A number of studies have already been commissioned to help establish local evidence. The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) has been commissioned to undertake a study to establish the extent

of cattle-cattle and badger-cattle interactions at pasture and in and around farm buildings in a TB high incidence area in Co. Down. The study will also examine and develop strategies to mitigate the extent of badger-cattle contact in both a housed and a grazing environment.

Also commissioned is an evaluation by AFBI of the way we use the gamma interferon blood test in the TB programme to ensure we are making the best use of it.

More recently, we have commissioned AFBI to develop proposals for some further studies, namely:

- (a) to investigate the reasons why the greater number of reactor cattle come from chronic or repeat breakdown herds and what could be done to address this;
- (b) a Literature Review to establish the TB transmission risk from the spreading of slurry; and
- (c) to establish how strain typing information can best be deployed to give maximum practical benefit to the TB programme.

During May 2012, my Department hosted an International Vaccination Experts' Scientific Symposium on badger vaccination to consider all the relevant issues associated with vaccinating the badger to achieve a reduction in TB in cattle. Following this symposium, I have asked my officials to design and cost specific wildlife intervention research, which involves testing live badgers; vaccinating and releasing the test negative badgers; and removing the test positive ones. The purpose of the research is to assess the impact of this approach on the level of TB in cattle and in badgers in the field study area. This balanced approach should avoid removal of uninfected badgers and could lead in time to a reduction in TB in badgers and in reduced transmission of TB from this source to cattle.

My Department will continue to work with industry and wider stakeholders to identify and prioritise TB evidence needs throughout the remainder of the budget period in line with my Department's Evidence and Innovation Strategy. We shall also be interested to consider any evidence needs identified by the ARD Committee as a result of its Thematic Review of TB.

Consultation in Regards to Bringing Lough Neagh into Public Ownership

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development which stakeholders were identified for consultation in regards to bringing Lough Neagh into public ownership.

(AQW 14635/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Lough Neagh Working Group is required to perform a high level scoping exercise, and report back to the Executive by November. Given the timescale for reporting its findings, and the high level nature of the exercise, there is no formal consultation at this time. As an alternative, each Department represented on the Working Group was asked to gather its own evidence and produce a short list of key stakeholders, to which a brief questionnaire was sent. In addition to this any organisations that had not been included in the short list of key stakeholders, but which have subsequently made contact with the Working Group in respect of the potential for being included, have been invited to complete the questionnaire. To date the questionnaire has issued to representatives of the 56 organisations listed below.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ■ Invest NI | ■ Antrim BC |
| ■ Geological Survey NI (DETI) | ■ Dungannon and South Tyrone DC |
| ■ Tourist Board | ■ Armagh DC |
| ■ NI Water | ■ Lisburn City Council |
| ■ The Utility Regulator | ■ Ballymena BC |
| ■ Consumer Council | ■ ECOS Centre |
| ■ Cookstown DC | ■ Monaghan County Council |
| ■ Magherafelt DC | ■ Quarry Product Association NI |
| ■ Craigavon DC | ■ WWF |

- Woodland Trust
- Ballinderry Fish Hatchery
- Six Mile Water Trust
- Ulster Angling Association
- The Honourable Irish Society
- Waterways Ireland
- Ulster Coarse Fishing Federation
- Lough Neagh Sand Traders Association (NI) Ltd
- AMK Association
- Rural Development Council
- Constructed Wetlands for NI
- Rural Community Network
- Ulster Farmers Union
- Portadown Boat Club
- Cullybackey and District Game and Sea Angling Society
- Rectory Lodge Trout Fishery
- Ballysaggart Lough Environmental Group
- NI Pike Society
- Ballyronan Marina
- Friends of the Earth NI
- Council for Nature Conservation and Countryside
- RSPB NI
- Norman Emerson Group
- Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute
- Lough Neagh Partnership
- Lough Neagh Fishermans Co Op
- Outdoor Recreation NI
- Lagan Canal Trust
- Inland Waterways Association Ireland
- River Bann and Lough Neagh Association
- Kinnego Marina
- Lough Neagh Rescue
- Rams Island Management
- The Blackwater Regional (Tourism in Ireland)
- Countryside Alliance of Ireland (CAI)
- British Association for Shooting Conservation
- Scottish Association of Country Sports
- Sports NI

Noxious Gas Detectors and Alarms on Slurry Tanks

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has any plans to bring forward a funded scheme for the installation of noxious gas detectors and alarms on slurry tanks.

(AQW 14657/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The possibility of including farm safety items in a future tranche of the Farm Modernisation Programme is under consideration by my Department, in conjunction with the Health and Safety Executive NI (HSENI) and the Ulster Farmers' Union through the Farm Safety Partnership.

Current HSENI advice is that noxious gas detectors/monitors can be a useful guide before entering a building after slurry mixing is complete to check the gas has had time to disperse. However, they can only be a backup to a safe system of work and not a substitute.

At the start of mixing slurry gas concentration rises and readings above 500 parts per million are very common in livestock buildings during tank mixing. Such levels will render most monitors ineffective. Therefore, HSENI recommends that at least 30 minutes, or longer, depending on the size of tank, is allowed before entering a building after mixing has started.

The Farm Safety Partnership encourages all farmers to develop and follow a safe system of work. HSENI has published guidance on working safely with slurry and on slurry gas detection monitors. This is available on its website www.hseni.gov.uk

Moyola River

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department is considering for the Moyola River.

(AQW 14710/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Moyola River is designated under the terms of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973. As such it is subject to routine inspection and maintenance to provide a free flow of water. Rivers Agency will continue with its current inspection and maintenance programme for the channel and flood banks along the Moyola River, in line with the standards set out in the Agency's maintenance manual. Currently flood banks along the Moyola River, from Fort William Bridge to Curran village, are being maintained and repaired and work has commenced to remove overhanging branches, clear debris and carry out revetment work at locations from New Bridge to its confluence with Lough Neagh.

Mandatory Micro-Chipping of Agricultural Animals

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she will (i) amend legislation to introduce mandatory micro-chipping of agricultural animals either along with, or in replacement of, ear-tagging, to tackle the illegal dumping of carcasses and protect against rustling; and (ii) identify and prosecute people who commit such crimes.

(AQW 14747/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) As the identification rules for farmed animals are laid down in European Law I can only consider introducing mandatory micro-chipping as a means of identification where this is supported by European legislation.

Under EU Regulation 21/2004 sheep and goats must be identified with two identifiers bearing the same number and for sheep one of the identifiers must carry an electronic identification device (EID). The EU legislation does allow Member States to introduce microchipping as a means of EID, but we, in common with the south and Britain, did not allow its use. This is because of concerns that the chip could not be reliably recovered from the carcass before it enters the food chain. The most common identifiers used for identifying sheep are an EID tag plus a conventional tag; however, an EID Bolus is also an approved means of identification here. A bolus may be as effective as a microchip in deterring the theft of animals as it cannot be removed from a live animal.

Cattle must be identified with two ear tags bearing an individual number to comply with Regulation (EC) 1760/2000. The Commission is currently bringing forward proposals to introduce EID for cattle and this may introduce other means of identification. While a substantial number of keepers electronically identify their cattle at present this is done on a voluntary basis for management purposes.

- (ii) My Department is responsible for enforcing the disposal of fallen animals and responds to complaints about the incorrect disposal of animals from the public and other agencies. In the last three calendar years, 43 cases have been investigated for offences under Animal By-Product legislation which lead to 15 prosecutions. My Veterinary Service has been working closely with the PSNI on a number of measures as part of the Rural Crime Strategy and one of measures is to tackle the theft of livestock. I have also met the Chief Constable on a number of occasions to discuss means of combating rural crime.

Funding under the Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 13842/11-15, how many farmers have (i) been offered; and (ii) taken up Field Boundary Management training.

(AQW 14750/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Since 2009 AI Services have had responsibility for administering the training programme associated with the Countryside Management Scheme which includes organising Field Boundary Management training.

The first training course took place in January 2011 and since then (i) 212 Field Boundary Management training courses have been offered to 5863 farmers and (ii) 1891 farmers attended.

Funding under the Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 13842/11-15, to detail (i) the date; (ii) location; and (iii) attendance of each individual who took part in workshops on Field Boundary Management training.

(AQW 14751/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Since 2009 AI Services have had responsibility for administering the training programme associated with the Countryside Management Scheme which includes organising the workshops. Table 1 provides the details of (i) the date; (ii) the location and (iii) the number of individuals who attended Field Boundary Management training since January 2011.

TABLE 1: DATE, VENUE AND ATTENDANCE AT FIELD BOUNDARY MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Course Date	Course Venue	Attendance
14/01/2011	Enniskillen	11
14/01/2011	Ballymena	10
17/01/2011	Dungiven	8
17/01/2011	Saintfield	8
17/01/2011	Magherafelt	14
18/01/2011	Greyabbey	1
18/01/2011	Dungiven	7
18/01/2011	Magherafelt	5
19/01/2011	Enniskillen	39
19/01/2011	Tandragee	0
19/01/2011	Greyabbey	7
19/01/2011	Magherafelt	18
20/01/2011	Enniskillen	7
20/01/2011	Saintfield	4
20/01/2011	Dungiven	8
20/01/2011	Magherafelt	13
21/01/2011	Enniskillen	0
21/01/2011	Ballymena	23
24/01/2011	Dungiven	17
24/01/2011	Fivemiletown	5
24/01/2011	Magherafelt	8
24/01/2011	Garvagh	21

Course Date	Course Venue	Attendance
24/01/2011	Omagh	15
25/01/2011	Enniskillen	5
26/01/2011	Enniskillen	8
26/01/2011	Dungiven	0
26/01/2011	Fivemiletown	3
26/01/2011	Fivemiletown	1
26/01/2011	Garvagh	18
26/01/2011	Omagh	13
26/01/2011	Tandragee	0
27/01/2011	Saintfield	6
27/01/2011	Ballymena	0
27/01/2011	Dungiven	5
27/01/2011	Tandragee	0
28/01/2011	Saintfield	12
31/01/2011	Fivemiletown	18
31/01/2011	Garvagh	8
31/01/2011	Omagh	11
03/02/2011	Bushmills	12
03/02/2011	Magherafelt	17
04/02/2011	Magherafelt	6
04/02/2011	Enniskillen	20
07/02/2011	Ballycastle	20
11/02/2011	Ballymena	22
08/02/2011	Ballyclare	26
08/02/2011	Hilltown	35
10/02/2011	Tandragee	13
18/02/2011	Fivemiletown	15
09/02/2011	Magherafelt	13
10/02/2011	Strabane	26
10/02/2011	Castledearg	20
10/02/2011	Hilltown	35
11/02/2011	Ballyclare	14
15/02/2011	Enniskillen	5
17/02/2011	Dungiven	14

Course Date	Course Venue	Attendance
18/02/2011	Dungiven	10
14/02/2011	Armagh	16
14/02/2011	Ballyclare	20
15/02/2011	Greyabbey	19
16/02/2011	Saintfield	11
16/02/2011	Ballyclare	12
16/02/2011	Ballyclare	0
16/02/2011	Tandragee	16
18/02/2011	Tandragee	4
23/02/2011	Bushmills	9
22/02/2011	Hilltown	8
22/02/2011	Hilltown	10
23/02/2011	Hilltown	15
21/02/2011	Ballycastle	20
19/02/2011	Enniskillen	42
18/02/2011	Castledearg	15
25/02/2011	Downpatrick	13
22/02/2011	Downpatrick	16
23/02/2011	Limavady	13
28/02/2011	Enniskillen	6
28/02/2011	Ballycastle	5
10/02/2012	Ballymena	25
11/02/2012	Tandragee	7
14/02/2012	Tandragee	9
14/02/2012	Hilltown	7
14/02/2012	Enniskillen	16
15/02/2012	Omagh	16
16/02/2012	Armagh	13
18/02/2012	Omagh	14
17/02/2012	Castledearg	11
17/02/2012	Fivemiletown	16
17/02/2012	Dungiven	13
18/02/2012	Dungiven	11
17/02/2012	Tandragee	15

Course Date	Course Venue	Attendance
17/02/2012	Ballymena	12
18/02/2012	Ballymena	23
17/02/2012	Saintfield	7
18/02/2012	Saintfield	17
18/02/2012	Magherafelt	20
18/02/2012	Limavady	13
22/02/2012	Hilltown	11
21/02/2012	Hilltown	8
18/02/2012	Armagh	14
21/02/2012	Hilltown	8
22/02/2012	Hilltown	7
21/02/2012	Strabane	13
22/02/2012	Omagh	26
25/02/2012	Omagh	23
22/02/2012	Magherafelt	18
23/02/2012	Magherafelt	21
25/02/2012	Magherafelt	15
23/02/2012	Ballycastle	16
23/02/2012	Enniskillen	21
23/02/2012	Armagh	12
23/02/2012	Dungiven	11
24/02/2012	Dungiven	12
24/02/2012	Ballymoney	27
25/02/2012	Enniskillen	12
25/02/2012	Ballymena	19
25/02/2012	Ballyclare	24
25/02/2012	Greyabbey	3
25/02/2012	Bushmills	4
28/02/2012	Hilltown	26
28/02/2012	Hilltown	20
01/03/2012	Dungiven	33
02/03/2012	Enniskillen	30
03/03/2012	Enniskillen	56
01/03/2012	Strabane	22

Course Date	Course Venue	Attendance
02/03/2012	Armagh	22
03/03/2012	Saintfield	13
02/03/2012	Hilltown	13
03/03/2012	Enniskillen	25
03/03/2012	Ballymena	19
03/03/2012	Magherafelt	10
03/03/2012	Ballymena	33
03/03/2012	Dungannon	29
Total		1891

Continued Rise of Tuberculosis

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the continued rise of tuberculosis, what studies are being conducted on the rising population of deer on lowland farmland and deer grazing on the same pastures as cattle.

(AQW 14753/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There are no current accurate population estimates for the three main deer species (Red, Fallow and Sika) here, nor is there any scientific evidence to suggest that there has been a substantial increase in either the population or range of deer in the north.

Whilst there is no current evidence to suggest that interactions between deer and cattle at pasture present any significant or widespread risk of bovine TB transmission, this aspect is kept under review.

Although DARD veterinary advice remains that deer are an unlikely cause of the recent rise in cattle TB herd incidence in the north, the possibility of deer being a factor in some localised outbreaks is not discounted. Currently, in one area, based on epidemiological advice, my Department is arranging for laboratory investigation of samples taken from deer culled in the vicinity to establish if deer had any involvement in that disease breakdown.

The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) has been commissioned to undertake a Badger-Cattle Proximity Study in East Down to establish the extent of cattle-cattle and badger-cattle interactions at pasture and in and around farm buildings. It will be useful to see if the fixed point cameras being deployed in that study provide any evidence of deer-cattle interaction.

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to her Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14814/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: At the 8 May 2007 DARD sponsored 7 public bodies, namely: -the Agri – Food and Biosciences Institute , the Agriculture Wages Board, the Drainage Council , the Livestock and Meat Commission, the NI Fishery Harbour Authority, the Pig Production Development Committee and the Research and Education Advisory Panel. A total of 62 people were serving on these bodies on that date.

At the 28 September 2012 DARD sponsored 5 public bodies, namely: - the Agri – Food and Biosciences Institute, the Agriculture Wages Board, the Drainage Council, the Livestock and Meat Commission and the NI Fishery Harbour Authority. A total of 48 people were serving on these bodies on that date.

In addition DARD jointly sponsors with DETI the Agri-food Strategy Board. There are 9 people serving on this Board.

DARD Public Bodies

DARD Public Bodies - 8 May 2007	Serving Board Members
Agri-food and Biosciences Institute	12
Agricultural Wages Board	1
Drainage Council	17
Livestock and Meat Commission	6
NI Fishery Harbour Authority	6
Pig Production Development Council	8
Research and Education Advisory Panel	12
Total	62

DARD Public Bodies - 28 September 2012	Serving Board Members
Agri-food and Biosciences Institute	13
Agricultural wages Board	3
Drainage Council	18
Livestock and Meat Commission	7
NI Fishery Harbour Authority	7
Total	48
Agri-Food Strategy Board**	9**

** jointly sponsored with DETI

Agricultural Animals: Appropriate Paperwork and Records

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she can offer an assurance that all abattoirs, meat processors and rendering facilities are compliant with the law on requiring agricultural animals to have the appropriate paperwork and records, including stock which is from the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 14836/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Officials in the DARD Veterinary Public Health Programme monitor the delivery of Food Safety Systems in the 20 slaughterhouses in the north. I can confirm that our monitoring indicates that all the Food Business Operators based in the north are fully compliant with the law on requiring agricultural animals to have the appropriate paperwork and records, including stock which is from the south of Ireland. Routine procedures in abattoirs at entry of animals for slaughter are supported by DARD's computer-based data. Daily verification checks by DARD officials of up to 10% of cattle and 5% of sheep are carried out. In addition, regular official audits are carried out by my specialist veterinarians on behalf of the Food Standards Agency in these establishments. Animals from other member states are required to have veterinary certification when entering an abattoir. Any discrepancy found in the documentation or identity of an animal results in that animal being excluded from the food chain.

Rendering plants are approved under the Animal By-Products (Enforcement) Regulations (NI) 2011 which cover the disposal of fallen animals. Fallen bovine animals over 48 months of age must be submitted for transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) sampling under the TSE Regulations.

Regular checks are made on the operation of these approved plants. These checks include auditing paperwork, checking records for fallen animals and the operational requirements of the plant.

Failure to comply with the regulations will result in enforcement action being taken by the Department.

Attendance at Annual Shows

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many annual shows she has attended in her official capacity from January 2012 to date.

(AQW 14846/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From January 2012 to date I have attended seven annual shows in my official capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Licences for the Culling of Badgers

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the decision of the Westminster Government to approve licences for the culling of badgers in specific areas of England.

(AQW 14859/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: You will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on matters that are the responsibility of a Department in Britain.

Tackling TB in cattle is a key priority for my Department and we are committed to the ultimate eradication of TB in cattle here. However, Bovine TB is a very complex, multi-factorial and challenging disease that is difficult to eradicate. There is no simple, cost-effective solution or 'quick-fix' and eradication is not something that could be achieved within the immediate timeframe.

You may be interested to know that funding of around £4 million has been allocated in my Department's budget to conduct TB and wildlife research and studies to provide the evidence base to underpin strategies to address the issue of cattle to cattle spread of TB as well as the wildlife issue. It is important that we do not duplicate the expensive research work that is ongoing in other areas, but that we draw down the lessons from that work and also collaborate where appropriate.

During May 2012, my Department hosted an International Vaccination Expert's Scientific Symposium on badger vaccination to consider all the relevant issues associated with vaccinating the badger to achieve a reduction in TB in cattle. Following this symposium, I have asked my officials to design specific wildlife intervention research, which involves testing live badgers; vaccinating and releasing the test negative badgers; and removing the test positive ones. The purpose of this scientific research study is to assess the impact of this approach on the level of TB in cattle and in badgers in the field study area. This balanced approach should avoid removal of uninfected badgers and could lead in time to a reduction in TB in badgers and in reduced transmission of TB from this source to cattle. We expect the design for such a study will be complex and we want to be sure that we get it right.

Meanwhile my Department will continue to work with industry and wider stakeholders to identify and prioritise the TB evidence needs.

Deficiencies in Watercourse Management in the Saintfield Road Area of Belfast

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to address the deficiencies in watercourse management in the Saintfield Road area of Belfast.

(AQW 14860/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Rivers Agency officials carry out routine inspections and clearing of a number of grilles in the Saintfield Road area of Belfast. This is either weekly for category A grilles or monthly for category B grilles. On receipt of extreme rainfall weather warnings or reports of blockages, the grilles are inspected and cleared.

The Agency is also responsible for a network of culverts and open watercourses in the Saintfield Road area of Belfast, which have been designated under the terms of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973. This network is routinely inspected and various maintenance and upgrade works are carried out on an on-going basis.

A number of undesignated watercourses exist in the Saintfield Road area. However it should be noted that the Agency does not have responsibility for the maintenance or for remedial action regarding undesignated watercourses. The responsibility for undesignated watercourses rests with the riparian occupiers of the land through which they flow or forms boundaries to.

Department's Headquarters: Staff

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what arrangements her Department intends to put in place to accommodate (i) administrative; (ii) specialist; and (iii) technical staff who do not wish to relocate to Ballykelly.

(AQW 14865/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I do not expect existing staff to be forced to move, but it may not be possible to avoid in all situations. The Department will make full use of the existing NICS policies and procedures for dealing with staff transfers. In addition, my officials will be working closely with Corporate Human Resources in DFP and with relevant trade unions to develop further arrangements, including greater use of flexible working supported by modern technology, to seek to accommodate staff of all grades and disciplines who do not wish to relocate to Ballykelly.

Staff Facing Internal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many members of staff in her Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations, and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

(AQW 14912/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As at 9 October 2012 DARD has (i) no officers suspended due to internal (disciplinary) investigations and (ii) 7 officers not suspended whilst facing internal (disciplinary) investigations.

Internal investigation has been interpreted as disciplinary investigations as suspension is directly linked to the disciplinary procedures.

Process for Redesignating Rivers

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the process for redesignating rivers.

(AQW 14989/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Designation is required to enable the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to undertake maintenance and schemes for drainage and flood defence purposes at public expense. There is no process to redesignate a river. If a watercourse was previously designated and then became de-designated, a new application to designate would be submitted to the Drainage Council which operates as an independent advisory Non Departmental Public Body. Criteria for the designation of watercourses are used objectively by the Drainage Council to ensure uniform treatment throughout the north of Ireland.

There are two key overriding conditions. Firstly, that the proposed works offer value for money with benefits outweighing costs. Secondly, that the works have sufficient priority to be included in Rivers Agency's programme. Viable works are programmed and this second condition has not resulted in designation being refused due to availability of funding.

There are five additional criteria beneath the two overriding conditions, with an application for designation needing to satisfy one or more of these. Firstly that there is sufficient area of disadvantaged agricultural land which is subject to poor drainage or flooding. Secondly, that works to

reduce existing or potential flooding are outside the capability of the riparians to organise and carry out at their own expense. Thirdly, where works are required but it is not possible to identify the occupier/ riparian. Fourthly, where the watercourse requires works but it does not perform any function connected with the drainage of riparian land. Lastly, that works are required to provide an outfall for increased run-off from new housing and commercial development.

Departmental Headquarters: Ballykelly

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what provision is being made for staff in her Department who do not wish to relocate to the new departmental headquarters in Ballykelly.
(AQW 15009/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Department will make full use of the existing NICS policies and procedures to facilitate staff transfers in and out of the headquarters group. Staff who travel to the new headquarters will, of course, be entitled to assistance. In addition, my officials will be working closely with Corporate Human Resources in DFP and with relevant trade unions to develop further arrangements, including greater use of flexible working supported by modern technology. I do not expect existing staff to move if they do not wish to do so, but it may not be possible to avoid in all situations.

Department's Fisheries Office

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she has any plans to relocate her Department's Fisheries Office to South Down.
(AQW 15079/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I took the decision to relocate the DARD headquarters to Ballykelly after careful consideration of a wide range of potential locations. In support of that decision I have given my Permanent Secretary a direction to provide me with a business case that will appraise the various possible options for relocating my Departmental headquarters on the Ballykelly site. In that context the business case will consider a range of issues such as value for money, potential savings and staffing implications. Part of the consideration the business case will also look at all areas of the Department's business, including those posts within the fisheries area, and make recommendations on the optimum configuration of the Headquarters which best serves the Department and its stakeholders.

DARD Headquarters

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why Ballymena was not selected as the location for the new DARD headquarters, despite being included in the list of potential locations.
(AQW 15134/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In relation to the decision to relocate to Ballykelly, there were a number of steps taken before reaching my final decision. The first stage in the process was to develop a long list of potential locations. The list was taken from the new Regional Development Strategy. Using the 23 local government districts my officials scored each against a defined set of criteria. This included 9 different socio-economic factors considering such things as unemployment levels, deprivation and earnings levels, as well as practical considerations such as the number of public sector and civil service jobs already sited in the area.

The top two areas in this analysis were both in the North West. I made my decision to relocate to Ballykelly based on two further factors namely the availability of the Executive- owned site at Shackleton Barracks and the availability of buildings on that site which could potentially be converted to office accommodation. Using this site and the buildings available has the potential to reduce the cost of this relocation from the £26m that is the estimated cost of a new build.

In my view the relocation of the DARD headquarters represents an important first step to relocate a significant share of public sector jobs and could pave the way for a much larger programme of relocation in the public sector. It would naturally greatly enhance the economic and social development of rural communities and bring a greater realisation of the outcomes envisaged by Bain.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Ulster-Scots Strategy

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) which non-governmental organisations her Department consulted when planning its Ulster-Scots Strategy; and (ii) what discussions were held concerning combining the Ulster-Scots language with Ulster-Scots heritage and culture.

(AQW 14167/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):

- (i) My department consulted with the Ulster-Scots Agency and Ministerial Advisory Group Ulster Scots Academy when planning its draft Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture strategy.
- (ii) No discussions were held concerning combining the Ulster-Scots language with Ulster-Scots heritage and culture.

Development of Windsor Park Stadium

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action her Department is taking to ensure maximum cross-community responses to the current consultation on the development of Windsor Park Stadium.

(AQW 14168/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Irish Football Association (IFA) is responsible for taking forward the consultation process in relation to the development of Windsor Park.

The IFA have put a comprehensive consultation process in place which encourages responses from the whole community and is accessible to all sections of the community.

Specifically:

- contact has been made with Greater Village Regeneration Group, South Belfast partnership Board and West Belfast Partnership Board;
- public notices were placed in three newspapers on the 22 August. The Irish News, News Letter and Belfast Telegraph;
- workshops were held on 26 July 2012 with focus groups, resident associations, trade associations, council officers and MLA's.
- The plans for the Stadium Redevelopment will also be on display at seven locations in Belfast where members of the public can submit their views by completion of questionnaires at:
 - Ballysillan Leisure Centre;
 - Andersonstown Leisure Centre;
 - Olympia Leisure Centre;
 - Ozone Complex Ormeau Park;
 - Greater Village Regeneration Trust Offices Donegall Road;
 - Irish FA Offices at Adelaide Business Centre,
 - Apollo Road and
 - Belfast City Hall.
- Details of the proposals will also be available on the Irish FA web site (www.irishfa.com) where a facility to record comments has been established.
- A public information day will also be held on 3/4 October during which members of the public will be able to submit their views in respect of the proposals.

I would encourage everyone with an interest to provide their views at the various locations or on the website.

Boxing Clubs

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which boxing clubs have paid employees; and how many people are employed in each case.

(AQW 14215/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Neither my Department nor Sport NI retains information on which boxing clubs have paid employees or how many people are employed in each case. This would be entirely a matter for the governing body of the sport, the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council.

Salmon Conservation Policy

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on her Department's plan to develop a salmon conservation policy.

(AQW 14217/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has carried out a public consultation process on a range of salmon conservation measures for both commercial netting and recreational angling. The consultation closed in July and a statistical analysis of the responses has been completed.

My officials are considering the outcomes of the public consultation, together with scientific and other advice, and I will decide on what actions are required to provide robust protection of wild Atlantic salmon stocks in the DCAL jurisdiction.

Following this, I will bring forward the necessary legislation and I would anticipate this coming into effect during 2013.

Grants Available for Bands to Purchase Equipment

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what grants are available from her Department for bands to purchase equipment.

(AQW 14222/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Funding by my Department in support of bands to purchase equipment is disbursed through the Arts Council's Musical Instruments for Bands Programme. It provides grants from £500 to £5,000 for the purchase of instruments. This scheme is available to bands based in the north of Ireland, which are formally constituted.

Funding is also awarded by the Arts Council through its lottery funded Small Grants Programme for band related activity (which includes equipment and tuition). For items over £10,000 funding is available from its Equipment Programme.

Dangers of Excessive Gaming

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, in light of the correlation identified between the playing of violent video games and aggressive behaviour, whether her Department has any plans to promote the dangers of excessive gaming.

(AQW 14230/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I support any actions that aim to protect children from exposure to inappropriate material. A change in legislation from 30 July brought in single age ratings system for video games - based on PEGI (Pan European Game Information) and to mark this, the Association for UK Interactive Entertainment, (Ukie) launched the Control. Collaborate. Create campaign. This includes the re-launch of the www.askaboutgames.com website which is a resource for parents and the industry providing further information about video games ratings.

To help ensure that parents have a better understanding and to get across messages about safe gaming the Ukie campaign is an attempt to take the initiative on ratings issues, educating both players and parents on the potential risks of mature games and what content may be appropriate. It also offers real family stories and suggestions on how video games can be a creative and collaborative experience for all the family.

Support or Funding for Pipe Bands

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she plans to provide any additional support or funding for pipe bands.

(AQW 14309/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I have no plans to provide any additional support or funding for pipe bands.

However, funding for instruments and tuition for music groups including bands will continue to be available.

Re-Imaging Communities Programme

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether any funding streams are planned through the Re-imaging Communities Programme.

(AQW 14411/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Arts Council applied to the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) for funding to build upon the key successes of the Re-Imaging Programme.

The Arts Council has advised that it recently received confirmation of this funding and it is expected that the programme will re-open later this year. The re-opening of the programme will be publicised in the media, the Arts Council's e-newsletter and its website.

Ulster Scots Agency: Funding

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what level of funding her Department currently allocates to the Ulster Scots Agency.

(AQW 14580/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In accordance with the agreed funding arrangement, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) contributes 75% of the Ulster-Scots Agency budget and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht funds 25%.

The 2011 budget for the North South Language body which was approved by the North South Ministerial Council amounted to an allocation of £3,028,116 for the Ulster-Scots Agency of which DCAL's contribution equated to £2,271,087.

Sectarianism in Boxing

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 14080/11-15, (i) when (a) departmental officials; and (b) SportNI officials met Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club (SRABC); (ii) whether any such meeting has been held since the publication of SRABC's report on sectarianism in boxing; and (iii) if a meeting has not taken place to detail the reasons.

(AQW 14658/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Outside of Ministerial meetings, DCAL officials met with representatives of Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club (SRABC), at the Department's request, on 13 January 2012 and 14 June 2012 to discuss the club's areas of concern. Sport NI officials met with the club on 12 October 2010. On the 12 April 2011 a further meeting was offered by Sport NI which was declined by the club. No meetings have been held since the publication of SRABC's report as the club has not sought a further meeting. The Department and Sport NI have not asked for a meeting as all the issues raised in the report were discussed at previous meetings.

Goal Line Youth, Portadown

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) for her assessment of the contribution of Goal Line Youth, Portadown; (ii) whether she is aware of their present urgent funding needs which, if unmet, will lead to the organisation closing its doors on 31 October 2012; and (iii) what assistance her Department can provide to the organisation as it seeks to continue to meet the needs of over two hundred children, almost 50 percent of whom have special educational and disability needs.

(AQW 14686/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware of the valuable contribution made by Goal Line Youth to the local community of Portadown and in particular to the health and well-being of children and young people in the area.

As a registered group engaged in youth work, the provision of youth service activities, including funding, falls under the remit of the Department of Education. In general, funding by my Department is disbursed through its arms length bodies (ALBs).

Funding in support of the arts is disbursed through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and for Sports activities through Sport Northern Ireland.

Funding Allocated to Marching Bands

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department has allocated to marching bands in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14692/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Funding in support of bands in the North of Ireland is disbursed through the Arts Council and the Ulster-Scots Agency.

My Department also allocates funding to bands through the Community Festivals Fund which is administered by district councils.

A breakdown of funding is shown in the tables below:

ARTS COUNCIL

Year	Total Awarded via Musical Instruments for Bands Programme	*Total Awarded via Small Grants Programme (or Awards for All in 08/09 and 07/08)	Total Amount
2007/08	£155,002	£42,565	£197,567
2008/09	£149,311	£16,020	£165,331
2009/10	£104,822	£18,750	£123,572
2010/11	£203,761	£12,951	£216,712
2011/12	£196,874	£3,200	£200,074
Total	£809,770	£93,486	£903,256

* The Small Grants programme (previously Awards for All) is Lottery Funding

COMMUNITY FESTIVALS FUND (CFF)

Year	Amount
2008/09	£9,870
2009/10	£9,146

Year	Amount
2010/11	£7,342
2011/12	£7,839
*Total	£34,197

* These figures include 50% matched funding from district councils.

* Ulster-Scots Agency

Year	Amount
2007	£108,651.50
2008	£58,044.50
2009	£143,235.16
2010	£297,295.91
2011	£241,709.15
Total	£848,936.22

* Ulster-Scots Agency operate in calendar years.

Community Festival Funding

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether the issue of disproportionate distribution of the Community Festival Funding, between urban and rural areas, has been examined; and what action she intends to take to address this matter.

(AQW 14694/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The budget for the Community Festivals Fund (CFF) is £450k per annum of which 90% is allocated to district councils according to their population and 10% according to their level of income deprivation as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010. Councils are required to provide match-funding.

A recent evaluation undertaken by my Department found that the distribution of CFF funding correlates closely with the distribution of urban and rural areas across the north of Ireland. In terms of the number of festivals, there is actually a disproportionately larger number in rural areas.

Relationship Between the Culture Company and Independent Bodies

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the nature of the relationship between the Culture Company and independent bodies such as, Comhaltas Ceóltoiri Éireann, Cumann Luthchleas Gael and Féile na nOg in their delivery of major events during 2013.

(AQW 14700/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Culture Company 2013 Ltd currently has no formal relationships with these independent bodies, however the Culture Company has been liaising with local and national representatives of these organisations. Discussions relating to Féile na nOg, the under 14s championship, have been held with Cumann Luthchleas Gael. Culture Company is working in partnership with a wide variety of bodies to develop and deliver elements of the City of Culture 2013 Cultural Programme.

World Police and Fire Games and the Culture Company

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the nature and extent of the co-ordination of events and visits in 2013 between the World Police and Fire Games and the Culture Company.

(AQW 14701/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Company established to deliver the Games, 2013 WPFG Ltd is aware of the need to ensure that there is close coordination and cooperation with the Culture Company and other stakeholders in major events taking place during 2013.

There has been formal engagement at CEO level between the Culture Company and 2013 World Police and Fire Games Ltd. Both organisations were also represented on the 2012 Stakeholder Group which was chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

On 25th September the members of the 2012 Stakeholder Group along with other organisations, who have an interest in 2013, met and established a 2013 Stakeholder Group which is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure.

The remit of the 2013 Stakeholder Group is to:

- Continue the momentum of 2012 to 2013 and beyond.
- Champion and promote 2013 Events particularly the World Police & Fire Games and City of Culture.
- Provide a forum for communication on 2013 events.
- Provide oversight of 2013 events calendar in order to assist in the co-ordination of Ministerial involvement and messaging in relation to the 2013 World Police and Fire Games and City of Culture.

Moyola River

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the terms of the lease of the Moyola River to the Moyola Angling Club.

(AQW 14711/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The details of the terms of any lease between the Moyola Angling Club and the owner of the fishing rights of the Moyola River are a matter for those parties and the Department does not have knowledge of these.

Olympic and Paralympic Games

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which sporting disciplines, that are currently part of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, give participants from Northern Ireland (i) the choice of competing for Team GB and NI or Team Ireland; or (ii) offer only the choice of competing for (a) Team Ireland; or (b) Team GB and NI.

(AQW 14743/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Athletes from the north of Ireland have the choice of competing for either Team GB and NI or Team Ireland in all of the Olympic and Paralympic sports assuming that the sport is played at the necessary standard and scale in the relevant jurisdiction.

Athletes must also meet the required eligibility and selection criteria that will vary across the sports and will be dependant on the affiliation structures within the sport, the rules and selection criteria and the processes of the governing organisations within the sport, and the rules, eligibility and selection criteria applied by the relevant national Olympic and Paralympic Committees.

Anticipated Spend in Respect of the Celebration of the Centenary of the Ulster Covenant

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of her Department's total anticipated spend in respect of the celebration of the centenary of the Ulster Covenant.

(AQW 14779/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The creative and cultural infrastructure and programmes already funded and supported by my Department will play a key role in telling the stories and different interpretations of significant anniversaries in the decade ahead. The centenary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant is being examined by a diverse range of events across the libraries network; at PRONI; and by the Ulster Museum. I enclose a summary of activity in Annex A.

Where a specific cost breakdown is readily available, it is clear that support to these and other initiatives is significant. For example, a recent landmark documentary on the BBC explored the story of the Ulster Covenant. This was supported by NI Screen, with £65,000 from the Ulster-Scots Broadcasting Fund. The only known copy of the 1913 Ulster Proclamation was purchased by NMNI for £18,750 and is a key feature of 'The Ulster Crisis: Irish Home Rule and the Ulster Covenant' exhibition at the Ulster Museum. An additional £10,000 is a conservative estimate of the further budget enabling this exhibition until March 2014. Around 1,000 related images will also be available to view online.

An extensive range of activity and resources is being supported within the existing budgets of the Arm-Length Bodies and PRONI. Specific costs will be variable but their inclusion and prioritization within the work of the ALBs recognises the importance of the Decade of Centenaries to promoting historical and cultural awareness, respectful remembrance and reconciliation.

These objectives, and the breadth and quality of these initiatives, are the more meaningful benchmarks by which they should be judged.

The Executive also unanimously agreed that the DCAL and DETI Ministers will jointly bring forward an approach to help people explore the political, social and cultural impact of the 1912-22 period. The key issue is not whether these events are remembered but how they are remembered in the context of a shared and accepting society. The approach format is now being finalized and will help set an inclusive tone and connect the events and stories behind these significant anniversaries.

ANNEX A

Ulster Museum	Irish Home Rule and The Ulster Covenant Exhibition (Sept 2012 – March 2014)
Ulster Museum	1912, A Hundred Years On. A play by Philip Orr will run from 16 to 21 Oct at the Ulster Museum with specific performances for schools, 3rd level students, lifelong learners, community groups and the general public
Ulster Museum	Home Rule? A drama commemorating the centenary of Winston Churchill's historic speech in Belfast in 1912 was performed on 9 September at the Ulster Museum as part of the European Open Heritage Days.
PRONI – "Decade of Change, Conflict and Transformation" lecture series in September 2012 - well-known historians and broadcasters deliver presentations relating to the impact of the Ulster Covenant and 3rd Home Rule Bill.	"Raiders of the Lost Archives: Covenant records at PRONI" by Stephen Scarth, Head of Public Services, PRONI (6 Sept)

PRONI	“Nationalism 1900-22” by Dr Eamon Phoenix, Stranmillis University College (13 Sept)
PRONI	“The Ulster Covenant and Ulster Unionist resistance to Home Rule, 1912-1914” by Dr Tim Bowman, University of Kent (20 Sept)
PRONI	“The Story Arc Of The Covenant: from signature to screen” by William Crawley and Brian Henry Martin (27 Sept)
PRONI	PRONI has partnered with Belfast City Council in a Decade of Centenaries exhibition entitled ‘Shared History - Different Allegiances’ which opened at City Hall on 6 August 2012 and features PRONI’s Ulster Covenant application.
PRONI	PRONI hosted actor Patrick Scully on 8 September 2012 during European Open Heritage Day. Hi play – Lord Carson Signs Off – opened at the Crescent Arts Centre on 28 September. Patrick provided a 15 minute adaptation followed by a discussion on sourcing material at PRONI
PRONI	PRONI participated in a Collectors Fair & Ulster Covenant Exhibition at the Spectrum Centre, Shankill Road, Belfast on 22 September 2012.
Libraries NI Belfast Central Library	The Ulster Covenant – An Exhibition (Sept – Nov)
Libraries NI Enniskillen Library	The Story of the Ulster Covenant by Dr David Hume (4 Sept)
Libraries NI Killyleagh Library	Digital Film Presentation on the Ulster Covenant (7 Sept)
Libraries NI Ballymena Central Library	Ulster Covenant in the Ballymena Area by Dr David Hume (11 Sept)
Libraries NI Irish & Local Studies Library, Armagh	Home Rule, the Covenant & Growth of Militancy in Armagh by Dr Colin Cousins (12 Sept)
Libraries NI Larne Library	Ulster Covenant in the Larne Area by Dr David Hume (13 Sept)
Libraries NI Holywood Library	The Year of the Covenant, Belfast 1912 by Roger Dixon (21 Sept)
Libraries NI Portadown Library	Home Rule, the Covenant & Growth of Militancy in Armagh by Dr Colin Cousins (26 Sept)
Libraries NI Lisburn City Library	The Ulster Covenant by Gordon Lucy (26 Sept)
Libraries NI Newry City Library	Home Rule 1885 to 1914, Prelude to Revolution by Dr Peter Collins (27 Sept)
Libraries NI Shankill Road Library	The Year of the Covenant, Belfast 1912 by Roger Dixon (27 Sept)

NI Screen	“The Ulster Covenant” was screened on BBC 1 NI on 27th September at 9pm. In this one hour historical documentary presenter William Crawley marked the centenary of the Ulster Covenant by telling the story of this key moment in history.
NI Screen	The Digital Film Archive (DFA) outreach programme is a key community and education focused initiative by NI Screen. One notable event on Oct 17 will be the ‘Characters Behind The Covenant’. Presented by Professor Graham Walker and illustrated with DFA footage, this lecture is one of several Belfast City Council events which will mark the centenary of the signing of The Ulster Covenant.

Funding for Boxing Clubs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding opportunities are available for boxing clubs.

(AQW 14803/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI has responsibility for the distribution of funding for sport throughout the north of Ireland. Sport NI has identified an indicative funding package within its Sports Lottery funding of up to £3.27m to assist with the development of boxing over the next 3 years. The boxing development programme will provide much needed investment in local amateur boxing clubs and help to address equipment and facility needs within the sport.

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to her Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14813/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) There were 10 QUANGOs attached to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure as at 8 May 2007. 139 people served on the QUANGOs on this date.
- (ii) There are currently (as at 27 September 2012) 10 QUANGOs attached to the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 133 people currently serve on the QUANGOs.

Expenditure on Library Stocks

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the expenditure on library stocks in (i) Bangor library, (ii) Holywood library and (iii) Donaghadee library, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14827/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI has informed me that its current computer system can not provide the information regarding expenditure on library stock in individual libraries in the last three years in the format requested.

Libraries NI state that library stocks are updated every day. This stock is a mixture of newly published titles; stock purchased to satisfy requests; replacement copies or purchases to meet identified stock gaps.

The new stock is delivered to branches via an internal delivery network. Each branch receives a minimum of two deliveries per week. Some of the larger branches receive three to four deliveries. Bangor and Lisburn libraries receive a delivery every day. Each delivery will contain some new stock.

Libraries NI also rotate stock among libraries to refresh the choice available to borrowers.

Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she can offer an assurance that Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club will be eligible for funding, under her recent announcement of £3 million aid.

(AQW 14874/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI is responsible for the distribution of funding including determining the eligibility criteria for the £3.27m Lottery funding being provided to boxing as part of the emerging boxing strategy. It would not, therefore, be appropriate for me to offer assurances that any boxing club, including Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club (SRABC), will be eligible for funding under this particular Sport NI investment programme. I am aware, however, that Sport NI is currently undertaking an exercise to determine the capital and equipment needs of boxing clubs in the north of Ireland, including SRABC. As part of this process, Sport NI has advised clubs, including SRABC, that they can have their needs assessed.

However, in line with all Sport NI club based programmes, direct funding is only currently being considered for boxing clubs that are governing body affiliated.

Staff Facing Internal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many members of staff in her Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations, and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

(AQW 14911/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: There are currently no members of staff in my Department (i) suspended due to internal investigations or (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

Alternative Ulster Covenant of 1913

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans there are to commemorate the Alternative Ulster Covenant of 1913.

(AQW 14955/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Executive unanimously agreed that the DCAL and DETI Ministers will jointly bring forward an approach to help people explore the political, social and cultural impact of the 1912-22 period. The approach is now being finalized to set an inclusive tone and connect the events and stories behind these significant anniversaries. The key issue is not whether these events are remembered but how they are remembered in the context of a shared and accepting society.

The creative and cultural infrastructure and programmes already funded and supported by my Department will play a key role in telling the stories and different interpretations of events from this important decade in our history. For example, PRONI delivered a lecture series throughout September 2012 entitled 'A Decade of Change, Conflict and Transformation'. Talks in this series explored the Ulster Covenant as well as Nationalism in the early 1900s. The Alternative Ulster Covenant of 1913 was referenced within this series.

Grants Available to Marching Bands

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the grants currently available to marching bands.

(AQW 14971/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Funding in support of marching bands to purchase musical instruments is disbursed through the Arts Council's Musical Instruments for Bands Programme. It provides grants from £500 to £5,000. This scheme is available to bands based in the north of Ireland, which are formally constituted.

Funding up to £10,000 is also awarded by the Arts Council through its Lottery funded Small Grants Programme for band related activity (which includes equipment, projects and tuition). For projects requiring over £10,000 funding is available through the Council's Project funding programme.

Support is available from the Ulster-Scots Agency through its Financial Assistance Scheme, which can provide funding for musical tuition.

My Department also allocates Community Festival Funding which district councils administer and bands may be eligible to apply.

Cultural Night in Holywood

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the success of the cultural night in Holywood.

(AQW 14973/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Culture Night has become part of the cultural calendar giving the arts sector the opportunity to thank the public for subsidising the arts, by offering free events, and to celebrate and showcase the strength and quality of the arts.

The Culture Night event in Holywood did not receive funding from my department and it would therefore be inappropriate for me to make an assessment of its success.

However, I believe that Culture Nights enrich and celebrate a collective creative spirit and are a catalyst for forging new relationships between town centre businesses and the local community.

Number of Catches on the River Bush

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of catches on the River Bush between March and August in each year since 2007.

(AQW 14996/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The catches detailed below relate to the special stretches of the River Bush, where anglers fishing day tickets have returned catch details to the Department. The figures held by the Department are for the total catch for the salmon fishing season from 1 March to 20 October. The 2012 figure is to 4 October.

Stretch	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Town	362	311	82	112	84	51
Leap	126	122	28	49	17	23
New	72	47	13	39	10	4
Dundrave	100	54	9	23	13	2
Total	660	534	132	223	124	80

Olympic Length Swimming Pool in Bangor

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much Sport NI contributed to the olympic length swimming pool in Bangor.

(AQW 15126/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department, through Sport NI, has contributed £8.227m of exchequer funding to the Olympic standard swimming pool in Bangor, to the end of the 2011/12 financial year.

Department of Education

Ministerial Visit to Rossmar Special School, Limavady

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education how many departmental staff accompanied him on his Ministerial visit to Rossmar Special School, Limavady on 24 May 2012; and what was the duration of the visit.

(AQW 14592/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): On my Ministerial visit to Rossmar Special School, I was accompanied by my Private Secretary and Special Adviser. I spent approximately one hour at the school.

Savings Delivery Plan

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how his Department performed in 2011/2012 against its published Savings Delivery plan.

(AQW 14628/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department remained within budget in 2011-12. Indeed it reported in May's provisional outturn a Resource underspend of 0.67% and a Capital underspend of 0.71%.

Dickson Plan

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the Dickson Plan.

(AQW 14720/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Dickson Plan is a form of academic selection and rejection with all the associated negative impacts this has on pupil self-esteem, disaffection and educational outcomes.

In terms of outcomes, the school leavers data for 2010/11 shows that the Dickson plan schools perform similarly to other schools. They are slightly better in terms of pupils achieving five plus GCSEs A*-C (or equivalent) including English and maths compared to the north of Ireland average (60.5% compared to 59.5%), whilst performance at 'A' level is below the north of Ireland average – 31.5% of school leavers achieved 3+ A levels A*-C compared to the north of Ireland average of 35.6%.¹

Like the rest of our school system there is wide variation in the performance across the Dickson Plan schools and I am concerned that 39.5% of school leavers do not achieve five good GCSEs including English and maths. It is also notable that the three selective 14-18 schools admit far fewer pupils entitled to free school meals than the non-selective schools, which mirrors the inequitable position existing at selective schools across the north of Ireland.

My focus is on addressing educational underachievement wherever it exists and to drive out the inequities that exist in our education system. I have in place a coherent set of policies designed to improve educational outcomes for young people and to address the root causes when pupils are not achieving to their full potential. I also remain committed to ending academic selection and rejection at any age.

Advertising Budget for Promoting Education in the Community

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what is his Department's advertising budget for promoting education in the community.

(AQW 14735/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I launched the "Education Works" advertising campaign on 17 September 2012. The campaign is of vital importance to our society and aims to raise the value, we as a society, place on education. The campaign aims to inform and engage all parents, in particular those from the most

¹ Please note that all A Level figures include those schools without a sixth form as the denominator is all school leavers regardless of year group.

disadvantaged backgrounds, to become more involved in their child's education. It is intended to impact upon home/family and attitudinal factors by providing parents with consistent, authoritative information on the importance of education and the steps they can take to support their child in achieving good educational outcomes.

Research has shown that children provided with good opportunities to learn in the home before they started school were over five times more likely to score well in English by the time they left primary school than those who were not and that those who had a bedtime story read to them in Primary 1 did much better at school than those who had not.

Parental involvement and encouragement, no matter how small, can have a direct and long-lasting effect on a child's educational achievements. It must be clear to parents that no matter who you are; no matter what your background; your child can achieve educationally and improve their life chances.

We know that parents want the best for their children. This campaign helps to give them ideas for simple steps they can take to make a difference. The campaign is supported by a dedicated website on NIDirect to give parents advice and guidance on how to develop their child's talking, reading and counting skills.

The campaign will run on television, radio, outdoor posters and online and will be taken forward in English and in Irish.

The budget required to support the development and implementation of the Education Works advertising campaign is £600,000 over the next three financial years.

Proposed Programme of Focused Audits

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education why his Department has written to all Voluntary Grammar schools and Grant-Maintained Integrated schools informing them of a proposed programme of focused audits in a sample of schools that are funded directly by his Department.

(AQW 14791/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The programme of focused audits has come about as a result of my Department's ongoing need to gain assurance on governance and accountability in areas where it expends funding. In this context, a number of issues were identified following an audit of one of the schools directly funded by DE. It was, therefore decided, that in order to provide the Departmental Accounting Officer with the assurance he requires, a programme of focused audits would be carried out in a random sample of those schools for which my Department fulfils the role of Funding Authority.

The Department considers this approach sufficient to provide the reassurance required whilst at the same being proportionate.

All Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated schools were formally advised that the Department would be undertaking these audits in a randomly selected sample of schools.

Enrolment Numbers

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education to explain the process used by his Department to determine the maximum enrolment number at (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools.

(AQW 14802/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Enrolment numbers are determined by the Department in line with its statutory duties under Article 11 of the Education (NI) Order 1997, having regard to a number of factors and in particular to the teaching accommodation available at a school. Paragraphs 13 to 21 of DE Circular 2012/12 "Open Enrolment in Primary Schools" (which can be viewed on the Department's website) explain how enrolment numbers are determined for primary schools.

For post-primary schools, enrolment numbers can also take account a number of additional factors including; the availability of places in an area; the Long Term Enrolment number and Pupil Teacher Ratios. The actual number of pupils in a school can exceed this figure for a number of reasons. Pupils

in receipt of a statement of special educational need and pupils admitted on appeal, or by direction of the Exceptional Circumstances Body (post-primary schools only) are supernumerary and do not count against the enrolment number. In addition, schools can apply to the Department for a temporary increase of their numbers which, if approved, would apply for one academic year only.

Consultation on Area Planning Proposals

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Education for his assessment of the time period given to schools within the Dickson Plan catchment area for responding to the consultation on Area Planning proposals, particularly in relation to Section 75 of The Northern Ireland Act.

(AQW 14834/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The consultation process for post-primary area plans lasts 16 weeks which exceeds the recommended minimum consultation period of 12 weeks. Schools within the Dickson Plan catchment area have therefore the same time period as all other schools to respond to this consultation which will end on 26 October 2012. I am confident that this timetable allows ample time for interested parties to respond to the consultation.

The consultation process complies with the Equality Commission good practice guidelines for public authorities in that the Boards are consulting with those directly affected.

The Area Planning process does not require a separate Section 75 screening as it facilitates the delivery of Departmental policies that have already been subject to separate individual screening exercises.

Special Needs Advisors

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of Special Needs Advisors in each Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 14873/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the education and library boards have advised that the number of full-time equivalent board officers directly involved in the statutory assessment and statementing process, excluding educational psychologists, is as follows:-

- Belfast Education and Library Board – 12
- North Eastern Education and Library Board – 12.89
- South Eastern Education and Library Board – 11.9
- Southern Education and Library Board – 14
- Western Education and Library Board – 7.79

English Baccalaureate Certificate in Core Subjects

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education when he first became aware that the Secretary of State for Education was going to make changes to GCSE examinations and develop a new English Baccalaureate Certificate in core subjects, which was formally announced on 17th September 2012.

(AQW 14882/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials were alerted to the decision by Michael Gove to develop a new English Baccalaureate, on Friday 14 September 2012. He formally made his announcement on Monday 17 September 2012. There was no prior communication or consultation with me or my officials, on this matter.

English Baccalaureate Certificate in Core Subjects

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what discussions he has had with the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment regarding the introduction of the new English Baccalaureate Certificate in core subjects.

(AQW 14883/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My Department is in regular contact with the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) on a range of qualifications issues.

I was not consulted by Michael Gove in relation to the introduction of a new English Baccalaureate. Since he made his announcement on Monday 17 September 2012, you will be aware that I have tasked CCEA to undertake a comprehensive review of GCSE and GCE A Level qualifications here. This review will examine all types of qualifications taken across the jurisdictions, to inform the content of a final report, for my consideration.

Staff Facing Criminal Charges or Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education how many people employed in his Department are (i) suspended from work pending criminal charges or investigations; and (ii) continuing in their duties whilst facing criminal charges or investigations.

(AQW 14900/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd:

- (i) There are no staff employed in the Department of Education who are suspended from work pending criminal charges or investigations;
- (ii) The Department is not aware of any employees who are continuing in their duties whilst facing criminal charges and investigations.

Amalgamation of Blythefield, Fane Street and Donegall Road Primary Schools

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the progress of the amalgamation of Blythefield, Fane Street and Donegall Road Primary Schools in a new school building on a site at Belfast City Hospital.

(AQW 14916/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware that the Board has been considering the amalgamation of these three schools with the view to publishing a Development Proposal. Part of that consideration includes site options and I understand that the potential of a site currently in the ownership of the Belfast City Hospital is included in that process.

The Education and Library Boards are planning to publish and consult on their draft area plans for primary provision in late Autumn. While I do not currently have a Development Proposal for such an amalgamation, I would expect the Belfast Board area plan to include details of this proposal. Should this be the case I will consider it in the context of the area plan.

Integrated Services

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education for an update on the Integrated Services, led by the Belfast Education and Library Board in partnership with other statutory and community organisations and operating in West Belfast and the Greater Shankill area.

(AQW 14917/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP) project was managed by my Department until 30th September 2012. I can confirm that the project has fully expended its allocated budget and has substantially met the targets relating to delivery.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety are leading on this project from 1st October 2012.

Teaching and Non-Teaching Posts in Upper Bann

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last two years, to detail and provide a breakdown on the number of teaching and non-teaching posts for each school in Upper Bann that were (i) suppressed; (ii) unfilled; and (iii) filled on a temporary basis.

(AQW 14932/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have been advised by the Southern Education and Library Board that the information is not available in the format requested and would only be available at disproportionate cost.

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools has confirmed the following:

	2011	2012
Suppressed	*3	*13
Unfilled	n/k	n/k
Filled on a temporary basis	*10	*4

*These figures relate to teaching staff only and are for the 2010-2011 and 2011-12 Calendar years.

Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to detail the income received by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment for the provision of examinations to examination centres in England and Wales, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14941/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment has provided the following information.

The CCEA income from England and Wales came from two different sources:

Direct sales of CCEA specifications.

Income linked to CCEA's partnership with the International Curriculum and Assessment Agency (ICAA) – description below.

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
ICAA Partnership (ended summer 2010)					
ICAA specifications in Wales	£17,091	£12,166	£13,516	£10,215	£0
	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
ICAA specifications in England	£877,732	£758,530	£656,337	£581,243	£0
Total sales linked to the ICAA partnership	£894,823	£770,696	£669,853	£591,458	£0
ICAA percentage	£675,342	£581,609	£506,694	£438,871	£0
CCEA net income from the ICAA partnership	£219,481	£189,087	£163,159	£152,587	£0

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
CCEA Owned Exams/ Specifications					
CCEA exams Wales	£1,532	£1,382	£1,375	£2,604	£2,151
CCEA exams England	£201,852	£227,929	£192,951	£186,410	£219,945
Total CCEA only sales	£203,384	£229,311	£194,326	£189,014	£222,096
Total income generated from England and Wales	£422,865	£418,398	£357,485	£341,601	£222,096

Note: The above figures relate to income only. Associated direct and indirect costs have not been included.

Integrated Services

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to list the schools whose pupils have benefitted from Integrated Services in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14943/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The following schools have benefitted from Integrated Services in each of the last three years:

NURSERY SCHOOLS/UNITS AND PLAYGROUPS:

Blackmountain Nursery School	Shaftesbury Nursery School
Edenderry Nursery School	Springfield Playgroup
Harmony Nursery School	Springhill Playgroup
Hope Nursery School	Tudor Lodge Nursery School

PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

Blackmountain Primary School	Harmony Primary School
Bun Scoil an Tsleibhe Dhuibh	Holy Child Primary School
Edenbrooke Primary School	Malvern Primary School
Forthriver Primary School	Springfield Primary School
Gael Scoil na Lunaigh	Springhill Primary School
Gael Scoil na Mona	St Bernadette's Primary School
Gael Scoil Phobail Feirste	St John the Baptist Primary School
Gael Scoil Sluibh Dubh	St Oliver Plunkett Primary School
Glenwood Primary School	St Theresa's Primary School

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

Belfast Boys' Model School	Holy Trinity College
Belfast Model School for Girls	Malone College
Christian Brothers School	St Genevieve's Girls School

Belfast Boys' Model School	Holy Trinity College
Colaiste Feirste	St Louise's College
Corpus Christi	St Rose's High School
De La Salle College	

Integrated Services

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to outline the current funding arrangements in relation to Integrated Services.

(AQW 14946/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: From 1st October 2012, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety have assumed responsibility for leading on the Integrated Services for Children and Young People (ISCYP) project.

Pupil Absenteeism

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education to detail the level of absenteeism in (i) controlled schools; (ii) maintained schools; and (iii) Integrated Schools, at (a) primary; and (b) post-primary level, in the North Antrim area.

(AQW 14968/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Absence rates for primary schools in the North Antrim area by management type of school, 2010/11

Management Type	Overall absence rate (% of total half days absent)
Controlled	4.4
Maintained	4.3
Grant Maintained Integrated	5.9
Voluntary	3.4
Total	4.4

Absence rates for post-primary schools in the North Antrim area by management type of school, 2010/11

Management Type	Overall absence rate (% of total half days absent)
Controlled	8.2
Maintained	7.4
Grant Maintained Integrated	7.6
Voluntary	3.7
Total	6.7

Notes:

1. Controlled includes controlled and controlled integrated schools. Maintained includes Catholic and other maintained schools.
2. Figures for primary schools include Years 1-7 and for post-primary schools include Years 8-12.

3. The figures are based on 63 primary schools and 14 post-primary schools in the North Antrim parliamentary constituency.
4. Attendance is recorded for every pupil in half day sessions – morning and afternoon.

Religion of People Recruited as Teachers and Classroom Assistants

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what statistics are held on the religion of people recruited as teachers and classroom assistants in schools; and whether Education and Library Boards, and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, are permitted to discriminate on grounds of religion when appointing teachers.

(AQW 14988/11-15)

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

Information is held in relation to the perceived religious affiliation of non-teaching staff including classroom assistants employed in all schools. (Perceived religious affiliation is based on community background as defined by the Fair Employment monitoring regulations). This information is used for the purpose of completion of the annual monitoring return to the Equality Commission and is not available to anyone involved in the recruitment process.

Although the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion, fair employment legislation in the north of Ireland, since its inception in 1976, has not applied to the employment of teachers in schools. The Fair Employment and Treatment Order (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2003 restricted the exemption to the recruitment of teachers in schools.

Home to School Transport

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's policy for home to school transport for (i) pre-school; and (ii) post-primary school pupils where their chosen school is outside the statutory distance and there is a school within the statutory distance.

(AQW 14998/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under the Home to School Transport Scheme the Department is required to provide transport assistance to parents of eligible pupils in line with Article 52 (in conjunction with Article 44) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 (as substituted) and policy Circular 1996/41 (as amended). The Department is not required to provide transport assistance for pre-school pupils.

In relation to post-primary pupils, transport assistance is only provided to pupils who have been unable to gain a place in all suitable schools within statutory walking distance, that is, 3 miles for secondary age pupils, of their home.

Staff Facing Internal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education how many members of staff in his Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations, and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

(AQW 15000/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are no DE staff currently suspended due to internal investigations under the NICS Disciplinary Procedures;

One member of DE staff is facing internal investigations under the NICS Disciplinary Procedures and is not suspended.

After School Supervision of Children

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 14028/11-15 and in relation to primary school pupils who live outside the two mile limit, does the statutory duty on the Board of Governors to promote the welfare of registered pupils, when the pupils are on the school premises from 2.15pm to 3.15pm, include a responsibility to supervise these pupils free of charge.

(AQW 15006/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As indicated in my response to AQW 14028/11-15, the Board of Governors of a grant-aided school has a statutory duty under Article 17 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 to safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils of the school at all times when the pupils are on the premises of the school.

In respect of charging, each school is required to set out its policy in relation to pupils. The decision as to whether and how much to charge will be determined by the Board of Governors where the cost of the activity is paid from funds at its disposal; and the Education and Library Board in any other case.

The particular circumstances you describe do not appear to be addressed specifically in current policy guidance. My department will review this and issue guidance in due course.

Education and Skills Authority

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what is the proposed timescale for the introduction and implementation of the legislation for the creation of the Education and Skills Authority.

(AQW 15010/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Education Bill was introduced on 2 October. The Programme for Government includes the commitment of bringing the Education and Skills Authority into operation in 2013.

School Children from North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education how many children from North Down attend schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 15011/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There were 873 children from the North Down constituency attending schools in the Belfast Education and Library Board area in 2011/12.

Figures relate to children, for whom a valid postcode was provided, attending nursery, primary, post-primary and special schools,

Proposed Review of GCSE and A Level Qualifications

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education, in light of his announcement of a review of GCSE and A level qualifications by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), for his assessment of the appropriateness of CCEA to carry out this assessment, given that it has been delivering these qualifications.

(AQW 15038/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: CCEA has a statutory duty to advise my Department on all matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and examinations.

I have tasked CCEA to set up a review group comprising stakeholders from across the education and business sectors, to review the current suite of qualifications at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5.

The final report of the review group will set out its assessment of the current qualifications offer and make recommendations as to the way forward. I will make the final decision in the best interests of our young people. This will ensure that qualifications offered here will continue to be comparable, or better, than those taken elsewhere.

Proposed Review of GCSE and A Level Qualifications

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what funds he has set aside for the proposed review of GCSE and A Level qualifications.

(AQW 15042/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: CCEA has a statutory duty to provide advice to my Department on all matters relating to the curriculum, assessment and examinations.

I expect the review of GCSE and A Level qualifications to be managed within the existing CCEA budget. If any funding gaps are identified, to enable CCEA to carry out its statutory duties, that organisation will advise my Department as part of the normal financial monitoring process.

Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Education what input the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment will have on the development of examinations policy over A levels and GCSE's in the rest of the UK.

(AQW 15043/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: CCEA regulation works with the qualifications regulators in England and Wales to ensure standards are maintained between qualifications taken in the three jurisdictions.

Locally, CCEA provides advice to my Department on matters relating to the curriculum, examinations and assessment. I, as Minister review this advice and make appropriate decisions on all aspects of qualifications and examinations policy.

CCEA has no role in providing advice on the development of examinations policy over A levels and GCSEs in England or Wales. That is entirely the remit of the appropriate authorities in those jurisdictions.

Department for Employment and Learning

Chairperson of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College, Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps his Department has taken to advertise for a new chairperson of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College, Belfast since the current incumbent's extended term of office is due to expire before the end of 2012.

(AQW 14514/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): My Department has this matter under active consideration.

Chairperson of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College, Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he will ensure that the replacement Chairperson of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College, Belfast will have the respect and confidence of staff.

(AQW 14515/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has this matter under active consideration.

Financial Outturn for Stranmillis College, Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, with regard to previous forecasts of debt, what the financial outturn for Stranmillis College, Belfast shows for 2011/12.

(AQW 14517/11-15)

Dr Farry: The 2011-12 accounts for the College have not yet been audited but I have been informed that they are likely to show a surplus of £559,000 against an anticipated surplus for the year of £435,000. The College continues to receive a number of subsidies associated with its activities such as moderation funding (£0.2m), small institution funding (£0.45m) and a historical buildings premium (£0.08m). These are reflected in the above results and contribute to a higher level of funding per student at Stranmillis compared to other benchmarks. In addition the College has been allocated a higher number of trainee teacher places than had been anticipated. The College has forecast that deficits would begin to be incurred in 2012-13 and would reach a level of around £430,000 by 2014-15.

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of St Mary's University College's ability to operate outside the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service system and the impact this has on Stranmillis University College being able to fill student places.

(AQW 14549/11-15)

Dr Farry: As you are aware, St. Mary's University College, in common with all other higher education institutions in Northern Ireland, is responsible for its own policies and practices, including admission procedures. While I am not aware that Stranmillis University College has had difficulty in the past in filling student places, I recognise that the use of different systems can impact on planning and admission processes of the various teacher training providers and also create differential opportunities for students applying to different institutions.

My preference would be for all institutions to operate the UCAS system and I have made this clear to St. Mary's on a number of occasions.

Departmental Review of Teacher Education in Northern Ireland

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when the departmental review of Teacher Education in Northern Ireland, including the viability audit of the two University Colleges, is likely to be published.

(AQW 14550/11-15)

Dr Farry: Work on the First Stage of the Study of the Teacher Education Infrastructure in Northern Ireland is ongoing. The report will be available once this has concluded and the findings have been discussed with both university colleges.

'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study'

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what consideration his Department has given to the Belfast City Council commissioned 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study' published in March 2012; and (ii) what action has been taken to implement the recommendations relevant to his Department.

(AQW 14646/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has considered the report in detail, particularly those recommendations which emphasise the need to ensure a coherent approach to where and how students will live within the city in the medium and long term future.

Although my Department does not have a lead role in any of the recommendations I want to ensure its continued involvement in trying to find a long term solution to the ongoing problems in the area. Therefore, a Departmental official currently chairs a Student Housing Strategy Working Group, comprising representatives from Queen's University, the University of Ulster, Department for Social Development, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Belfast City Council, to take forward recommendations from the Strategic Study.

Departmental officials also continue to be involved with Belfast City Council's Holylands Inter-Agency Group.

Kilcooley Women's Education Centre

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning when he intends to visit the Kilcooley Women's Education Centre to discuss what action his Department can take to increase educational achievement in the Protestant community.

(AQW 14691/11-15)

Dr Farry: I met with representatives of the Kilcooley Women's Centre as part of a delegation from Training for Women Network earlier this year.

Improving the academic achievement of individuals within Northern Ireland is a key aim of my Department. This issue will be addressed through the implementation of both the higher education strategy 'Graduating to Success' and 'Access to Success' our Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education.

"Access to Success" will be implemented through a number of projects which will include an awareness raising campaign to promote the benefits of higher education and a campaign to raise aspiration and attainment among under-represented groups. Specifically, my Department will encourage institutions offering higher education courses to develop outreach activities in the workplace and in local disadvantaged communities to attract adult learners in order to raise their educational attainment levels to facilitate their entry to courses of higher education. You will be aware from my previous correspondence that the strategy has identified young males from a working-class Protestant background from lower participation neighbourhoods as a clearly defined target group.

In addition, through its higher education strategy 'Graduating to Success' my Department will support the development of increased flexibility in the delivery of higher education courses, and a lifelong learning ethos within the higher education sector for example through the introduction of modular learning opportunities for all learners.

As the main providers of adult education throughout Northern Ireland, further education colleges continue to encourage access to a wide and varied curriculum through their main campuses and network of community outreach centres.

My Department also developed and implemented the Learner Access and Engagement Pilot Programme. This programme allowed FE colleges to contract with third party organisations for the provision of learner support. Support was directed at those 'hard to reach' adults who are economically inactive, disengaged from the labour market, with few or no qualifications, to encourage them to enrol on and complete FE courses.

Following a successful independent evaluation, my Department is developing proposals to roll out a mainstream Learner Access and Engagement programme in the immediate future.

A community based access pilot will run concurrently with the mainstream Learner Access and Engagement programme. It aims to create pathways to enable disengaged 16- 18 years to progress to Level 2 Essential Skills provision and into mainstream further education, or other government-funded training programmes. This is one of the new initiatives outlined in the "Pathways to Success" Strategy for those young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Subjects and Careers which Offer the Best Prospects of Employment

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how he intends to encourage parents and young people to consider subjects and careers which offer the best prospects of employment.

(AQW 14714/11-15)

Dr Farry: I fully recognise the need to ensure that young people are aware of current and future employment opportunities and understand the areas which are likely to offer good employment prospects and address the needs of the economy.

My Department, in conjunction with the Sector Skills Councils, develops and maintain information on employment opportunities and trends. This is presented in Industry Factsheets which are available online at www.nidirect.gov.uk/careers The factsheets are used by careers advisers and careers teachers to support young people to make informed career decisions.

In 2010, I asked the Northern Ireland Adviser on Employment and Skills to carry out research to help identify the sectors which will be key to rebuilding and rebalancing our economy. Following publication of the Adviser's report "Identification of Priority Skills Areas for Northern Ireland", the key and emerging sectors have now been agreed and communicated to the further education colleges and universities to inform future provision. Careers advisers also ensure that young people are informed about these priority sectors as part of the guidance process.

"Success Through Skills- Transforming Futures" highlights the importance of labour market information. The Careers Service is leading on a project to provide improved access to clear and up to date information on current and future trends. This includes exploring a range of technologies and communication channels and training for careers advisers.

The Careers Service is currently developing an information guide to assist parents and guardians to support their sons and daughters with career planning. This will include information on the key and emerging sectors which will be the focus of rebuilding and rebalancing our economy. The guide will be available in late autumn.

Job Losses at First Four Skills

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in light of the recent announcement of 40 job losses at First Four Skills, to detail what processes are in place to (i) agree redundancy payments; and (ii) facilitate training programmes for the 900 plus participants.
(AQW 14749/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department has taken the lead in agreeing, arranging and delivering a support service to the employees that have been made redundant. The Redundancy Advice Service is delivered by this Department in partnership with other Departments and Agencies such as the Social Security Agency, Invest NI, EGSA and HMRC.

The Employment Service has written to each individual employee offering redundancy support to them directly. Redundancy clinics will be organised as a matter of urgency as appropriate.

In addition, my Department's Redundancy Payments Service is working with the Administrator for First4Skills to process, where appropriate, payments in compliance with Employment Rights legislation, to employees who have been made redundant.

With regard to the second part of your question, I can confirm that the Department has been working closely with the Administrator to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the 989 apprentices. My primary concern is to ensure that the apprentices are able to continue with their training to allow them to complete their apprenticeships. I would stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr Irwin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had regarding First4Skills entering administration, including (a) the resultant loss of jobs and (b) if the current training contracts held can be passed to a new business.

(AQW 14799/11-15)

Dr Farry: Any discussions regarding a company entering into administration is an employer-focussed matter and not one the Department would be party to. The Department is however very keen to work closely with employers and employees facing job losses.

The Department did not have any advance notice of the impending situation in First4Skills and therefore did not have the opportunity to discuss directly with the company the support available from my Department.

As soon as my Department became aware of the job losses within First4Skills, my officials firstly attempted to make contact with the company directly and subsequently made contact with the administrator, Deloitte. Deloitte has provided the Department with details of those who have been made redundant and my Department, through the Employment Service, has written to each individual offering our Redundancy Advice Service.

The Redundancy Advice Service is organised and delivered by my Department in partnership with other Departments and Agencies such as the Social Security Agency, Invest NI, Educational Guidance Service for Adults and HM Revenue and Customs, and the package of support is tailored to meet the needs of the employees. Employees will be provided with information and professional advice and guidance regarding the options and support available, including employment, training and education opportunities, careers advice, and a range of other issues such as benefits, taxation and money management.

When responses from the First4Skills redundant employees have been collated, redundancy clinics will be organised as soon as possible, in convenient locations. The network of Jobs and Benefits offices and Jobcentres across Northern Ireland has been alerted to the situation.

The Department has been working closely with the Administrator for First4Skills, to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the 989 apprentices. My primary concern is to ensure that the apprentices are able to continue with their training in order to allow them to complete their apprenticeships. I would like to stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the engagement he has had with First4Skills since it entered administration last week, in relation to transferring the business to a new owner.

(AQW 14811/11-15)

Dr Farry: As an Administrator have been appointed to act on behalf of the company, it would not be appropriate for me, or my officials, to engage directly with First4Skills. However, my Department is working closely with the Administrator to ensure an effective resolution to the situation.

My primary concern is to ensure that all 989 apprentices are able to continue with their training without further delay to allow them to complete their apprenticeships. I would stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration. In relation to the employees of First4Skills the Employment Service has written to each individual offering support to them directly and redundancy clinics are being organised as a matter of urgency. The Department's network of 35 Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres has also been alerted to the situation to enable support and guidance to be offered to the individuals who require this service. In addition, my Department's Redundancy Payments Service is working with the Administrator to process, where appropriate, payments in compliance with Employment Rights legislation, to employees who have been made redundant.

Ballymena Campus of the Northern Regional College

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the proposed new Ballymena Campus of the Northern Regional College.

(AQW 14861/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Northern Regional College is currently completing an Outline Business Case which will assess the options for the provision of further education in the Ballymena area. The business case will identify the value for money option and the procurement route, and is expected to be completed by March 2013. The project has been included in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 3, but no funding has yet been identified.

Maximum Student Number for Full-Time Higher Education Places

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the Maximum Student Number for full-time higher education places that have been allocated at each further educational college in each year since 2007.

(AQW 14862/11-15)

Dr Farry: The table in Annex A details the Maximum Student Number allocations (MaSN) for full-time higher education places at the six Further Education Regional Colleges for each of the academic years from 2007/08 – 2012/13.

ANNEX A

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Belfast Metropolitan College	1591	1591	1591	1491	1491	1463
Northern Regional College	249	249	249	249	252	266
North West Regional College	729	729	729	729	679	635
Southern Regional College	465	465	465	465	520	539
South Eastern Regional College	578	578	578	570	533	533
South West College	186	186	221	324	383	420
Total places	3798	3833	3833	3833	3833	3856

Maximum Student Number for Full-Time Higher Education Places

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how the Maximum Student Number for full-time places is allocated to further educational colleges and higher education institutes.

(AQW 14863/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department carries out regular reviews of the Maximum Student Number (MaSN) allocations across the Northern Ireland Further Education Regional Colleges to coincide with the College Development Plan cycle. The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that the MaSN allocations represent an equitable and rational distribution of full-time higher education places in order to secure maximum recruitment and uptake of places and that the allocations reflect available evidence of existing demand and potential future demand across Northern Ireland.

A number of metrics are used to calculate the Higher Education in Further Education MASN allocation for each of the six colleges as follows:

Actual performance over the last six years. The Department considers each college's Higher Education in Further Education enrolments, both full-time and part-time, in order to assess the overall historical demand for higher education in each college region;

Estimated Future demand. The Department considers the total potential demand for Higher Education in Further Education as measured by the 18-50 year old population in each of the regional college areas;

There is a 75% weighting for historical demand and a 25% weighting for potential future demand. An additional weighting is also applied to reflect the distance from the college to the nearest permanent University campus.

Account is then taken of the individual college's alignment with DEL strategic priorities as demonstrated in its College Development Plan. This would include the college's commitment to developing and delivering courses in STEM subjects and other priority skills areas; its commitment to the development and delivery of Foundation Degrees, and its support for the Department's Widening Participation goals in the geographical distribution of higher education places across Northern Ireland.

In the case of the universities, each institution's MaSN allocation is initially carried forward from the previous year. The number of places for medical, dental and social work is determined by the Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS) and for Initial Teacher Education, by the Department of Education (DE). Where the number of places is changed by either Department, my Department adjusts the institutions' MaSN allocations accordingly. For other subject areas my Department keeps the overall MaSN allocation under review commensurate with available funding resources and recruitment outcomes.

When additional funding has become available over the years, my Department has increased the MaSN allocations for both the universities and the regional colleges. Such increases are normally made conditional on additional student places being made available in economically relevant subject areas, for example, Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to his Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14869/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are currently 15 bodies classified as NDPBs of the Department for Employment and Learning. On 8 May 2007, there were eight. The increase is accounted for by the change in status of the six colleges of Further Education and the two University Colleges, plus the creation of one additional advisory post. This has been offset by the formal cessation of a statutory employment training organisation, and the abolition of a non-executive advisory body.

The total number serving on these NDPBs, not including support staff, was 301 on 8 May 2007, and 424 on 1 October 2012. Further information may be found in the 'Public Bodies & Public Appointments Annual Reports' published by OFMDFM and available from the Assembly Library.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what steps he will take to ensure that people who recently received training with First4Skills Ltd will be able to complete their necessary qualifications without excessive delay.

(AQW 14876/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department is working closely with the Administrator for First4Skills, to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the 989 apprentices. My primary concern is to ensure that the apprentices are able to complete their apprenticeships. I would stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the closure of First4Skills Ltd.

(AQW 14877/11-15)

Dr Farry: I was extremely disappointed to learn of the closure of First4Skills and its potential impact on the affected individuals. Since the announcement I have ensured that my Department has been working closely with the Administrator for First4Skills to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the 989 apprentices. My primary concern is to ensure that the apprentices are able to continue with their training without further delay to allow them to complete their apprenticeships. I would stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration.

In relation to the employees of First4Skills the Employment Service has written to each individual offering support to them directly and redundancy clinics are being organised as a matter of urgency. The Department's network of 35 Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres has also been alerted to the situation to enable support and guidance to be offered to the individuals who require this service. In addition, my Department's Redundancy Payments Service is working with the Administrator to process, where appropriate, payments in compliance with Employment Rights legislation, to employees who have been made redundant.

First4Skills did not have any contractual arrangements with client companies.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions he has had with the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on efforts to save First4Skills Ltd from closure.

(AQW 14878/11-15)

Dr Farry: As Administrators have been appointed to act on behalf of the company, it would not be appropriate for me, or my officials, to engage directly with the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment as First4Skills Ltd is already in administration. However, my Department is working closely with the Administrator for First4Skills to ensure an effective resolution to the situation currently faced by the 989 apprentices and to ensure that they are able to continue with their training as soon as possible. In relation to the employees of First4Skills the Employment Service has written to each individual offering support to them directly and redundancy clinics are being organised as a matter of urgency. The Department's network of 35 Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres has also been alerted to the situation to enable support and guidance to be offered to the individuals who require this service. In addition, my Department's Redundancy Payments Service is working with the Administrator to process, where appropriate, payments in compliance with Employment Rights legislation, to employees who have been made redundant.

New Further Education College in Coleraine

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the timescale for the completion of a new further education college in Coleraine.

(AQW 14927/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Northern Regional College is currently completing an Outline Business Case which will assess the options for the provision of further education in the Coleraine area. The business case will identify the value for money option and the procurement route, and is expected to be completed by March 2013. The project has been included in the Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 3 but no funding has yet been identified. It is therefore not possible to give a timescale for the completion of the project.

First4Skills Ltd

Mr McElduff asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what action his Department is taking to support employees, trainees and client companies of First4Skills which has gone into administration. **(AQW 14965/11-15)**

Dr Farry: My Department is working closely with the Administrator for First4Skills to ensure an effective resolution to the situation.

My primary concern is to ensure that all 989 apprentices are able to continue with their training without further delay to allow them to complete their apprenticeships. I would stress that none of the apprentices have lost their jobs as a result of First4Skills going into administration. In relation to the employees of First4Skills the Employment Service has written to each individual offering support to them directly and redundancy clinics are being organised as a matter of urgency. The Department's network of 35 Jobs and Benefits Offices and Job Centres has also been alerted to the situation to enable support and guidance to be offered to the individuals who require this

service. In addition, my Department's Redundancy Payments Service is working with the Administrator to process, where appropriate, payments in compliance with Employment Rights legislation, to employees who have been made redundant.

First4Skills did not have any contractual arrangements with client companies.

Religious Breakdown of Students Attending Further Educational Colleges

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to provide a religious breakdown of students attending further educational colleges. **(AQW 14977/11-15)**

Dr Farry: Professional and Technical enrolments by religious background in the Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges for the 2010/11 academic year are detailed in the table below.

PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL ENROLMENTS BY RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES FOR THE 2010/11 ACADEMIC YEAR

Catholic	Protestant	Other Christian	Other Religion	No Religion	Total Known	Not Stated/Not Known
55,902	44,550	2,194	486	6,550	109,682	45,743

Source: Further Educational Statistical Record

Notes:

1. It should be noted that a sizeable proportion of those enrolling with FE colleges in Northern Ireland do not disclose their religious background, data on which has been used to answer this question.
2. The latest available full-year data are for the 2010/11 academic year.

Stranmillis University College, Belfast

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on his proposals for Stranmillis University College, Belfast. **(AQW 14979/11-15)**

Dr Farry: I commissioned a study of the teacher education infrastructure in Northern Ireland earlier this year. I await the outcome of that work.

Expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on progress since 2010 on the expansion of the University of Ulster at Magee.

(AQW 15014/11-15)

Dr Farry: I would refer you to my previous answer on AQW 14465/11-15.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Life Science Hub UK Limited

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how much E-Synergy has invested in Life Science Hub UK Limited; and (ii) what benefit it has brought to the technology sector, given the apparent disconnect between the company and local interests.

(AQW 14706/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):

- (i) E-Synergy has invested £104,000 in Life Science Hub UK Limited (LSH).
- (ii) LSH is an FDI start up company which was attracted to Northern Ireland and is based at the Northern Ireland Science Park. The company aims to identify technologies in life sciences which have the potential to be commercialised, thus bringing benefits to the technology sector.

John Lewis Development at Sprucefield

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether her Department has used, or will use, public resources to demonstrate the potential impact that the John Lewis development at Sprucefield would have on Belfast retail plans.

(AQW 14773/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is working with other departments to ensure a consistent overall approach to the difficulties faced by the retail sector in Belfast and elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

Promoting Businesses in Towns

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what her Department is doing to promote businesses in towns such as Bangor.

(AQW 14807/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Between 2008 – 2011, Invest NI has offered support of £6.9 million to almost 330 projects that will generate investment of £33 million in the North Down area.

In addition, the Jobs Fund was established in April 2011 to support business owners across Northern Ireland to create new, sustainable jobs that will help to tackle current levels of unemployment. Since the Fund's launch in 2011, 9 projects have come forward from the North Down Borough. These are at various stages of development and should lead to 40 new jobs, 19 of which have already been created.

The full range of Invest NI's financial support is available to qualifying businesses in the Bangor area as it is across Northern Ireland. This includes loans from the Small Business Loan Fund, launched in July 2012 and designed to assist small independent businesses who may be experiencing difficulty in accessing finance in the current economic climate. All types of business, including retail, are eligible to apply.

DETI officials are also working with other departments to ensure a consistent overall approach to the difficulties faced by the retail sector in Bangor and elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to her Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14815/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- (i) Four Quangos were sponsored by DETI at 8 May 2007, namely: - Invest NI, Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (GCCNI) and Health & Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI). A total of 46 people were serving on the boards of these bodies at that date.
- (ii) Five Quangos were sponsored by DETI at the date of this question, 26 September 2012 - the four named above and the Agri-Food Strategy Board (AFSB). This fifth body is jointly sponsored with DARD. A total of 51 people were serving on the boards of these bodies at that date.

Bookings for Bed and Breakfasts

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, pursuant to AQW 13941/11-15, whether, as a priority, she will write to the councils expressing concern at the low numbers involved.

(AQW 14850/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Global trends advances in technology have resulted in changes in people's booking patterns and preferences with more visitors now booking online.

The service Tourist Information Centres provide extends beyond that of accommodation bookings and as such they will continue to play an important role assisting visitors and local people with their wider informational needs.

Firms which Shed Jobs in Northern Ireland to Relocate Elsewhere

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how much advance notice her Department received from each firm which shed jobs in Northern Ireland to relocate them elsewhere, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14906/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (Amended 8 October 2006) any business proposing to make 20 or more employees redundant must notify the relevant public authority before redundancy notices are issued to staff. Full details on the notifications periods required are publically available on the DETI website. <http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-redundancies/stats-employment-rights-order.htm>

These notification provide the basis for published redundancy statistics for Northern Ireland which, from January 2000, are publically available to download from the DETI website at

<http://www.detini.gov.uk/deti-stats-index/stats-surveys/stats-redundancies.htm>

It is important to note that these figures are likely to underestimate total job losses as firms are only legally obliged to inform of impending job losses of 20 or more, and so it is not possible to quantify the extent of the shortfall. In addition statistics are not routinely produced on the company rationale for instigating any redundancies.

Invest NI does not hold specific information on how much notice it receives of companies' intentions to shed jobs or move them elsewhere. However, through maintaining close relationships with its client companies Invest NI will often, but not always, be provided notice of plans to shed jobs or move them elsewhere. In general this will be advised by companies in advance and Invest NI will work closely and intensely with the company and, where appropriate, with its parent company or owner to mitigate the impacts of any such decision.

FG Wilson: Job Losses

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the multiplier effect on suppliers and traders following the recent job losses at FG Wilson.

(AQO 2545/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI is currently working with local management in Caterpillar to determine the potential impact of its recent announcement on local suppliers. I can assure the Member that Invest NI is ready to work with any supply-chain companies impacted by this decision to help them identify other opportunities.

Whilst this announcement is a major blow for those affected, Caterpillar still employs over 2,000 people and has committed to continue manufacturing in Northern Ireland.

I know that local traders will also be concerned at the impact of the job losses across all the areas. Invest NI, through initiatives such as Boosting Business and the Regional Start Initiative, will be doing all it can to revitalize the areas most affected and to minimize the impact on local traders and businesses.

Tourist Board Investment

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much the Tourist Board has invested in each constituency, in each year since devolution.

(AQW 14919/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) provides funding support for tourism capital projects through the Tourism Development Scheme (TDS) and for tourism events through the Tourism Event Funding Programme both of which are open-call and criteria based. Funds are then offered to successful applicants following an assessment and scoring process.

Between 2008 and 2011 NITB supported a wide range of new tourism developments throughout Northern Ireland. Details are contained within the Financial Assisted Projects 2008 – 11 publication, a copy of which you received in November 2011, and which is available online at An overview of financially assisted projects 2008 to 2011 (<http://www.nitb.com/BusinessSupport/FundingOpportunities/CapitalDevelopmentFundingSupport.aspx>)

A list of projects which fall outside this publication are shown at Annex A, for preceding projects in the 2007-08 financial year and at Annex B, for projects in the 2011-12 financial year.

The main support mechanism available for the Events Industry is the Tourism Event Funding Programme, an annual funding programme designed to support International and National Tourism Events.

A full list of the events funded through the National and International Events programme in 2011-2012 is available at Successful Events - Events Funding 2011-12 (<http://www.nitb.com/FileHandler.ashx?id=2176>) and is filterable by constituency.

A full list of the events funded through the National and International Tourism Events programme in 2012-2013 is available at Successful Events - Events Funding 2012-13 (<http://www.nitb.com/FileHandler.ashx?id=1959>) and is filterable by constituency.

All other investment is not disaggregated by Constituency and may only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Financial Aid Awarded to Businesses in the Coleraine and Limavady Areas

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the total value of financial aid awarded to businesses in the (i) Coleraine; and (ii) Limavady areas in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14970/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Whilst the question asks for the value of financial aid awarded to businesses in Coleraine and Limavady, it should be noted that Invest NI does not determine the level of funding to particular areas. Assistance patterns are based on the location of those businesses which have sought and received support to grow and develop. Table 1 shows the amount of assistance, or funding, that Invest NI has offered to businesses in the (i) Coleraine and (ii) Limavady District Council Areas (DCAs) in each of the last five financial years.

TABLE 1: INVEST NI ASSISTANCE OFFERED IN COLERAINE & LIMAVADY DCAS (2007-08 TO 2011-12)

Financial Year	Coleraine £m	Limavady £m
2007-08	4.32	0.45
2008-09	1.39	0.88
2009-10	1.79	0.35
2010-11	1.07	0.25
2011-12	1.16	0.53
Total	9.72	2.45

Notes:

- (i) Invest NI revises performance data on a regular basis to ensure that it reflects implemented projects; therefore, the data above may differ to previously published information.
- (ii) The figures in the table may not add due to rounding.

In 2009-10, Invest NI offered an additional £10million to Enterprise Northern Ireland to administer the Enterprise Development Programme. Although Enterprise Northern Ireland is located in the Limavady area, the funding will benefit new local businesses throughout Northern Ireland, and has therefore been excluded from the table above.

Petroleum Licences for Unconventional Gas

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what evidence would be required to enable her to take the decision to withdraw the petroleum licences for unconventional gas.

(AQW 14991/11-15)

Mrs Foster: For my Department to consider withdrawing a Petroleum Licence, it would require evidence that the Licensee was in breach of the terms of that licence.

Attracting Cruise Ship Visits to Belfast

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much public money has been invested by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in attracting cruise ship visits to Belfast, in each of the last 5 years.

(AQW 15037/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has not provided any direct funding to attract cruise ships to Belfast in the last five years.

The Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau works together with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland as a cruise destination under the banner of Cruise Belfast.

Cruise Ship Visits

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the financial contribution to the local economy made by cruise ship visits, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 15039/11-15)

Mrs Foster: A full economic impact assessment has been commissioned by the Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau (BVCB) to evaluate the financial contribution of the 2012 cruise season.

A previous calculation estimated that cruise ship visits have generated between £10-£15 million for the local economy in recent years.

Cruise Ship Visits

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many cruise ships has visited Belfast, and how many passengers were on board, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 15056/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The following figures have been supplied by the Belfast Visitor & Convention Bureau (BVCB) which works together with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to promote Belfast and Northern Ireland as a cruise destination under the banner of Cruise Belfast.

Year:	Cruise Ships:	Passengers & Crew:
2008	39	65,559
2009	36	57,259
2010	35	54,517
2011	32	57,885
2012	44	72,665
Total:	186	307,885

International Companies Investing in Northern Ireland

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what provisions are available to encourage international companies to invest in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 15112/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI sells Northern Ireland as a location that can meet the needs of international investors. The agency has a successful track record of attracting high quality investment, exceeding its Key Performance Indicators for the most recent Programme for Government period.

The Northern Ireland proposition is based on a combination of quality and cost competitiveness. We have a ready supply of skilled and talented people, excellent university/business linkages, an advanced telecommunications infrastructure and world class companies operating in key knowledge-based sectors. Operating costs are highly competitive and can be significantly lower than many regions of the UK and Europe, including the Republic of Ireland.

We await the outcome of the negotiations with HM Treasury regarding the devolution of powers to lower Corporation Tax. There is no doubt that the ability to compete with the Republic of Ireland in this area would provide us with an additional competitive advantage.

In addition, Invest NI provides a suite of business development services to existing and potential investors. Invest NI's support is designed to enable both indigenous and externally owned companies to grow their business, maximise efficiencies, develop their product and sell in overseas markets. This can include the offer of financial assistance to support capital equipment, employment and training costs, and also to encourage and support new research and development activity.

Invest NI's overseas sales staff, investment managers and Property Solutions Unit work closely with potential investors to demonstrate how Northern Ireland, including support from Invest NI, can help them to grow their business. The feedback that I have personally received from companies that have chosen to locate in Northern Ireland suggests that support from Invest NI is crucial, and often a major factor in the decision.

Tourism: Causeway Coast and Antrim Glens

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact that a National Park on the Causeway Coast and Glens could have on the local tourism sector.

(AQO 2551/11-15)

Mrs Foster: From a tourism perspective, National Parks have the potential to deliver positive impacts including improved profile and image, enhanced marketing opportunities, dedicated funding and enhanced opportunities for the branding of local products.

However, I believe that before any introduction of a National Park there must be full consultation with all of the key stakeholders as it is vital that any proposals for a National Park have the support of the local community.

Whilst positive tourism impacts are welcomed, I would not wish to support any proposal that places additional bureaucracy on local residents.

FG Wilson

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the future of FG Wilson.

(AQO 2552/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Whilst the recent announcement by Caterpillar has come as a major blow to the workforce affected, and indeed the local economy in general, it is recognised that shifts in global demand now mean that Caterpillar has had to re-organise its smaller, retail operations in order that the business in Northern Ireland can remain competitive.

However, in making its announcement, Caterpillar stressed that its decision is in no way a reflection on the skills, productivity or flexibility of its workforce.

Despite these redundancies, Caterpillar is still a major employer in the local economy, employing in excess of 2000 people, and Invest NI is working with the company to help ensure future competitiveness.

I met with senior management of the Electric Power Division while in the US last week and explored a number of potential opportunities to bring more work to Northern Ireland. Whilst it is too early to comment on the specific nature of these opportunities, Invest NI is following up in a number of areas.

Air Travel: Direct Flights

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any discussions have been held with Airlines about expanding direct flights to European or North American cities to benefit the tourism and business sectors.

(AQO 2553/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department, through Tourism Ireland, is in dialogue with airlines and Northern Ireland airports on an ongoing basis to identify and develop opportunities for new, extended or re-instated services to key markets, including those in Europe and North America.

For example, Tourism Ireland recently agreed a co-operative marketing programme to promote a new inbound charter flight from Austria to Belfast International Airport. This service, which will be operated by Lauda Air from April to June 2013, will help to boost the number of inbound Austrian visitors to Northern Ireland and will also provide a positive example to other inbound charter carriers that Northern Ireland can be an option for their business.

Hydraulic Fracturing: Fermanagh

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, given the expert advice that the minimum permissible distance between the shale and a water aquifer at which fracking should occur

is 600 metres, what impact this would have on her proposals for Fermanagh where the difference in depth in many areas is only 500 metres.

(AQO 2554/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The licence in Fermanagh is still in the preliminary stages.

Should an application to drill be made, officials in my Department will consider the applicability of any recommendations to proposed operations in Fermanagh.

Full planning permission and an associated Environmental Impact Assessment will be required prior to any drilling taking place.

Tourist Information Centres

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what she is doing to increase the number of bookings for accommodation through Tourist Information Centres.

(AQO 2555/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Tourist Information Centres play an important role assisting visitors with their informational needs at the planning stage of their trip and also in destination. NITB will continue to promote the 31 Tourist Information Centres in the network.

However, advances in technology have resulted in changes to the way visitors access this information and book their accommodation requirements. In line with global trends there has been a year on year decline in the number of bookings made via Tourist Information Centres, as visitors increasingly prefer to book their accommodation over the internet in advance of arriving in their destination.

Economy: Planning Delays

Mr Molloy asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact that delays in the planning process have on our economic development.

(AQO 2556/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The 2009 Independent Review of Economic Policy underlined the importance of planning to regional economic growth and recommended that the Planning Service should have processing time targets which are competitive and comparable with those countries and regions against which we are competing for mobile international investment.

Whilst it is important to have in place an effective and balanced planning system, I continue to have concerns about the number of large projects, with the potential to make significant contributions to the Northern Ireland economy, which are adversely affected by delays in the planning process.

Collaborative Research

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department has taken to promote and advance EU funded collaborative research.

(AQO 2550/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My department is actively promoting increased engagement in EU R&D funding programmes. As part of this, DETI has appointed a new full time manager for Northern Ireland Horizon 2020.

In addition, I am currently working with the Minister of Employment and Learning on the establishment of a new £1.8 million Higher Education EU Support Fund. This Fund will facilitate the appointment of experts by both Universities in key research areas. They will be tasked with supporting a significant increase in successful applications to the forthcoming Horizon 2020 programme.

Department of the Environment

Failings at Cavanacaw Mine

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of the Environment what action he has taken to ensure that the failings at Cavanacaw mine near Omagh are not repeated.

(AQW 14327/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): I have been fully briefed on the issues in relation to a number of planning applications relating to the Gold Mine at Cavanacaw near Omagh.

These issues relate to delay in taking enforcement action against a breach of condition on the original approval and to the adequacy of determinations made under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations for two subsequent planning applications relating to the reinstatement of the site and the provision of passing bays on local roads. These latter permissions have now been quashed by the courts.

I do not consider the history of events in relation to this case to be acceptable, however, the Department has acknowledged its mistakes and I am determined to ensure that lessons are learnt and there is no repeat of the failings noted above.

I have therefore instructed officials in Strategic Planning Division to undertake the following:

- Urgently review the staff resources available to the Enforcement Team within Strategic Projects Division and to make greater use of Area Office Enforcement Staff to carry out initial site visits in relation to complaints received;
- Move to a pro-active regime where in terms of specialist applications such as mineral extraction compliance with planning conditions is monitored to identify any breaches at an early stage, this will include engaging with applicants and the relevant industry bodies where appropriate;
- Ensure all staff have access to the most up to date technology to monitor sites – for example Strategic Planning Division Compliance Teams are now able to access real time high quality aerial photographs to deliver accurate mapping and analysis of topography, boundaries, levels which is ideal for monitoring quarries and landfill sites.
- Immediately review all current and recently approved minerals applications as well as a range of enforcement cases (minerals and unauthorised waste) to ensure compliance with the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;
- Organise refresher training for staff on the requirements of the new Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations;
- Provide updated guidance to staff on the processing of Enforcement Cases.

I have asked to be regularly updated on progress in respect of the above actions.

Restricted Operators Licences

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment how many temporary permits have been issued out of the expected 8000 applications for restricted operators licences, under the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Act 2010 'Own Accent' Operators – Temporary Permit.

(AQW 14458/11-15)

Mr Attwood: To date (as of 4 October 2012) the Department has received 3784 applications for temporary permits and issued 2000 permits. Applications are continuing to arrive on a daily basis.

The Department continues to pursue a range of measures to encourage applications for permits from organisations using goods vehicles that are not exempted from the provisions of the Act, highlighting the benefits that accrue to an operator who makes use of the permit process. Officials are also preparing further education and compliance measures to ensure that the benefits of the Goods Vehicles Act are delivered.

Cost of Clearing up Bonfire Sites

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the cost of clearing up bonfire sites after the Eleventh and Twelfth of July events in each of the 26 councils; and (ii) the cost of clearing up bonfire sites after Nationalist-related events in each of the 26 councils, in each of the last five years. **(AQW 14540/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: The table below sets out the costs incurred by some District Councils in clearing up bonfire sites – the figures do not include any expenditure by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which is responsible for clearing up bonfire residue on its own land.

Where the figures have not been split according to the origin of the bonfire, one total is quoted.

I will write to you with an update should the other Councils provide us with further details.

AQW 14540 – CLEAN UP COSTS FOR A) 12 JULY AND B) NATIONALIST BONFIRES IN EACH OF THE LAST 5 YEARS

	2008 a	2008 b	2009 a	2009 b	2010 a	2010 b	2011 a	2011 b	2012 a	2012 b
Antrim	Figures not provided								£1567.35	nil
Ards	£10130		£7549		£9238		£4049		£38315	
Armagh										
Ballymena	£5,617	£4,640	£3,701	nil	£11,084	nil	£7,619	nil	£6,274	nil
Ballymoney	£5098.32	£1653.12	£5057.70	£1247.40	£5804.04	£1340.64	£4257.92	£1696.00	£7836.80	not available
Banbridge	£1000 - £1200	nil	£1000 - £1200	nil	£1000 - £1200	nil	£1000 - £1200	nil	£1282	nil
Belfast	£15400	£3700	£16100	nil	£17300	nil	£20200	nil	£14400	nil
Carrickfergus	£576.90	nil	£592.67	nil	£598.59	nil	£598.59	nil	£587.35	nil
Castlereagh	See note 2 below	nil	See note 2 below	nil	See note 2 below	nil	See note 2 below	nil	See note 2 below	nil
Cookstown	£380	nil	£460	nil	£478	nil	£367	nil	£730	nil
Coleraine	£300	nil	£300	nil	£300	nil	£300	nil	£300	nil
Craigavon	£19,923.74		£13695.01	nil	£21737	nil	£16513.98	nil	£11993.88	nil
	2008 a	2008 b	2009 a	2009 b	2010 a	2010 b	2011 a	2011 b	2012 a	2012 b
Derry										
Down	No figures available								£2,000	
Dungannon										
Fermanagh	Nil									
Larne	£9,151		£12,126		£9,201		£7,985		£4,055	
Limavady	£248.60		£225.80		£265		£396		£251.80	
Lisburn	£9,270.19		£1,826.75		£2,306.84		£4,326.39		£2,298.12	
Magherafelt	£3,000	£900	£930	£1,270	£2,160	£1,080	£2,800	£1,400	£2,956.00	nil
Moyle	No figures available				£211.91		£1473.46		£990.22	

	2008 a	2008 b	2009 a	2009 b	2010 a	2010 b	2011 a	2011 b	2012 a	2012 b
Newry and Mourne	See note 1 below									
Newtownabbey	£2816.20	nil	£5304.86	nil	£1760.60	nil	£6380.90	nil	£1780.00	nil
North Down										
Omagh	£0		£400		£1358		£0		£350	
Strabane	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil	nil

- 12th July bonfire clear-ups for past 5 years - £3102.81; Nationalist related bonfire clear-ups for past 5 years - £14750.00; Halloween bonfire clear-ups for past 5 years - £119705.00 (22 No. sites)
- £29,001.23 over past 5 years

Management Structures for Councils

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of the development of agreed management structures for each council under the reform of local government.

(AQW 14545/11-15)

Mr Attwood: New council management structures will be a matter for the transition committees and new councils to develop. Local Government is likely to consider recommendations for harmonising management structures across the Sector as part of the Human Resources workstream of the Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency programme.

Rates Convergence

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment what is the expected level of rates convergence across each new proposed council under the reform of local government

(AQW 14546/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am fully aware of the concerns which have been expressed by elected representatives, the business sector, and others, about rates convergence and debt issues arising from the implementation of local government reform.

The Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has commissioned the senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group to examine the financial implications of rates and legacy debt convergence, develop plans and procedures for minimising any negative impact of change, and ensure that those affected are treated as fairly and equitably as possible.

The group is currently developing detailed financial models to quantify the impact on rate levels, arising from local government reform, across each of the councils.

In parallel with this the group is also examining a wide range of options for minimising the impact of these rate changes, I have, of course, raised the issue of rates convergence with the Minister of Finance and Personnel. A paper is being developed in relation to the issue. In my view, there will be a requirement to provide transitional rates assistance.

Redundancies in Local Councils

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) how many redundancies are expected in local councils as a consequence of the reform of local government, (ii) if funds have been set aside for redundancy packages, (iii) the appeals process and (iv) whether, in light of the existing levels of remuneration across local councils, redundancy packages and new starting salaries will be harmonised.

(AQW 14547/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Executive's decision to reduce the number of councils to 11 will mean a need for fewer staff than are employed by the existing 26 councils. Further work is ongoing to quantify this and to determine costs for the councils, which as the employing authorities will be responsible for the costs of officer redundancy packages and will be required to make funds available for this purpose.

I am conscious of and wish to minimise the potential impacts on those likely to be affected, and this is being taken fully on board as preparations progress. Central to this is the Local Government Reform Joint Forum which was set up to ensure that the impacts upon affected staff are thoroughly considered and negotiated between staff representative organisations and employing authorities. The work of the Joint Forum and its negotiations are underpinned by the commitment to act in the best interests of the affected staff, according to guiding principles agreed by the Executive.

A fundamental aspect of these principles is to make every effort to avoid compulsory redundancies, and a severance scheme for common application across councils is being developed by the Joint Forum. Similarly a model transfer scheme is being developed to set out the terms and conditions, including dispute resolution, pension and salary, under which staff will move from existing councils to new councils.

The harmonisation of terms and conditions, including salaries for staff in councils, is also being considered as part of the HR Implementation timetable for reform of local government in the long term.

Councils: Chief Executives and Senior Staff

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of the Environment whether new Chief Executives and senior staff will be in post in advance of the next election to shadow councils.

(AQW 14548/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I believe that it is important to create certainty as soon as possible and that the reform change process must be driven by a senior manager – be that an interim Chief Executive or a Chief Executive Designate. For this reason, the Statutory Transition Committees, which I intend to establish early next year, will have the power to appoint staff. Discussions regarding the underlying principles and timings for competitions for senior posts are being taken forward within the implementation structures I have established; I expect to receive recommendations shortly and will settle the issue as soon as possible thereafter. I believe that the earlier, not later, appointment of staff is the best way to go.

Cyclist Road Deaths

Mr Weir asked Minister of the Environment to detail, in each of the last five years, (i) the number of cyclist road deaths and (ii) the percentage that cyclist road deaths represents in overall road deaths.

(AQW 14561/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The requested information is provided in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: PEDAL CYCLIST ROAD FATALITIES AS A PERCENTAGE OF ALL ROAD FATALITIES, 2007 - 2011

Year	Pedal cyclists killed	All road users killed	Cyclist deaths as proportion of all road deaths
2007	2	113	1.8%
2008	2	107	1.9%
2009	0	115	0.0%
2010	0	55	0.0%
2011	2	59	3.4%

Source: PSNI

Sea Fishing Defence

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the legal and policy reasons for not removing the sea fishing defence between nought and six nautical miles.

(AQW 14599/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There are no overarching legal requirements for retaining the sea fishing defence between the nought to six nautical miles limit. Fishing activity should be treated equally within our territorial waters; irrespective of whether it is two nautical miles out or eight nautical miles out.

I have thus far taken the policy decision to retain the scope of the sea fishing defence, but appreciate there is a contrary view.

This position mirrors the provisions included in the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 and Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. To remove the defence may lead to a fragmented approach among fishing interests in our waters and other marine areas. It would also not be reasonable to penalise or disadvantage our inshore fishing fleet while those fishing offshore can remain unaffected.

I would point out that the defence relates only to authorised fishing activity. It also only applies when it can be demonstrated that such activity could not have been reasonably avoided and as such fishermen must abide by the rules of their licence. In addition, the licencing authority would be under a duty to ensure that any activity, for which they may be responsible, would not be detrimental to an MCZ.

Intertidal Survey of the Killard Point Area of Special Scientific Interest

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the findings of the most recent intertidal survey of the Killard Point Area of Special Scientific Interest.

(AQW 14602/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The intertidal area of Killard Point Area of Special Scientific Interest (ASSI)

was originally surveyed in the 1980s by Herriot Watt University under contract to the Department and found to consist of a good diversity of fauna and flora associated with bedrock. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency intertidal survey team repeated the survey within Killard Point ASSI in July 2012 following the same methodology and transects used in by Herriot Watt. There were no signs of nutrient enrichment, direct pollution or sewage related debris. The species encountered were similar in all respects to those reported in the 1980s and NIEA has determined that the site remains in favourable condition.

Invasive Sea Squirt *Didemnum Vexillum*

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment (i) whether it has been confirmed that the invasive sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* has spread throughout Strangford Lough; and (ii) whether his Department has finalised plans to manage the situation.

(AQW 14603/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Following the discovery of the probable invasive sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* in Strangford Lough samples were sent to an expert in Britain to verify the species identity. I can confirm that these samples were verified as being *Didemnum vexillum* on 26th September 2012.

The survey in which *Didemnum vexillum* was discovered examined over ten other sites in Strangford Lough and the species was not detected at any of these sites. Samples of what are believed to be native sea squirts were taken and verification of these is awaited. Following the initial find, further dive surveys were undertaken by staff from the NIEA on 25th September 2012 in the vicinity of the original discovery to assess the distribution of the species in the immediate area. Further dive surveys will be undertaken to confirm whether it has spread beyond the area of the initial find.

I have requested that a group is set up to co-ordinate action to address this new threat. This group will use existing information and the finds of further surveys to determine what control options,

if any, should be used and develop an action plan for delivery. The plan is expected to include a monitoring programme to assess distribution of the species and the effects of any control actions. In the meantime NIEA is commissioning a feasibility study to assess potential management options. To help advise the Department on its options, NIEA has sought advice from marine scientists in the Countryside Council for Wales who have extensive experience in managing this species in Holyhead Harbour in Wales.

Invasive Species

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the content of the recent discussions at the British/Irish Council regarding invasive species; and what plans are in place to tackle invasive species on an all-Ireland basis.

(AQW 14604/11-15)

Mr Attwood: At the British-Irish Council Environment workstream meeting held in Vogrie Country Park, Edinburgh, on 7 September 2012, Ministers discussed the development of biodiversity policy and delivery mechanisms for dealing with invasive species across Member Administrations. Ministers also recognised the threat that invasive species pose to the island ecosystems which make up the British-Irish Council membership. Following the presentation by GB's Non-Native Species Secretariat, Ministers discussed existing awareness campaigns, how to improve monitoring, warning systems and risk assessment across British-Irish Council Member Administrations and the potential for an expert meeting in the run-up to the anticipated EU Directive. A report of the meeting was made in my Statement to the Assembly on 25 September 2012.

Since 2006, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) has jointly funded the Invasive Species Ireland Project with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). This all-Ireland project is overseen by a Steering Group which is made up of representatives from a wide range of departments, state bodies, agencies and academia. It provides a mechanism to help co-ordinate action for invasive species on an all-Ireland basis.

The Department recognises the need for partnership working with our colleagues in the South to achieve long term success in tackling invasive species. This is particularly of importance for our cross border river catchments and our shared sea loughs. In 2011, the Department and our counterparts in the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG) provided part funding to a large scale £2.6 million InterReg IVA funded project, led by the Queens University Belfast, known the CIRB Project (Controlling priority Invasive species and Restoring native Biodiversity). This project aims to eradicate riparian invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed and giant hogweed, from river catchments in both the North and South of Ireland. In addition in the past year both departments have again worked together to develop a European LIFE+ funding bid which will focus on marine invasive species.

Facility for Taxing Cars Online

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department is taking to introduce a facility for taxing cars online.

(AQW 14622/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea, which has responsibility for the collection of vehicle excise duty across the UK, on behalf of the Department for Transport, are currently developing a fully integrated IT system that would bring vehicle licensing services in Northern Ireland into line with those in Britain and improve services to customers by facilitating online applications and more services from Post Offices.

A separate study is also examining options for the future delivery of vehicle licensing services following systems integration.

DVLA plan to have the integrated IT system ready by June 2013 but its implementation is tied into the proposals for the future of vehicle licensing services here. Following the recent ministerial changes at Westminster I have again written to the Secretary of State for Transport acknowledging the proposed

expansion of improved services for customers here but emphasising my opposition to any reduction in jobs in NI as a consequence. I have had meetings with the previous Secretary of State for NI and the then Parliamentary Under - Secretary for Transport and further meetings are planned with the new Ministers. I have been assured that no decision will be made without further consultation with me.

Car Tax: V10(NI) Form

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to seek an increase in the number of Post Office branches that are eligible to tax cars using the V10(NI) form.

(AQW 14623/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Under a UK wide contract managed by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, 155 Post Offices in Northern Ireland currently provide motor tax licensing facilities for customers who can produce motor tax reminder notices before their tax discs expire. Of these, 19 also offer an additional service of processing V10 tax renewal applications for customers who do not have reminder notices or who want to notify changes of keeper or address, or submit statutory off road notifications.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, which has responsibility for the collection of vehicle excise duty across the UK, on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT), are currently examining how they can deliver a fully integrated IT system that would bring vehicle licensing services in Northern Ireland into line with those in Britain and improve services to customers by facilitating online applications and introducing more services from Post Offices, including the extension of the V10 relicensing service.

I am currently involved in discussions and negotiations with Ministers at DfT on these proposals, with a view both to enhancing the availability of services for customers in Northern Ireland and also to protecting the economy and jobs, and the question of expanding Post Office services will be dealt with in that context.

Unauthorised Quarrying

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of the Environment whether he is aware of any incidents over the last five years in which unauthorised quarrying has had an environmental impact on local rivers.

(AQW 14640/11-15)

Mr Attwood: My Department takes all incidents of unauthorised quarrying very seriously and I am aware of a number of such developments that are operating without planning permission or in contravention of an existing planning permission. All of these identified developments have been, or are currently subject to DOE Planning's enforcement procedures.

Uncontrolled quarrying and related activities have the potential to impact upon both groundwater and surface water. The Northern Ireland Environment Agency has recorded 123 pollution incidents taking place in the last 5 years where the source of the pollution has been identified as a quarrying operation.

In relation to these 123 identified pollution incidents, 87 were classified as low severity, 35 as medium severity and one incident was classified as high severity. A total of 7 of these incidents resulted in a prosecution being taken against the offender.

Where a quarrying operation is impacting upon groundwater or surface waters, regardless of the development's status in relation to the Planning (Northern Ireland) Order 1991, NIEA will take enforcement action with a view to stopping the identified impact and to act as a deterrent against further actions that may result in an impact on the water environment.

I can assure you that my officials take breaches of planning or environmental legislation very seriously and have established policies and procedures, as well as statutory powers, for taking action when such breaches are identified.

Aspergillosis

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the problem of Aspergillosis that may result from composting kitchen and garden waste.

(AQW 14651/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Aspergillosis is a respiratory disorder that is one of the hazards associated with a fungus that is commonly found in decaying vegetation such as green and kitchen wastes.

The fungus, *Aspergillus fumigatus*, is present in the Bioaerosols produced by the composting process and is an Occupational Health and Safety issue, primarily for those working in the industry. The Health and Safety Executive of Northern Ireland (HSENI) has guidance for those carrying out such activities. The HSENI believes that the occupational risk of workers contracting Aspergillosis from working with composted kitchen and garden waste is low. Employers adhering to the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (NI) 2003 can easily control the risk through good systems of work that minimise the amount of dust becoming airborne and working practices that minimise dust and bioaerosols being breathed in.

Further information on the health risks of working with green waste can be found in "Green Waste Collection: Health Issues" published by the Health and Safety Executive (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/waste02.pdf>)

The majority of regulated composting facilities are in vessels where the air within is properly managed thus mitigating the risk for both operatives and those living adjacent

Disposal of Used Tyres

Mr Storey asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department is taking to deal with the issue of the disposal of used tyres.

(AQW 14659/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department has developed a Tyres Action Plan which includes various proposals, a number of which are completed or being actively pursued:

- Consultants are currently working on the Used Tyres Survey looking at used tyre arisings and flows. A draft report is scheduled to be completed in October 2012.
- Periodic in-depth audits and enforcement of waste licensed sites is ongoing and has resulted in a number of warning letters, Enforcement Notices, Licence Revocations, a major financial asset confiscation case and case files being prepared for the Public Prosecution Service (PPS).
- Discussions are taking place with other regulators and the Waste Resource Action Program (WRAP) regarding quality standards for crumbed and baled tyres and a Quality Protocol for crumbed tyres.
- Implementation of a Flytipping Pilot Project with 11 District Councils is ongoing.
- Contact has been made with the Chief Environmental Health Officers Group regarding the establishment of a joint strategy for bonfires, which would include the use of tyres as bonfire material and the widespread environmental and social implications of bonfires.
- A comprehensive Duty of Care audit of tyre retailers, waste tyre collectors and recyclers has been completed.
- A good working relationship has been established with the District Councils in relation to part worn tyres and joint audit and enforcement visits are planned.

The purpose of all of these actions is to bring about a long term resolution to the tyre problem and at the same time provide sustainable solutions for the reuse, recycling and recovery of tyres.

The Environment Committee has completed an Interim Inquiry Report into Used Tyre Disposal. The Report includes 20 recommendations to which the Department has provided an initial response and

which it will consider in the context of the Committee's final report, in conjunction with the Tyres Action Plan.

Payment of Invoices

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to supplier invoices paid by councils during the period 1 April 2012 to 31 August 2012, to detail (i) the number of invoices paid; and (ii) how many invoices were paid (a) within 30 days; and (b) later than 30 days following receipt of the supplier's invoice; and (iii) which councils impose a payment term other than 30 days.

(AQW 14667/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Responses to these questions have already been provided. I would refer Mr Campbell to the following replies:

- (i) AQW 14452/11-15
- (ii)(a) AQW 14452/11-15 (ii) (a)
- (ii)(b) AQW 14452/11-15 (ii) (b)
- (iii) AQW 14450/11-15 (i) and (ii)

Payment of Invoices

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to supplier invoices paid by councils during the period 1 April 2012 to 31 August 2012, (i) to detail the number of invoices paid within 10 working days of receipt of the supplier's invoice; (ii) to list the councils that paid 90 percent, or more, of supplier's invoices within 10 working days of receipt; and (iii) to list the councils which failed to achieve the 90 percent payment performance target set out in Section 3.1.5 of the Central Procurement Directorate's Procurement Guidance Note 06/12 of 11 July 2012.

(AQW 14668/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Responses to these questions have already been provided. I would refer Mr Campbell to the reply to AQW 14451/11-15.

Contract for the Maintenance and Cleaning of Beaches

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the timescale for a new contract for the maintenance and cleaning of beaches.

(AQW 14672/11-15)

Mr Attwood: NIEA is utilising a combination of its own staff and an existing contract, procured through the Department of Finance and Personnel, to clean and maintain its properties.

NIEA will review the performance of its existing arrangements, including costs, before coming to a decision on how to service its properties; this will be done after the close of the high visitor season in October.

Should the analysis be in favour of retendering NIEA will work towards having a new contract in place by 1 April 2013.

Chicken Waste Incinerator at Glenavy

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment, in light of the time that has passed since the original application for a Chicken Waste Incinerator at Glenavy and given the fact that European attitudes to incineration and the economic climate have changed substantially in the intervening years, whether he will request an independent economic appraisal, with particular focus on the impact of the plant on the South Antrim economy, in light of the concerns raised by Radox and the local community; and, given that the EU Commission is now urging member states to adopt approaches

other than incineration, citing the fact that incineration is a waste of precious nutrients and not a sustainable solution, whether he plans to inform the applicants that their proposals are unacceptable.
(AQW 14696/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am fully aware of the arguments being presented for and against the proposed Waste Incinerator at Glenavy and I have instructed officials to carefully consider a range of issues.

There is already a large volume of information both in support and in objection to this proposal, including objections from Randox. The economic impacts will form part of the determination of the planning application along with all other material planning matters which includes the grounds for objection and the comments of consultees. At this time there is no need for a further economic appraisal at this stage which will only delay the decision making process further. I also note the position of the EU in relation to incineration of chicken waste which will be taken into account in the final analysis.

Audio-Visual Information on Public Transport Vehicles

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether he intends to introduce legislation that would require all public transport vehicles to provide onboard audio-visual information; and what is the timescale for the introduction of any such legislation.

(AQW 14718/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am aware that the Department for Regional Develop recently undertook a successful pilot study using audio visual equipment on buses and at stops on a single bus route. The study report, in concluding that there were clear benefits for all bus passengers, indicated that the total cost of roll out across the Translink fleet alone would be in the region of £6.8 million. Given the limited scope of the pilot study and the significant financial impact on the bus industry of bringing forward legislation requiring the mandatory fitment of such equipment, I have asked officials to undertake further scoping and evaluation of audio visual technology to further inform my decision making on this matter.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 provides DOE with the powers to set the accessibility requirements for public service vehicles, including buses. The current requirements are contained in the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (NI) 2003 and these could be amended to introduce requirements for the fitting of audio visual equipment on buses.

My Department is also in the process of bringing forward regulations which place certain duties on bus drivers to assist passengers with impairments. Currently the legislation focuses on the deployment of steps and improving accessibility for wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments. I have asked that these regulations include requirements that the driver provide passengers with information about the route they are on and let them know, on request, when they have reached their required stop. I anticipate that this may alleviate some of the difficulties people with impairments face when accessing public transport. The draft regulations are being scrutinised by the Departmental Solicitor's Office and I anticipate that consultation on proposals will take place in 2013.

Taxi Operating Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment what steps his Department has taken to assist public hire and individual private hire taxis in adapting to the Taxi Operating Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

(AQW 14719/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In designing the taxi operator licensing regime my Department took account of the needs of the small operator by making provision for them to obtain a small operator licence which incorporates a reduced grant fee. During my consideration of the licensing regime I identified that the requirement to pay, in advance, for a five year operator licence could have a disproportionately adverse impact on an individual or small operator which is why the licensing regime that I approved allows operators to choose to be licensed for one, three or five years. In addition I have reduced the

application fee by £100, during the transition into the licensing regime, and the individual or small operator will, proportionately, benefit most from this.

Since announcing the introduction of Taxi Operator Licensing from 1 September 2012, my Department has engaged with the industry in a variety of ways to assist all taxi operators in adapting to the new regulations.

In July my Department wrote to all taxi drivers and taxi vehicle owners providing information on the licensing regime and inviting them to attend specific workshops events where they could find out what they needed to do to become licensed operators. The workshops, held in Belfast, Omagh, Derry and Newry, were also advertised in the local press. It was anticipated that the workshops would be of particular benefit to individuals and small operators as they were designed as one on one advice sessions offering tailored advice about individual businesses.

In addition a taxi operator manual has been produced which gives detailed information on the application process, the duties of a licensed operator, the records that have to be kept and how the licensing regime will be monitored and enforced. Included with the manual are templates which an operator can use to keep their records. These templates are likely to be of most use to individuals or small operators who, for the first time, will have to keep records in a systematic way.

Since the regulations became law in September officials from the Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) and Road Safety and Vehicle Regulation Division have been available to answer questions and give advice. RSVRD alone has answered 80 written queries from individuals within the industry since July, as well as meeting with drivers face to face when requested. NIDirect has assisted by answering over 800 calls on the Taxi Information Line during this time, providing information and issuing application packs where necessary.

To date DVA have received over 300 applications for taxi operator licenses many of which are from individuals. I am therefore content that my Department is providing effective support to the small operator to help them comply with the new rules.

DVA has also been proactive in raising the industry's awareness of the new legal requirements associated with taxi operator licensing by engaging with drivers at the roadside. This has included the distribution of educational material, including information leaflets and a new taxi operator handbook that provides guidance on how to obtain a licence and details the standards the Department expects from licence holders in the course of running their businesses.

Plastic Bag Levy

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment how the plastic bag levy will be implemented over the course of the next financial year.

(AQW 14738/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations will come into operation on 8 April 2013. The Regulations will require sellers to charge their customers a 5 pence levy for a broad range of single use carrier bags, not just those made of plastic. The Regulations will also require sellers to pay the proceeds of the levy to the Department.

An in house Carrier Bag Levy Team (CBLT), based in Derry, has been established to administer collection of the levy and ensure that sellers implement the charging arrangements effectively. In advance of 8 April 2013, retailers will be required to register as sellers of carrier bags. After that date, collection of proceeds of the levy will be undertaken on a quarterly basis.

Sellers will be able to make payments on line, with first payments due in July 2013. The CBLT will administer the process. A variety of payment methods will be available, and sellers will be able to choose the method that best suits their personal circumstances.

Dedicated Customer Relations Managers from the CBLT will provide on the ground advice and guidance to sellers identified as being liable for the levy. They will also undertake compliance and enforcement

activities, and help ensure that sellers are prepared for Phase 2 of charging proposals; the extension to low cost reusable bags from April 2014 and an increase in the levy from 5 pence to 10 pence.

MOT Tests

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment what has been the change in the percentage of vehicles failing an initial test at each of the Vehicle Test Centres between 2001 and 2011.

(AQW 14739/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The first full year of implementation for the Driver & Vehicle Agency's computerised booking system was 2004-05, and records for failure rates by test centre for periods before that are not available.

DVA does not hold information in a format which would enable initial tests to be identified separately, so the figures below relate only to full tests. However, this would affect only a small number of tests, and the effect on the statistics provided should not be significant.

It should be noted that fail rates can change over time for a variety of reasons. For example, there may be changes in the composition of the stock of vehicles being presented for tests eg a test centre where the proportion of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) being presented for testing has increased is likely to see a reduction in the overall pass rate.

The fail rates for vehicle tests in 2004/05 and 2011/12, and the percentage change at each test centre, are shown below.

VEHICLE TEST FAIL RATES FOR FULL TESTS BY TEST CENTRE FOR 2004/05 AND 2011/12

Test Centre	Fail Rate 2004/05 (%)	Fail Rate 2011/12 (%)	Percentage Point Change (%)
Armagh	25.53	23.46	-2.07
Ballymena	21.00	21.45	0.45
Balmoral	22.20	18.30	-3.90
Coleraine	20.60	21.52	0.92
Cookstown	28.40	27.54	-0.86
Craigavon	30.13	22.47	-7.66
Downpatrick	22.64	21.02	-1.62
Enniskillen	19.39	24.98	5.59
Larne	14.07	21.49	7.43
Lisburn	23.70	18.93	-4.76
New Buildings	23.91	25.03	1.12
Mallusk	22.78	22.31	-0.48
Newry	22.47	22.26	-0.21
Newtownards	21.88	20.79	-1.09
Omagh	25.24	23.08	-2.16
Total	22.76	22.03	-0.73

Illegal Dumping of Agricultural and Equestrian Animal Carcasses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment how many cases of illegal dumping of agricultural and equestrian animal carcasses have been (i) reported; and (ii) dealt with, in each council area in each of the last three years; and how many individual carcasses were dumped.

(AQW 14741/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The figures in the attached table are a combined total from local Councils and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

I will write to you with a further update following receipt of any additional data.

AQW 14741 – cases of illegal dumping of agricultural and equestrian animal carcasses (i) reported and dealt with, in each council area in each of the last three years and ii) how many individual carcasses were dumped.

	2010 i)	2010 ii)	2011 i)	2011 ii)	2012 i)	2012 ii)
Antrim	2	3	1	1	1	2
Ards**						
Armagh**						
Ballymena	11	not recorded	8	not recorded	4	not recorded
Ballymoney	5	7	4	6	3	6
Banbridge**						
Belfast**						
Carrickfergus	0	0	2	5	0	0
Castlereagh	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cookstown**						
Coleraine	3	3	2	2	3	3
Craigavon	1	1	2	1* see note 1 below	0	0
Derry**						
Down	4	6	1	1	1	1
Dungannon**						
Fermanagh	39	48	50	61	35	39
Larne	5	6	1	2	4	7
Limavady	4	6	10	13	9	11
Lisburn	2	3	2	2	0	0
Magherafelt	10	10	9	9	6	6
Moyle	9	24	12	39	13	28
Newry and Mourne	Total of 158 carcasses dumped in the last three years					

	2010 i)	2010 ii)	2011 i)	2011 ii)	2012 i)	2012 ii)
Newtownabbey	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Down	0	0	0	0	0	0
Omagh**						
Strabane**						

1 Craigavon – 1 animal lifted, 1 animal left in water – no further action taken

** No data supplied.

Roadside Advertising Signage for Businesses

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment what consideration has been given to reviewing the policy in relation to roadside advertising signage for businesses, particularly given the current economic situation.

(AQW 14767/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The statutory requirement for advertisements is set out in the Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992.

The regulations allow for a level of advertisement to be “deemed” as granted if it complies with certain conditions such as size, height, illumination and number of advertisements relating to the profession, business or trade at the premises where it is displayed. The full details of the Regulations are available to view on the Planning website www.planningni.gov.uk

If an advertisement is not granted deemed consent, then the Departments express consent will be required before it can be displayed. Where the Department receives an application for express consent it will assess the effect of the display of the advertisement on amenity and public safety (particularly road safety). In this respect, the Department will normally consult Roads Service if the advertisement is alongside a major road.

The Department is presently focused on a significant legislative change programme to bring forward planning reform and help to address some of the difficulties being experienced by businesses in the current economic climate. These proposals, staff returning to planning, strong management of article 31 applications, new senior management team, new PPS policies, ensuring prompt and full NIEA responses working with the economic sectors (etc) are all interventions to reconfigure planning.

A small number of signage cases have been referred to me, but I have not received particular representation on roadside advertising.

Delays in New Social Housing Schemes

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of the Environment what discussions he and his officials have had with their counterparts in the Department for Social Development over the last twelve months on the delays in new social housing schemes.

(AQW 14785/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Planning officials meet on a bi-annual basis with representatives from NIHE in relation to new social housing schemes and planning applications currently in the planning system. General planning advice is provided in relation to proposed schemes and, on occasion, issues with particular applications may also be highlighted.

In addition, regular monitoring meetings are conducted by Area Planning Offices in relation to the social housing programmes for that area.

There are occasions when the Department is requested to give priority to certain individual applications such as those on which grant-aid may depend or those with a clear strategic, employment, community or public interest dimension. In this respect, applications for social housing would be given priority.

The Department will continue to work with key stakeholders to ensure that planning delivers benefits to all in an efficient and timely manner.

Planning Applications for Major Retail Outlets in Out of Town Locations

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the difference in the number of planning applications for major retail outlets in out of town locations between 2001 and 2011.

(AQW 14794/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Applications for major retail developments have been identified and manual checks have enabled proposals in excess of 1,000 sq m gross retail floorspace, which are located outside defined town centres to be highlighted.

Based on historic records, 23 applications (2 of which were subject to Article 31 procedures) were received within the 2001 calendar year.

For the 2011 calendar year, records show that 18 applications (7 of which were subject to Article 31 procedures) were received.

The trend shows a decrease in terms of overall major retail applications, but a significant increase in the number of Article 31 proposals. Some time back I instructed officials to bring forward a new PPS 5, to better manage retail applications, particularly the requirement for “in town” over “out of town”.

Councils Prepared for Heavy Snow Falls

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment whether councils are prepared for heavy snow falls in the coming winter.

(AQW 14804/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Councils have Emergency Plans in place and Emergency Planning Officers to assist lead agencies in their response and any recovery aspect of an emergency situation, including those caused by adverse weather conditions. In addition, following the experience of severe winter conditions in 2010 / 2011 councils have engaged with Roads Service (Department for Regional Development) in agreeing a protocol and Memorandum of Understanding, ‘Clearing Busy Town Centre Footways and Pedestrian Areas of Snow and Ice’ in respect of salting and clearing of footways.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) the amount spent on the local government reform aspect of the Review of Public Administration at the end of August 2012; (ii) the projected ongoing cost of local government reform under the Review of Public Administration to the end of April 2015; and (iii) the total cost to his Department and local councils of managing the reform of local government.

(AQW 14823/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Up to 31 August 2012, the Department’s Local Government Policy Division’s expenditure in respect of local government reform is £12.6m. This includes staff and support costs, grant funding for NILGA and the Transition Committees, costs of the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner and consultants’ fees. These figures are from the initiation of this project back in 2005 and are detailed in the table below.

COSTS TO 31 AUGUST 2012

Year	£
2005/2006	193,951
2006/2007	1,646,421
2007/2008	1,324,461
2008/2009	2,610,990
2009/2010	3,321,871
2010/2011	2,341,286
2011/2012	852,258
2012/2013 to date	316,057
Totals	12,607,295

The economic appraisal of local government service delivery, published by PricewaterhouseCoopers in October 2009, indicated that under the preferred option (i.e. Transformation with Regional Collaboration) implementation of the local government reform programme could involve expenditure of up to £118 million over five years and achieve savings of £438 million over twenty five years.

The Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has commissioned the senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group, to re-examine the costs and benefits of reform taking account a range of key factors. These include the 2015 timescale for reform set out in the Programme for Government (2011-15), the sector's Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency proposals and the changed economic climate in which reform is now being taken forward.

The group will be working closely with the Transition Committees in developing the costs and benefits of reform in their constituent councils. The appraisal will include the ongoing projected costs of reform to the end of April 2015 along with the total costs to the Department and councils in managing the reform process.

Staff Member Re-Employed in the Same Position

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW 13833/11-15, whether the job title for this member of staff remained the same when they returned after retirement, albeit in a part time capacity, or whether another post and job title was created.

(AQW 14840/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I would refer the Member to the answer to AQW 13833/11-15, when I previously stated that the job description for the new post had no similarities to the previous post. Similarly the Job title had no similarities with the previous post.

Marine Bill: Sellafield Nuclear Plant

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment (i) why Sellafield Nuclear Plant has not been included in the proposed Marine Bill; (ii) whether he will include the plant in the Bill; and (iii) whether a report on the plant will be produced, including the effects on the eco-system and public health.

(AQW 14845/11-15)

Mr Attwood:

- (i) Nuclear energy and nuclear installations are excepted matters under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and, as such, are not within the Department's remit. Moreover, the Marine Bill covers the marine area 0-14 nautical miles, with Sellafield outside that limit; (ii) Consequently the Sellafield site will not be included in the Marine Bill – to do so would be beyond the competence of the NI Assembly and will be until such times as the power is transferred. The Department will continue

its programme of monitoring the effect of radioactive discharges from nuclear installations on the Northern Ireland coastline; and (iii) A joint report, Radioactivity in Food and the Environment (RIFE), is published annually by Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Environment Agency, Food Standards Agency, and Northern Ireland Environment Agency. This report gathers the results of radiological monitoring and demonstrates that, in Northern Ireland, food is safe and the public's exposure to ionising radiation from discharges is insignificant.

New Driver Initiatives

Ms Brown asked the Minister of the Environment to provide an update on when new driver initiatives will be introduced.

(AQO 2534/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I plan to seek the introduction of a Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to the Northern Ireland Assembly in December 2012 that will include provisions to tackle drink driving in Northern Ireland, the reform of the Learner and Restricted Driver schemes and introduction of a system of Graduated Driver Licensing, together with proposals concerning the wearing of helmets on quadricycles.

I will do everything possible to have this Bill passed before summer 2013. I am aware, however, that it will form part of an extensive legislative programme placed before the Assembly and Environment Committee. I do not, therefore, expect that any of the new driver provisions will be able to be implemented before early 2014.

I also plan to develop a second Road Traffic Amendment Bill that will include provisions for the mutual recognition of penalty points for certain offences between Northern Ireland and Ireland, and measure to tackle drug driving.

The latter Bill will compete with others for a slot in the legislative programme but is expected to be ready for introduction in the 2013/2014 session.

Political Reference Group for the Review of Public Administration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the projected cost of the proposed political reference group for the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 14893/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In driving the Local Government Reform Programme, I have been careful to ensure that everyone is fully engaged in the process. On 18th September 2012, I wrote to the leader of each of the seven parties represented in the Assembly to invite them to nominate members to a Political Reference Group that I intend to establish in order to ensure that the views of the political parties are represented in the reform process. The leader of each of the five parties represented in the Executive was invited to nominate two representatives to the Group – one from local government and one from the Assembly. The leaders of the Green Party and the Traditional Unionist Voice were invited to nominate one member each.

I will establish the Group shortly, once I have received nominations from all parties. The Group will meet on an ad hoc basis – the frequency of meetings will depend on when input would be useful. I envisage that the costs associated with the Group will be minimal as it will meet at Parliament Buildings or at other government buildings and there will be no further allowance payable to members.

Political Reference Group for the Review of Public Administration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the political composition of the proposed political reference group for the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 14894/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In driving the Local Government Reform Programme, I have been careful to ensure that everyone is fully engaged in the process. On 18th September 2012, I wrote to the leader of each of the seven parties represented in the Assembly to invite them to nominate members to a Political Reference

Group that I intend to establish in order to ensure that the views of the political parties are represented in the reform process. The leader of each of the five parties represented in the Executive was invited to nominate two representatives to the Group – one from local government and one from the Assembly. The leaders of the Green Party and the Traditional Unionist Voice were invited to nominate one member each.

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Political Reference Group for the Review of Public Administration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the timescale for the establishment of the proposed political reference group for the Review of Public Administration.

(AQW 14896/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In driving the Local Government Reform Programme, I have been careful to ensure that everyone is fully engaged in the process. On 18th September 2012, I wrote to the leader of each of the seven parties represented in the Assembly to invite them to nominate members to a Political Reference Group that I intend to establish in order to ensure that the views of the political parties are represented in the reform process. The leader of each of the five parties represented in the Executive was invited to nominate two representatives to the Group – one from local government and one from the Assembly. The leaders of the Green Party and the Traditional Unionist Voice were invited to nominate one member each.

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Political Reference Group for the Review of Public Administration

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment how often the proposed political reference group for the Review of Public Administration will meet.

(AQW 14897/11-15)

Mr Attwood: In driving the Local Government Reform Programme, I have been careful to ensure that everyone is fully engaged in the process. On 18th September 2012, I wrote to the leader of each of the seven parties represented in the Assembly to invite them to nominate members to a Political Reference Group that I intend to establish in order to ensure that the views of the political parties are represented in the reform process. The leader of each of the five parties represented in the Executive was invited to nominate two representatives to the Group – one from local government and one from the Assembly. The leaders of the Green Party and the Traditional Unionist Voice were invited to nominate one member each.

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Revision of PPS5

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment at what stage is the revision of PPS5; and what is the timetable for introducing the draft as policy.

(AQW 14901/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Work to bring forward new planning policy for town centres and retailing is underway.

The Department will soon be engaging consultants to update the evidential context in relation to town centres and retailing and to undertake engagement with stakeholders. This necessary research will inform the development of new retail and town centre policy to be included within a Single Planning Policy Statement (SPPS).

It is intended that a draft Single Planning Policy Statement will issue for public consultation towards the end of next year and be finalised as soon as practicable in 2014.

Existing draft PPS 5 'Retailing, Town Centres and Commercial Leisure Developments' (published 2006) remains the subject of ongoing legal challenge with the case due to come before the Supreme Court in February 2013.

Incidents of River Pollution

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment how many incidents of river pollution have been recorded in the North Down area, for each of the last two years; and which rivers were affected.
(AQW 14905/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Tables 1 and 2 below detail the number of substantiated water pollution incidents recorded by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) in the North Down area in each of the last 2 years. The table also details the rivers affected and the severity of the incident.

Table 1: Water Pollution Incidents and Affected Rivers North Down – 2010.

2010	Incident Severity			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
River Affected				
Belfast Lough	0	1	11	12
Crawfordsburn River	0	1	4	5
Tributary of the Crawfordsburn River	0	0	1	1
Croft River	0	0	1	1
Irish Sea	0	0	1	1
Tributary of Belfast Lough	0	0	8	8
Tributary of the Cunningburn River	0	0	1	1
Tributary of the Enler River	0	1	0	1
Tributary of the Irish sea	0	0	3	3
Ward Park River	0	1	4	5
			Total	38

TABLE 2: WATER POLLUTION INCIDENTS AND AFFECTED RIVERS NORTH DOWN – 2011.

2011	Incident Severity			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
River Affected				
Belfast Lough	0	0	2	2
Tributary of Belfast Lough	0	1	8	9
Crawfordsburn River	0	0	1	1
Ballyholme River	1	5	4	10

2011	Incident Severity			
River Affected	High	Medium	Low	Total
Tributary of the Ballyholme River	0	0	3	3
Tributary of the Croft River	0	0	1	1
Irish Sea	0	1	0	1
Mill Burn	0	2	0	2
Twissel Burn	0	0	2	2
Tributary of the Enler River	0	0	1	1
Ward Park River	0	3	5	8
			Total	40

Table 3 below details the number of substantiated water pollution incidents recorded by NIEA in 2012, to 30 June, in the North Down area. The table also details the rivers affected and the severity of the incident.

TABLE 3: WATER POLLUTION INCIDENTS AND AFFECTED RIVERS NORTH DOWN – 2012 (TO 30 JUNE 2012).

2012 to 30 June 2012	Incident Severity			
River Affected	High	Medium	Low	Total
Belfast Lough	0	0	8	8
Tributary of Belfast Lough	0	0	3	3
Crawfordsburn River	0	1	1	2
Croft River	0	0	2	2
Irish Sea	0	1	0	1
Tributary of the Crawfordsburn River	0	0	2	2
Tributary of the Irish Sea	0	0	1	1
Ward Park River	0	2	3	5
			Total	24

The environmental impacts of water pollution incidents are classified by their 'Severity' i.e. High, Medium or Low Severity. The definition of each severity class is detailed in Appendix A.

APPENDIX A: WATER POLLUTION INCIDENT - SEVERITY CRITERIA.

High Severity

A major incident involving one or more of the following:

- a. potential or actual persistent effect on water quality or aquatic life;
- b. closure of potable water, industrial or agricultural abstraction if necessary;
- c. extensive fish kill;
- d. excessive breaches of consent conditions;
- e. extensive remedial measures necessary;

- f. major effect on amenity value.

Medium Severity

A significant pollution incident involving one or more of the following:

- a. notification to abstractors necessary;
- b. significant fish kill;
- c. measurable effect on invertebrate life;
- d. water unfit for stock;
- e. bed of watercourse contaminated;
- f. amenity value to the public, owners or users reduced by odour or appearance.

Low Severity

A minor incident resulting in localised environmental impact only. Some of the following may apply:

- a. notification to abstractors not necessary;
- b. fish kill of fewer than 10 fish (species of no particular importance to the affected water);
- c. no readily observable effect on invertebrate life;
- d. water unfit for stock;
- e. bed of watercourse only locally contaminated;
- f. minimal environmental impact and amenity only marginally affected.

Open Spaces in the Bovally Area of Limavady

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of the Environment why planners have made no provision for open spaces in the Bovally area of Limavady, despite the high number of new houses being built in the area. **(AQW 14969/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: The Department published in January 1990 a Local Plan, known as the South East Lands Local Plan 1989-1999, to cover this extensive area and ensure its proper planning. This Plan identified lands for housing, commercial and recreational use, and the development of the area is still ongoing.

The Draft Northern Area Plan, which was published in May 2005 and will replace the South East Lands Local Plan when adopted, retained as zonings those areas of Bovally not yet completed, and this included the Proposed Open Space Zoning LY001. In essence the Department had identified lands suitable for public open space in this area over a number of years. However, objections were received to the zoning propose in the Draft Northern Area Plan, including one from Limavady Borough Council.

A planning application (B/2005/0399/O) was submitted for housing on this open space area. The Department refused the application as being contrary to the Adopted Plan, being prejudicial to the Draft Plan and its process, and contrary to Policy OS 1 of Planning Policy Statement 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation. This decision was appealed and, following an informal hearing in July 2010, the Commissioner's decision issued in August 2010. The appeal was allowed and outline planning permission was granted by the Commission.

Notwithstanding the zoning provision, the Planning Appeals Commission determined that in the light of the record of Limavady Borough Council in not bringing this provision forward, formal open space provision was not supported and the PAC granted outline approval for housing on the larger part of the site.

The three key deliberations of the Commissioner in allowing the appeal were the fact that the site had been zoned for over 20 years in the Adopted Plan but that Limavady Borough Council had never put firm proposals to provide playing fields in place; Limavady Borough Council had objected to the proposed Open Space zoning in the Draft Plan on the basis that part of it should be developed for housing as per

the planning application; and that the technical supplement that accompanied the Draft Plan indicated that there was an overprovision of playing fields in the Town of Limavady.

Conditions attached to the approval indicated that the development should be carried out broadly in accordance with the concept plan, with the exception of the provision of the playing field. The concept plan that accompanied the outline application had indicated a playing field, pavilion, children's play area and kick about area, and riverside walk. However, the conditions did not set out any timeframe for the provision of the open space and facilities nor was there any requirement that these be developed concurrently with other elements of the concept plan such as the housing.

I am aware that an application for Approval of Reserved Matters has recently been submitted in relation to approximately one quarter of the area identified as suitable for development in the outline concept. The principle of this development has been established by the PAC decision and any submission of reserved matters which is consistent with the conditions of an approval carries a legal expectation of approval. While I am aware that there has been a substantial level of public objection to the proposal, the Department is constrained by the statutory process and the granting of outline approval by the PAC.

Local Government Reform

Mr McGimpsey asked the Minister of the Environment whether any individual councils have yet provided ratepayers with estimates of the costs of local government reform.

(AQO 2539/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The economic appraisal of local government service delivery, published by PricewaterhouseCoopers in October 2009, indicated that the preferred option (i.e. Transformation with Regional Collaboration) could involve expenditure of up to £118 million over five years and achieve savings of £438 million over twenty-five years. These costs and savings were not, however, broken down on a council or cluster basis.

However, the Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has tasked the senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group with re-examining the costs and benefits of reform, taking account of a range of key factors. These include the 2015 timescale for reform set out in the Programme for Government (2011-15), the sector's Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency proposals and the changed economic climate in which reform is now being taken forward. The group will be working closely with the Transition Committees in developing the costs and benefits of reform in their constituent councils.

Developers: Planning Conditions

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of the Environment what action his Department takes to ensure that developers comply with planning conditions which are set when an application is approved.

(AQO 2540/11-15)

Mr Attwood: DOE Planning is responsible for planning control in Northern Ireland. This responsibility includes the determination of planning applications and taking whatever appropriate action for the enforcement of planning control.

As part of the assessment of an application advice may be sought from a number of agencies and organisations, such as DRD Roads Service, NI Water, and Environmental Health Departments within local councils, to inform the decision on an application.

Following the grant of planning permission, planning officers will identify particular developments which require proactive monitoring to ensure that development is carried out as approved and conditions complied with. In cases involving restrictive conditions the Department will take reasonable steps through effective monitoring and liaison with other Departments and agencies to ensure that conditions are complied with.

In addition to planning staff identifying breaches of planning control, other Departments such as Roads Service regularly alert the Department of concerns in relation to the implementation of a permission granted, including compliance with conditions stipulated as part of the planning permission.

Where planning permission has been granted subject to conditions, and one or more of these conditions has not been complied with, DoE Planning may serve a breach of condition notice. Failure to secure compliance with the notice is an offence and anyone found guilty of such an offence may be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £1000.

NIEA: Planning Applications

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of the Environment what are his Department's targets for the Northern Ireland Environment Agency to respond to consultations on planning applications.

(AQO 2541/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I am fully aware of the importance in providing timely responses and I have set the NIEA a key target to deliver a consultation response for 75% of routine applications within 15 working days to DOE Planning. NIEA is currently meeting this challenging target, achieving 77% in the first five months of this financial year.

Response times to planning consultations are monitored monthly by the NIEA Board. Its aim is to deliver the highest possible standard of service in terms of both quality and response time.

That said, responding does not equate to responding in full or exhaustively or on all issues raised. I believe that consultees should be measured against this standard and that includes NIEA. I have instructed officials to identify a further range of measures to upgrade response times and the quality of responses received.

Sea Squirts

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of the Environment to outline progress on discussion with his counterparts in the Irish Republic about managing invasive species of sea squirts.

(AQO 2542/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department has had ongoing discussions with our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland with respect to the management of invasive species of sea squirts for several years.

In 2007, as part of the Invasive Species Ireland Project which the Department jointly funds with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, a best practice management plan was specifically developed for the carpet sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* which has recently been found in Strangford Lough.

The Department, and our counterparts in the Republic of Ireland, have been involved in the development of a UK and Ireland wide LIFE+ European funding bid, to manage marine invasive species such as the carpet sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum*.

At the recent British Irish Council meeting the importance of sharing information and co-operation to prevent the spread of invasive species was discussed. To build upon linkages and opportunities for shared working it is planned to hold an expert workshop in the near future.

On Friday 14 September 2012 a press release was issued advising of the suspected finding of the carpet sea squirt *Didemnum vexillum* in Strangford Lough. This finding has now been confirmed and initial dive surveys have taken place.

Samples which were sent to experts in Britain were confirmed as being *Didemnum vexillum* on 26th September 2012. I have requested officials to bring forward urgent proposals on how to eradicate this threat.

Climate Change Bill

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of the Environment whether a Climate Change Bill is likely to be introduced earlier than 2014.

(AQO 2543/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There are 3 major issues affecting the timescale for introducing a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill:

Firstly, DOE currently has a considerable volume of legislation in the Executive programme and it is necessary to manage the Department's available resources efficiently and effectively to ensure that all of these are completed within the current Assembly term. Legislation includes Marine, Planning, Road Traffic, Better Regulation and Local Government Sectors.

Secondly, while all of the parties represented in the Assembly agree on the need to address the issue of the North's greenhouse gas emissions, there are differences of opinion on the best way to achieve this. There is considerable political support for a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill with robust targets but it is not universal. Given the cross-cutting nature of climate change policy, it is essential that the case for a Bill is properly made and that the relevant Executive Ministers are convinced by that case.

Finally, I believe it is essential when developing any policy and legislation that we follow best practice, engaging fully and at an early stage with relevant stakeholders. Following best practice necessitates effective consultation and this clearly takes time.

I have asked officials to avail of any and all opportunities to expedite matters, I can reassure you that with Executive approval I will introduce the Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill to the Assembly as soon as I can. I believe a NI Climate Bill is a key element of enhanced ambitions, to be a world leader in carbon reduction, profile for our clean and green environment and of a sustainable economy and a growing agri-food industry.

Planning Service: Paramilitary Memorials

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment on how many occasions Planning Service has taken enforcement action in relation to paramilitary memorials erected without planning permission.

(AQO 2537/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Planning permission is generally required for the erection of such memorials, as they fall within the definition of development as contained in the Planning (NI) Order 1991. Therefore, if they are erected without planning permission being sought, they can be subject to enforcement action.

Since 1999 DOE Planning has assessed 18 cases in relation to unapproved memorials. No formal enforcement action was taken. Since 1999, there have been approximately 50 planning applications for various memorials, 42 were approved. I have asked for a schedule of the 50, 42 and 18 and will consider the issue further.

Environment: EU Funding

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of the scope to draw down greater amounts of EU funding in the Environmental sector, particularly in relation to research and development.

(AQO 2538/11-15)

Mr Attwood: There is a real opportunity to increase the amount of EU funding drawn down in the environmental sector. The Task Force established by the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, has given the North of Ireland dedicated access to the European institutions in Brussels.

DOE leads the Climate Change and Energy Thematic Group established under the Executive's Barroso Task Force Working Group and officials are liaising with a range of organisations, in the public and private sectors, to build networks and provide the necessary support to ensure that the PfG target of increasing the drawdown of competitive EU funds by 20% during this Assembly term is met.

There are also clear opportunities to learn from the experience of others who have already developed the mechanisms required to successfully compete for EU funds. I am developing closer links with the institutions in the South that have had particular success drawing down EU funds over the last number of years.

However, I do not find the current drawdown satisfactory. I convened a meeting in September of a senior Dublin official leading their FP7 strategy, the new Head of the EU Commission Office in Belfast, Pat McColgan Chief Executive of the Special EU Programmes Body and senior officials to identify how to better access funds now and prepare for Horizon 2020. For example, the Republic drawdown pro rata is 4 times that of NI. Opportunities do exist, following a commitment by me of direct financial support of £350k, 3 Interreg IVB projects have been successful.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Vacant Posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the current (i) location; and (ii) number of vacant posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service at (a) Administrative Assistant; (b) Administrative Officer; (c) Executive Officer II; (d) Executive Officer I; (e) Staff Officer; and (f) Deputy Principal grades in each Department.

(AQW 13743/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):

The information requested is set out in the table overleaf.

AQW 13743/11 - LOCATION & NUMBER OF VACANT POSTS IN THE NICS AT AA, AO, E02, E01, SO & DP - 4/9/12

	AA	Location	A0	Location	E0II	Location	E01	Location	S0	Location	DP	Location
DARD	7	1 Ballymena 1 Loughry 2 Newry 3 Stormont	9	1 Ballymena 1 Greenmount 1 Londonderry 1 Mallusk 5 Stormont	6	1 Enniskillen 5 Stormont	6.5	1 Ballymena 1 Hydebank 1 Londonderry 0.5 Newry 3 Stormont	10	2 Londonderry 8 Stormont	3	Stormont
DCAL	0		0		0		0		1	Belfast	1	Belfast
DE	0		2	1 Bangor 1 Londonderry	1	Londonderry	0		0		5	4 Bangor 1 Londonderry
*DEL	1	Belfast	27.29	1 Armagh 1 Ballymena 13.49 Belfast 1 Coleraine 1 Cookstown 1 Enniskillen 2 Foyle 0.8 Limavady 1 Lisnagelvin 1 Lurgan 1 Newry 2 Newtownabbey 1 Omagh	19.9	1 Armagh 11.9 Belfast 1 Carrickfergus 1 Coleraine 1 Cookstown 1 Foyle 1 Lisnagelvin 1 Lurgan 1 Omagh	17	1 Antrim 1 Ballymena 12 Belfast 1 Londonderry 2 Southern Region	13	12 Belfast 1 Newry	6	5 Belfast 1 Londonderry

	AA	Location	A0	Location	E0II	Location	E01	Location	S0	Location	DP	Location
DETI	0		0	Belfast	3	Belfast	1	Belfast	5	Belfast	4	Belfast
DFP	3	2 Belfast 1 Londonderry	18	Belfast	11	Belfast	13	1 Bangor 12 Belfast	16	1 Bangor 15 Belfast	4	Belfast
DHSSPS	1	Stormont	0	Stormont	1	Stormont	1	Stormont	5	Stormont	2	Stormont
DOE	1	Belfast	27.7	1 Armagh 14.5 Belfast 1 Coleraine 1 Cookstown 0.5 Craigavon 2.7 Downpatrick 2 Lisburn 2 Londonderry 1 Newry 2 Omagh		6.64 Belfast 7 Coleraine	1	Belfast	17	16 Belfast 1 Coleraine	6	1 Ballymena 3 Belfast 1 Coleraine 1 Londonderry
DOJ	4	2 Belfast 1 Maghaberry 1 Magilligan	18	1 Ballymena 8 Belfast 3 Londonderry 2 Maghaberry 3 Magilligan 1 Stormont	46	29 Belfast 1 Hydebank 7 Maghaberry 3 Magilligan 1 Millisle 5 Stormont	11	5 Belfast 1 Londonderry 1 Newry 3 Newtownards 1 Omagh	19	6 Belfast 2 Maghaberry 11 Stormont	12	1 Antrim 1 Belfast 1 Carrickfergus 1 Maghaberry 8 Stormont

AQW 13743/11 - LOCATION & NUMBER OF VACANT POSTS IN THE NICS AT AA, AO, EO2, EO1, SO & DP - 4/9/12 (continued)

DRD	0	9 Belfast	0	2 Antrim	0	22 Belfast	0	15 Belfast	4	Belfast	0	
DSD	10	9 Belfast 1 Londonderry	58	2 Antrim 2 Armagh 4 Ballymena 43 Belfast 1 Lurgan 3 Newry 2 Omagh 1 Portadown	29	22 Belfast 1 Lisburn 4 Londonderry 1 Newcastle 1 Portadown	17	15 Belfast 2 Londonderry	19	17 Belfast 1 Carrickfergus 1 Omagh	6	Belfast
OFMDFM	0		0		1	Stormont	0		9	Stormont	8	Stormont
PPS	0		0		3	2 Belfast 1 Londonderry	0		0		0	
TOTAL	27		159.99		134.54		67.5		117		56	
TOTAL VACANCIES						562.03						

Notes

*DEL Southern Region comprises: Magherafelt, Cookstown, Dungannon, Omagh, Enniskillen, Armagh, Portadown, Newry, Lurgan, Ballynahinch, Downpatrick, Banbridge, Newcastle, Kilkeel

Surplus Posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the current (i) location; and (ii) number of surplus posts in the Northern Ireland Civil Service at (a) Administrative Assistant; (b) Administrative Officer; (c) Executive Officer I; (d) Executive Officer II; (e) Executive Officer I; (f) Deputy Principal grades in each Department. (AQW 13744/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The location and number of surplus posts in the Civil Service at (a) Administrative Assistant (AA); (b) Administrative Officer (AO); (c) Executive Officer II (EOII); (d) Executive Officer I (EOI); (e) Staff Officer (SO); and (f) Deputy Principal (DP) grades, in each Department at 4 September 2012 are set out in the table overleaf.

AQW 13744/11 - LOCATION & NUMBER OF SURPLUS POSTS IN THE NICS AT AO, EO2, EOI, SO & DP AS AT 4/09/12

	AA	Location	AO	Location	EOII	Location	EOI	Location	SO	Location	DP	Location
DARD	1	Enniskillen	0		0		0		0		0	
DCAL											1	Belfast
DE	0		0		0		0		0		0	
DEL	2	Belfast	1	Belfast	2	Belfast	0		0		0	
DETI	0		0		0		2	1 Belfast 1 Stormont	0		0	
DFP	0		2	Ballymena	0		0		1	Belfast	2	Belfast
DHSSPS	1	Stormont	0		0		0		0		0	
DOE	0		1	Belfast	0		0		0		0	
DOJ	0		0		3	2 Stormont 1 Omagh	0		0		0	
DRD	0		0		0		1	Belfast	0		0	
DSD	5	2 Belfast 1 Ballymena 1 Cookstown 1 Newcastle	3	Enniskillen	0		0		0		0	
OFMDFM	0		0		0		0		0		0	
PPS	0		0		0		0		0		0	
Total	9		7		5		3		1		3	

Company Headquarters

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 14039/11-15, to detail the figures for 1 April (i) 2007; (ii) 2008; (iii) 2009; (iv) 2010; (v) 2011; and (vi) 2012.

(AQW 14663/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses can be obtained from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). Businesses are classified by their legal status and Companies (including Building Societies) are grouped together with Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and Joint Ventures. Figures are available for March of each year.

Table 1 shows the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses that were operational in Northern Ireland in March 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 and how many of these businesses were Companies, LLPs or Joint Ventures.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF VAT AND/OR PAYE REGISTERED BUSINESSES OPERATIONAL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
All Businesses	71,445	72,515	71,650	69,665	69,175	68,475
Company, LLP or Joint Venture	18,360	19,355	19,860	19,100	19,315	19,795

Source: Inter Departmental Business Register, March 2007-2012

Table 2 shows the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered Companies, LLPs or Joint Ventures which had their headquarters (a) outside Britain or the island of Ireland; (b) in Britain or Northern Ireland; and (c) in the Republic of Ireland based on their country of ultimate ownership. Information on the registered address of the parent company (used to split companies between Britain and Northern Ireland) is not available on IDBR extracts prior to August 2012.

TABLE 2: VAT AND/OR PAYE REGISTERED COMPANIES, LLPS OR JOINT VENTURES BY COUNTRY OF OWNERSHIP

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Outside Britain or the island of Ireland	385	425	465	475	520	555
Britain or Northern Ireland	17,765	18,685	19,135	18,380	18,550	18,965
Republic of Ireland	205	245	255	245	245	275

Source: Inter Departmental Business Register, March 2007-2012

Table 3 shows the number of VAT and/or PAYE registered Companies, LLPs or Joint Ventures that were (a) banks; and (b) small and medium sized enterprises. Please note that these figures do not include banks in any years when they were classified as a 'Public corporation/nationalised body'.

As the IDBR does not hold information on corporation tax, it is not possible to determine how many of these small and medium sized businesses do not pay corporation tax.

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF BANKS AND SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED VAT AND/OR PAYE REGISTERED COMPANIES, LLPS OR JOINT VENTURES

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Banks	15	15	10	10	10	10

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Small and medium sized	18,170	19,190	19,670	18,905	19,115	19,600

Source: Inter Departmental Business Register, March 2007-2012

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 and thus may not add to totals.

East Belfast/Connswater Community Greenway Integrated Flood Alleviation Scheme

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 14114/11-15, for an update on his discussions with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in relation to how much of the £10 million, allocated by the Executive to the Rivers Agency for flood alleviation schemes, has been allocated for use on the East Belfast/Connswater Community Greenway Integrated Flood Alleviation Scheme; and whether this amount can be ring-fenced to permit planning and tendering of the scheme without further delay.

(AQW 14756/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I would like to clarify that the Executive statement of 5 July referred to the acceleration of existing flood alleviation works and not the allocation of additional funds. That said, my officials are currently liaising with their DARD counterparts on the funding requirements for the East Belfast Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Regarding the proposal to ring-fence scheme funding, it is the responsibility of the Agriculture Minister to manage the funding for the East Belfast Flood Alleviation Scheme and ensure there is no unnecessary delay in planning or tendering.

Disposal of Items Through Auction

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much money has been returned to each Department, and their arm's-length bodies, from the disposal of items through auction over the past three years.

(AQW 14832/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The following amounts have been returned to the Department of Finance and Personnel, and its arm's-length bodies, from the disposal of items through auction over the past three years:

Financial Year	£
2009/10	1,800
2010/11	13,314
2011/12	65,055

This response is provided for the Department of Finance and Personnel only as the information for all departments is not held centrally. The Member should contact individual departments for their information.

Reduction in Tax on the Local Television and Film Industry

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what impact a reduction in tax on the local television and film industry, similar to the reductions imposed by the Irish Government, would have on the Block Grant.

(AQW 14866/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Only HMRC would have access to the necessary taxpayers' data to make any estimate of the cost of such reductions which would only occur if the power to introduce such reliefs were first devolved to and then subsequently introduced by the Assembly.

Such reliefs would be against corporation tax. Our ongoing work to consider the devolution of the power to set the corporation tax rate locally has not separately considered the implications with respect to specific industries such as the television and film industry.

Companies that produce films in Northern Ireland are subject to UK special tax rules, which are a Reserved Matter for HM Treasury to determine. They can also avail of a range of tax reliefs, subject to certain conditions. These do not apply to television. A recent UK consultation on creative sector tax reliefs closed on 10 September 2012. I look forward to the Government's response to this consultation.

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to his Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14868/11-15)

Mr Wilson: My Department currently has 5 small arm's length bodies (ALBs): the Northern Ireland Building Regulations Advisory Committee (NIBRAC), the Statistics Advisory Committee (SAC), the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Lay Observer and the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme (NI) (PCSPS (NI)) Governance Group. Many of the posts are unpaid and total cost to the Department for all bodies is approximately £90k per annum.

On 8 May 2007 my Department was responsible for all these bodies except the PCSPS(NI) Governance Group which was set up with effect from February 2010.

At 8 May 2007 my Department was also responsible for the Lands Tribunal and the NI Valuation Tribunal which transferred to the Department of Justice with effect from April 2011. I have provided the information relating to May 2007 however the member should contact the DoJ for information on the number of staff currently serving on these tribunals.

The following table lists the number of members in each of the ALBs at the requested dates.

ALB	8 May 2007	1 October 2012
NIBRAC	16	18
SAC	16	8
PSC	7	7
Lay Observer	1	1
PCSPS (NI) Governance Group	N/A	7
Lands Tribunal	2	N/K
NI Valuation Tribunal	116*	N/K

* Of the 116 people in NIVT there was 1 president, 21 people with legal background, 8 with valuation background and 86 lay people. Each panel consisted of the president and one individual from each of the different backgrounds.

Sale of Goods at Events held in the Stormont Estate

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what rules and regulations are in place relating to the sale of goods at events held in the Stormont Estate.

(AQW 14880/11-15)

Mr Wilson: All organisations requesting use of the Stormont Estate to hold events must produce a management plan outlining proposals for the event, including proposals for the sale of food or other items.

Sale of UDA and UVF Music CDs at the Ulster Covenant Event

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether permission was given for the sale of UDA and UVF music CDs at the Ulster Covenant event in the Stormont Estate; and what steps he will take to prevent this happening in future.

(AQW 14881/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Permission was given for the sale of historic and commemorative goods associated with the Ulster Covenant.

The Department will continue to seek assurances from all event organisers in relation to managing events appropriately.

Employment of Protestants in Grades 6 and 7 in the Northern Ireland Civil Service

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel why there has been an 18.2 percent drop in the employment of Protestants in Grades 6 and 7 in the Northern Ireland Civil Service since 2000.

(AQW 14892/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There are a number of factors which, over a number of years, will have affected the community background profile of staff in Grades 6 and 7 of the General Service discipline and analogous grades. These will include an overall decrease in the Protestant proportion of the Northern Ireland workforce, a higher proportion of Protestant retirees and lower than expected number of applications from Protestants for General Service posts.

The last NICS Article 55 Review found fair representation at Grades 6 and 7 of the General Service discipline. A further Article 55 Review will be carried out in 2013 using data from the 2011 Census.

Unemployed People

Mr Dallat asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of unemployed people in each constituency in each of the last two years, broken down by age group.

(AQW 14925/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The official measure of unemployment is sourced to the Northern Ireland Labour Force Survey (LFS). However, the LFS is a sample survey and the current numbers of unemployment by age group in each parliamentary constituency area are not sourced to the LFS because of the relatively large confidence intervals around the estimates. This is due to sample size constraints in the LFS.

The following table is sourced to the claimant count measure of unemployment. This shows the number of persons claiming unemployment related benefits at August 2012, August 2011 and August 2010 in each parliamentary constituency area broken down by age group.

TABLE 1 - CLAIMANT COUNT FOR PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY AREA BY AGE GROUP OVER TWO YEARS

Parliamentary Constituency Area	Current Month Aug-12					One Year Ago Aug-11					Two Years Ago Aug-10							
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Total*	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Total*	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55+	Total*
Belfast East	875	785	550	545	235	3,008	865	740	515	455	185	2,794	835	670	505	420	155	2,608
Belfast North	1,535	1,545	1,035	945	415	5,494	1,545	1,400	980	805	300	5,040	1,445	1,180	875	730	245	4,505
Belfast South	1,020	1,110	650	540	240	3,573	1,115	1,045	640	485	200	3,494	1,160	1,010	575	425	180	3,355
Belfast West	1,730	1,560	905	1,025	390	5,641	1,705	1,430	900	850	280	5,184	1,680	1,350	915	875	255	5,092
East Antrim	810	630	445	450	225	2,576	815	550	430	415	185	2,405	805	525	415	395	170	2,332
East Londonderry	1,030	930	740	595	280	3,573	1,100	925	745	515	215	3,502	1,145	910	745	535	210	3,552
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	895	840	625	540	295	3,234	845	885	625	485	230	3,117	900	790	590	465	215	3,021
Foyle	1,840	1,755	1,065	975	325	6,011	1,835	1,635	1,085	835	240	5,679	1,680	1,490	990	815	225	5,250
Lagan Valley	725	625	425	445	200	2,428	700	530	410	385	150	2,184	660	475	400	355	140	2,036
Mid Ulster	850	735	580	440	220	2,850	925	755	565	415	185	2,872	960	780	565	400	185	2,916
Newry & Armagh	1,255	1,150	840	780	355	4,405	1,395	1,250	875	740	315	4,600	1,335	1,250	795	645	260	4,312
North Antrim	920	805	650	580	260	3,226	1,005	740	605	535	215	3,120	935	695	625	490	200	2,952
North Down	665	515	415	395	215	2,224	660	515	420	380	170	2,165	635	485	390	355	145	2,035
South Antrim	715	625	450	385	190	2,375	720	580	445	360	160	2,273	725	560	455	330	145	2,248
South Down	1,060	925	660	645	310	3,623	1,110	940	670	560	250	3,559	1,135	915	675	500	205	3,456
Strangford	790	630	455	455	220	2,568	775	605	430	400	170	2,400	725	485	410	350	155	2,175
Upper Bann	1,335	1,055	795	660	315	4,196	1,280	1,040	730	555	235	3,884	1,220	950	715	510	225	3,672
West Tyrone	1,040	1,030	750	610	250	3,709	1,055	980	740	510	230	3,533	1,130	925	710	485	220	3,498
Northern Ireland	19,090	17,245	12,040	11,005	4,945	64,714	19,445	16,540	11,820	9,685	3,915	61,805	19,105	15,445	11,350	9,085	3,530	59,015

*Includes clerical claimants which are not included in age breakdown therefore will not sum to total.

Small Business Rates Relief Scheme

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to list the businesses in the Upper Bann constituency which benefit from the small business rates relief scheme; and to detail the projected total annual value of the financial relief.

(AQW 14937/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of businesses in the Upper Bann constituency which benefit from the small business rate relief scheme and the projected total annual value of the financial relief is not available as data is collated at district council and ward level only. A list of individual businesses cannot be provided as it may breach the confidentiality of individual ratepayers. A total of 1,801 properties in the Craigavon and Banbridge District Council Areas have benefited (received a Small Business Rate Relief after other awards have been taken into account) from the scheme this financial year to date, with a total value of almost £922,000.

The attached tables provide this information for each ward within the Craigavon and Banbridge District Council Areas.

Amount of SBRR Awarded to Properties in each Ward in the Banbridge DC area in 2012/13 (as at 30th September 2012) and Number of Properties Benefiting

Wards in Banbridge DC	Amount of SBRR in 2012/13	No of Properties
Ballydown	£6,327	10
Ballyward	£6,476	19
Banbridge West	£6,612	15
Bannside	£9,576	24
Dromore North	£41,477	76
Dromore South	£9,733	21
Edenderry	£19,547	42
Fort	£39,130	61
Gilford	£20,804	41
Gransha	£7,286	16
Katesbridge	£4,883	10
Lawrencetown	£9,990	25
Loughbrickland	£10,403	26
Quilly	£8,549	22
Rathfriland	£37,782	79
Seapatrick	£3,482	10
The Cut	£92,044	146
Banbridge DC	£334,099	643

Totals may not add due to roundings

Amount of SBRR Awarded to Properties in each Ward in the Craigavon DC area in 2012/13 (as at 30th September 2012) and Number of Properties Benefiting

Wards in Craigavon DC	Amount of SBRR in 2012/13	No of Properties
Aghagallon	£13,191	33
Annagh	£148,592	258
Ballybay	£7,983	17
Ballyoran	£7,374	13
Bleary	£8,833	22
Brownstown	£11,752	25
Church	£32,936	59
Corcrair	£10,124	23
Court	£73,389	134
Derrytrasna	£10,567	26
Donaghcloney	£9,261	28
Drumanoe	*	*
Drumgask	£8,735	26
Drumgor	£8,415	16
Edenderry	£33,882	58
Kernan	£42,706	101
Killycomain	*	*
Knocknashane	£3,530	9
Magheralin	£5,285	15
Mourneview	£4,067	7
Parklake	£67,258	110
Taghnevan	£3,502	9
Tavanagh	£7,306	13
The Birches	£18,125	44
Waringstown	£9,154	26
Woodville	£40,502	83
Craigavon DC	£587,670	1,158

* 5 Properties or less

Vacant Domestic Properties

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the number of vacant domestic properties, based on rating records, in the (i) Ballymena Borough Council; (ii) Ballymoney Borough Council; and (iii) Moyle District Council areas.

(AQW 14957/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The numbers of vacant domestic properties, as at 30th September 2012, are given in the table below.

District Council Area	Number of Vacant Domestic Properties as at 30th September 2012
Ballymena Borough Council	820
Ballymoney Borough Council	480
Moyle District Council	522

Vacant Business Premises

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many business premises are currently vacant in (i) Ballymena; (ii) Ballymoney; and (iii) Ballycastle; and how many premises in each of these towns are occupied by charities with rates exemption.

(AQW 14958/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Information on the number of business premises that are currently vacant in Ballymena, Ballymoney and Ballycastle is not available as data is collated at district council and ward level only. Also, the information available cannot easily or consistently identify those properties which are charities with rates exemption.

The number of vacant non-domestic properties in the Ballymena Borough Council; Ballymoney Borough Council and Moyle District Council areas, as at 30th September 2012, is given in the table overleaf.

District Council Area	Number of Vacant Non-Domestic Properties as at 30th September 2012
Ballymena Borough Council	490
Ballymoney Borough Council	194
Moyle District Council	104

Changes to Public Sector Pensions

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an estimate of the cost to the Executive of failing to comply with changes to public sector pensions.

(AQW 14963/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The estimate is in the region of £260m per year of savings which will be forgone to the main public sector pension schemes. These are Health, Teachers, Civil Service, Fire and Police. This estimate is based on the formula used by the Government Actuary of 7% of the pensionable pay bill; when determining that for the Health Scheme the savings forgone would be £100m. These costs will arise for the financial year 2015/16 (should the April 2015 deadline set by HM Treasury not be met) and each subsequent year of delay.

These figures, although not “cash” but rather represent the costs of scheme liabilities, are likely to be used by HM Treasury to recoup monies in cash terms from Northern Ireland public expenditure.

Peace III Programme

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether the PEACE III Programme is overcommitted, and, if so, by how much; and to outline the reasons for the overcommitment.

(AQW 15015/11-15)

Mr Wilson: To date the Special EU Programmes Body has allocated £296.7 million, approximately 103% of the funding available under the PEACE III Programme. The programme is therefore over-committed by £7.2 million. No funding remains to be allocated.

In order to maximise the amount of funding in receipt from the European Commission under the programme, and taking into account factors such as de-commitment, slippage, efficiency savings and the exchange variation, it is deemed as a prudent practice for SEUPB as Managing Authority to over-commit the programme.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what would be the estimated impact on the block grant if the Welfare Reform Bill was not passed in sequence with similar changes in the rest of the UK.

(AQW 15131/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The financial impact of not implementing the Welfare Reform Bill is likely to be very significant. The estimated direct costs amount to some £207 million over the three remaining years of this Spending Review period. In addition there are also further potential costs associated with running different systems etc, which it is not yet possible to quantify.

What is really alarming is that these costs are set to escalate over time. The latest estimate suggests that the cost to the Northern Ireland Executive could be nearly £400 million in the 2018-19 financial year alone, with a cumulative cost from 2011-12 in excess of £1.2 billion.

Given the very high costs associated with a failure to implement the welfare reform agenda within Northern Ireland there is now an urgent need to move this issue forward.

Air Passenger Duty

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline the impact of the devolution of Air Passenger Duty on the Block Grant.

(AQO 2577/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The overall revenue cost associated with devolving and eliminating Air Passenger Duty on direct long haul flight has yet to be finalised. Some of the methodological issues involved here are relevant to our ongoing discussions with the Government on the devolution of corporation tax and we don't want to set any precedents at this stage. That said, Treasury have indicated that they expect that the initial block grant adjustment will be around five million pounds per annum.

Corporation Tax

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what proposals he has developed to calculate the value of Corporation Tax liabilities, to be offset against the Block Grant, of companies which have local branches and head offices in Britain.

(AQO 2578/11-15)

Mr Wilson: A devolved rate of corporation tax will not only benefit locally owned firms, but will also apply to companies registered in the rest of the United Kingdom for that part of their taxable income that relates to activities within Northern Ireland.

As corporation tax returns do not currently identify the amount of taxable income in respect of Northern Ireland based activities separately, it has been necessary for HM Revenue and Customs to estimate the loss to the Exchequer of a devolved rate by using the local share of total employment for these companies as an indicator of the proportion of taxable income attributable to Northern Ireland.

Although there are a number of possible alternative indicators such as turnover, wage bill and value added it is not evident that these would result in a significantly different result for the types of company that would be registered in the rest of the United Kingdom, but with local operations.

In addition, the required data is only readily available at the current time in respect of employment, through the Inter-Departmental Business Register.

Small Business Rate Relief Scheme: Lagan Valley

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many businesses in the Lagan Valley area have taken up the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme.

(AQO 2579/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There is no application procedure for Small Business Rate Relief as relief is applied automatically by Land & Property Services and as such is taken up by all businesses that qualify.

Information on the number of businesses in the Lagan Valley area that have been awarded the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme is not available as data is collated at District Council and Ward level only.

The latest figures available, as at 23rd September 2012, show that 1,421 non-domestic premises in the Lisburn District Council Area and 708 non-domestic premises in the Banbridge District Council Area have benefited from the scheme since its introduction. That is, they have received Small Business Rate Relief after other awards have been taken into account.

Rates: Empty Homes

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many property owners have failed to comply with a request for information regarding their properties since the implementation of the Rating of Empty Homes in October 2011.

(AQO 2582/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Prior to the implementation of Rating of Empty Homes (REH), my Department, through Land & Property Services (LPS) commenced a systematic exercise to gather ownership information on known vacant homes in the rating database. LPS issued a mail shot, including a factsheet, to just under 49,000 vacant domestic properties. In addition, searches were undertaken on the Land Registry database to identify ownership details for the vacant domestic properties. Ownership details on approximately 10,000 have still to be obtained.

Executive: Capital Funding

Mr Ó hÓisín asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the possibility that further capital funding may become available to the Executive.

(AQO 2583/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Additional capital investment funding may become available through the Barnett mechanism, if further capital allocations are made to the Whitehall departments in England. The Chancellor of the Exchequer will deliver his Autumn Statement in early December, which represents the next available opportunity for the UK Government to confirm any additional capital allocations.

The Executive's Budget Review Group continues to monitor delivery of capital receipts planned for this Budget period and it will consider other options that may deliver additional capital receipts to boost expenditure.

Business Bank

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his assessment of the potential for the proposed 'business bank' to benefit the local economy.

(AQO 2584/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The detail on the design of the new business bank announced by the Business Secretary Vince Cable MP and the types of interventions it will support have yet to be finalised. This is not expected until later in the Autumn and therefore it is too early for me to come to any firm view on how beneficial it will be locally.

Clearly, any intervention that will increase the availability of finance for businesses is to be welcomed, however, I have been concerned that measures taken by the Government in this regard in the past have not been effective here in Northern Ireland. This is a point I have made repeatedly and forcibly to Treasury Ministers.

My officials are already liaising with their counterparts in Whitehall on how the new Funding for Lending Scheme will be implemented in Northern Ireland and they have now also indicated that we wish to explore how this new business bank might operate in Northern Ireland.

Departmental Staff: Ban on Issuing Press Releases

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has issued a directive to his departmental staff banning them from issuing press releases to the Press Association; and on what grounds is he implementing this ban.

(AQW 15397/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Yes and the matter was resolved last week.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Voluntary Early Retirement Schemes

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what voluntary early retirement schemes have been agreed in each of the Health and Social Care Trusts; and how many staff in each Trust have been offered the package, broken down by grade.

(AQW 14670/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): Details of the number of staff by grade who have left the HSC under Voluntary Early Retirement/Voluntary Redundancy Schemes in the last twelve months are set out in the following table:

HSC Trust	1 October 2011 to 30 September 2012													Total
	Agenda for Change Banding													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8a	8b	8c	8d	9	
Belfast	2	19	1	10	1	4	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	44
South Eastern	1	2	7	5	5	5	1	0	4	1	0	0	0	31
Northern	5	6	6	20	4	4	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	49
Southern	0	2	12	10	7	6	6	0	2	7	0	2	0	54
Western	0	3	4	6	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	18
N I Ambulance Service	None													

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Mr Copeland asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to Paediatric Congenital Cardiac services, why Northern Ireland was given no notice and five working days to complete the documentation, while England and Wales were given one year's notice through a consultation process, with three months to complete the relevant documentation.

(AQW 14715/11-15)

Mr Poots: Following concerns expressed regarding the long term sustainability of the Paediatric Cardiac Surgical Service in Belfast I announced on 29 March 2012 that the HSC Board would carry out a review of PCCS in NI. In doing so, the Board commissioned an Expert Panel from England to carry out an independent review of the service in Belfast using standards that were used to assess centres elsewhere in the UK.

The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust was formally advised of this intention and agreed to the proposed timescales. It was agreed with the Trust that whilst timescales for the review were challenging, they were deliverable and it was the view of both the HSC Board/Public Health Agency and the Belfast Trust that every effort should be made to complete the work within this timeframe.

In recognition of this, adjustments were able to be made to the programme including extension of the visit by a further day to support the Trust in more fully presenting its data.

Following receipt of the Expert Panel's report, I asked the HSCB to develop a draft service specification, clear criteria for decision making and proposed options for the delivery of this service for the population of Northern Ireland, taking account of the Expert Panel's report. I announced on 25 September 2012 the commencement of a 12 week period of consultation on the draft service specification and the standards that are proposed for the future commissioning of this service, as well as a number of options for the delivery of this service in the future. The consultation will run until 21st December 2012, following which I will take a decision on the future provision of this service for Northern Ireland.

Advanced Nurse Practitioners

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to employ Advanced Nurse Practitioners within hospital Accident and Emergency departments. **(AQW 14763/11-15)**

Mr Poots: Employment of hospital staff is a matter for individual Health and Social Care Trusts. Emergency departments employ a variety of health professionals to see and treat patients and it is up to the individual Trust to consider the range of skills and roles needed.

It is assumed that the term "Advanced Nurse Practitioner" encompasses all nurses employed and working at an advanced level to support the delivery of emergency care services; in emergency departments such nurses may also be known as Enhanced Nurse Practitioners or Emergency Nurse Practitioners, and such nurses are currently employed in emergency departments and minor injuries units.

Locum Doctors

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many locum doctors are currently employed in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) for what reason are they employed; and (iii) on what scale of pay.

(AQW 14766/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested follows and has been obtained directly from HSC Trusts. This data has not been validated by the Department. Some similar grades within Trusts have been grouped together to prevent disclosure of confidential information about individuals or very small identifiable groups of people.

Belfast HSC Trust

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£74,504- £100,446	17	10.7

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
Locum Appointment for Training	£29,705-£39,300	9	8.7
Locum Appointment for Service	£29,705-£39,300	6	6.0
Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (hourly)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant (including out of hours)	£50.00-£130.00	23	23.0
Specialty Doctor	£48.00-£65.00	12	12.0
Locum Appointment for Service (StR 3 level and above)	£40.00-£58.60	10	10.0

Notes: The main reasons for Belfast Trust's employment of locums are to cover vacancies, sick leave and maternity leave, to relieve backlogs of work, to maintain services and to protect patient safety.

The hourly rates quoted above are from contracted agencies however the Trust may from time to time engage non-contracted agencies to maintain service delivery.

The Consultant scale of Pay also includes elements of accommodation costs, relocation from England/Scotland and travel arrangements within the hourly rate.

NORTHERN HSC TRUST

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of Pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
GP sessions	£88.34 per session	1	0.2
Consultant	£74,504-£100,446	8	6.35
Hospital Practitioner (Sessions)	£4,508-£6,074 per annum per session	4	1.3
Specialty Doctors	£36,807-£68,638	8	6.3
Fixed Term Locum Specialty Registrars/Core Trainee CT/Senior House Officer	£27,798-£39,300	5	5.0
Associate Specialist	£51,606-£84,948	1	0.4

Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of Pay	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£92.00-£102.95 per hour	4	4.0
Specialty Registrar SpR/Senior House Officer	£52.43-£64.72 per hour	2	2.0
Core Trainee CT	£76.00 per hour	2	2.0

Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of Pay	Headcount	WTE
Notes:			

The Northern Trust employs locums to cover vacant posts, for maternity cover, to cover gaps in rotas and to cover sickness absence.

SOUTH-EASTERN TRUST

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of Pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£74,504- £100,446	15	10.71
Hospital Practitioner (sessions)	£4,508-£6,074	5	2.02
Specialty Doctors	£51,606-£77,235	5	3.20
Fixed Term Locum Specialty Registrar	£29,705-£39,300	9	9.00

Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of Pay (hourly)	Headcount	WTE
Foundation Doctor Year 1-Senior House Officer	£32.00-£57.08	11	11.00
Specialty Doctor-Specialist Registrar	£62.53-£73.02	5	5.00
Consultant	£90.76	3	3.00

Notes: Locums are employed by the SE Trust as short-term cover for 'hard to fill' posts, for maternity and sickness cover, and to relieve additional pressures.

Agency locums are used to cover vacancies (including NIMDTA), for maternity cover, for adoption leave, for sickness cover, to support opening of new wards, to comply with new rotas, and to cope with additional pressures.

SOUTHERN TRUST

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£74,504- £100,446	9	5.77
Specialty Doctor	£36,807-£68,638	3	1.7
Locum Appointment for Training (LAT)	£29,705-£39,300	3	3.0
Locum Appointment for Service (LAS)	£29,705-£39,300	8	8.0
Clinical Fellow inc Research	£29,705-£39,300	6	6.0

Notes:

Southern Trust directly employs locums to fill vacant posts for various reasons such as permanent employees on career break; pending recurrent funding for permanent post; service requirements.

LATs, LASs and Clinical Fellows are employed on temporary contracts with the same terms and conditions as substantive posts, in order to fill vacancies on the junior doctor rotations.

Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (hourly)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£90.00	6	6.0
Staff Grade	£46.00-£54.00	6	6.0
Junior Doctor	£61.99-£66.00	6	6.0

Notes: Agency locums are engaged by the Southern Trust for a variety of reasons, including covering vacant posts which they have been unable to fill through advertisement, and to fill gaps in the rotational junior doctor rotas where they have been unsuccessful in recruiting a LAT or LAS.

WESTERN TRUST

Locums directly employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (p/a)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£74,504 - £100,446	17	13.4
Specialty Doctor	£36,807 - £68,638	6	3.8
Locum Appointment for Service/ Trust Doctor (Senior House Officer and above)	£27,798 - £39,300	10	10.0

Notes: Western Trust directly employs locums to cover vacancies, sick leave, maternity leave, and to relieve backlogs of work or additional workload.

Locums agency employed			
Grade	Scale of pay (hourly)	Headcount	WTE
Consultant	£71.37-£109.52	10	10.0
Specialty Doctor	£49.52-£77.50	16	16.0
Locum Appointment for Service (StR1 - StR3 level)	£38.38-£77.50	9	9.0
Foundation Doctor Year 1/2	£27.55-£60.64	3	3.0

Notes: The hourly rates quoted are the contracted agency rates- however, the Trust may, on occasion, need to engage from non-contracted agencies to maintain service delivery. On these occasions, the Trust will negotiate as low a rate as possible.

The Department is taking forward the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee report into the use of locum doctors by NI Hospitals as a priority. One of the main actions is the establishment of a Regionally Managed Medical Locum Service (RMMLS). Regional rates have been agreed and communicated to medical staff and registration for the service has taken place with a pilot of the

service beginning shortly. This service will allow increased use of substantive staff to cover vacancies thus enabling Trusts to have a better control of the costs of locum cover.

Belfast City Hospital Sleep Clinic

Ms Lo asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether new patients admitted to the Belfast City Hospital sleep clinic, who may have been using advanced or newer models of Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machines in other clinics, can continue to use these machines in their current treatment.

(AQW 14769/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has advised me that patients who have commenced Continuous Positive Airway Pressure treatment in other Trust areas prior to their admission to the City Hospital sleep clinic can continue to use their machine if they own it or if the initiating Trust has not asked for it to be returned. Patients are advised in these circumstances that the Belfast Trust is unable to provide accessories such as masks and tubing filters for this equipment as these are not part of the Trust's contract for the provision of machines.

It should be noted that differing software requirements mean that compliance data cannot be extracted and this may affect clinicians' ability to advise patients appropriately about driving in accordance with Driver and Vehicle Agency guidelines. Patients are offered a new machine from the Belfast Trust's contracted supplier if they wish to change.

QUANGOs

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of QUANGOs linked to his Department (i) at 8 May 2007; and (ii) at the date of this question; and how many people served on the QUANGOs on these respective dates.

(AQW 14817/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of QUANGOs linked to my Department on the dates requested and the number of non-executive members is as follows:

	8 May 2007	28 September 2012
No of Quangos	29	21
No serving	293	158

Missed Appointments

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the findings outlined in the Department for Regional Development's research paper 'Achieving Efficiencies in Public Transport', what action he is taking to reduce the £17 million which is lost due to missed appointments.

(AQW 14818/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has no direct contact with community transport organisations as community transport is a matter for the Department of Regional Development (DRD).

My Department's 2007 Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland recommended that there should be a mixed economy of provision to provide the necessary flexibility in transport services for patients throughout Northern Ireland. In relation to healthcare transport provision the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Patient Care Service (PCS) provides pre-booked non-emergency transport for patients attending outpatient appointments who have been assessed by a medical practitioner as needing it.

Health and Social Care (HSC) Trusts are at liberty to co-operate locally with the Community Transport Association to provide transport. In addition, my officials have met with DRD officials during the past

year to explore the potential for a collaborative approach between Northern Ireland's health and public transport sectors and for the Community Transport Association (CTA) to work with HSC Trusts to transport some patients and clients to specific HSC services. This dialogue is ongoing, with another meeting planned in October.

I understand the document "Achieving Efficiencies in Public Transport: The role of Local Integrated Transport Services (LITS)" presents the findings of a review of the Local Integrated Transport Services Pilot Scheme which took place in a selection of rural communities in Ireland. The Northern Ireland Assembly Research paper refers to £17m loss due to missed appointments.

While it is not possible to say what impact lack of transport has on patients' ability to attend outpatient appointments as HSC Trusts do not routinely collect this data, NISRA's Continuous Household Survey data show that the most common reasons for not attending were, in fact, forgetting the appointment, being too ill to attend, an inconvenient time, or no longer needed. The Integrated Elective Access Protocol developed in 2008 by the HSC Board, sets out protocols and best practice to assist staff in effectively managing outpatient, diagnostic and inpatient waiting lists. Trusts are required to ensure that booking systems enable patients to choose and agree hospital appointments that are convenient for them, thus minimising the number of appointments missed.

Missed Appointments

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to what extent he has engaged with the Community Transport Association and Community Transport operators to establish the best way to support community assist services to help address the access needs of patients and reduce the number of missed appointments.

(AQW 14819/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has no direct contact with community transport organisations as community transport is a matter for the Department of Regional Development (DRD).

My Department's 2007 Transport Strategy for Health and Social Care Services in Northern Ireland recommended that there should be a mixed economy of provision to provide the necessary flexibility in transport services for patients throughout Northern Ireland. In relation to healthcare transport provision the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) Patient Care Service (PCS) provides pre-booked non-emergency transport for patients attending outpatient appointments who have been assessed by a medical practitioner as needing it.

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Fragility Fracture Working Group Report

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when implementation of the Fragility Fracture Working Group report will be completed.

(AQW 14831/11-15)

Mr Poots: Good progress has been made by the Board and the Public Health Agency in taking forward the recommendations of the Fragility Fractures Working Group report, "The Prevention and Management of Fragility Fractures in Northern Ireland". It is important to note that there are a number of important developments that have taken place since the report was issued in 2009 that have a direct impact on the recommendations. These include the inclusion of osteoporosis in the Quality and Outcomes Framework and the resulting increased role of primary care in the management of fragility fractures.

In January 2012 the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency (PHA) established a group to consider the recommendations contained in the report and work towards their implementation. The implementation group is chaired by a Consultant in Public Health Medicine with the Public Health Agency on behalf of the HSCB and PHA. The group has representation from all five Trusts and the National Osteoporosis Society. HSCB and Local Commissioning Group (LCG) representatives are invited as required.

The Group has reviewed the recommendations and have agreed steps to take them forward.

The attached Annex sets out the latest position on all the recommendations.

ANNEX

Recommendation 1: A Regional Public Awareness campaign to promote good bone health should be undertaken by the Northern Ireland Public Health Agency.

The Public Health Agency (PHA) has a number of campaigns which contribute to good bone health. These include healthy eating, physical activity and smoking campaigns. The PHA works to ensure that campaigns are directed at the areas where the need is greatest and there is evidence to support the use of resources on campaigns. Smoking and obesity are examples of priority areas.

Recommendation 2: A Fracture liaison service for secondary prevention of fragility fractures should be established in all Trusts that have A&E and Minor Injury Services to ensure secondary prevention is offered to all patients who have suffered a fragility fracture.

The Southern, South Eastern and Belfast Trusts have secondary care based fracture liaison services in place. The Western Trust is recruiting specialist nurses to re-establish their service as soon as possible. A fracture liaison service has been funded in the Northern Trust and the Local Commissioning Group is working with the Trust to develop the best service model for patients in the Northern area.

The role of primary care in the management of fragility fractures has increased with the inclusion of the osteoporosis management in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) since April 2012. This gives GP practices financial incentives for diagnosing and treating osteoporosis in their patients. These are the same patients who would be seen in secondary care services.

The Implementation Group has recognised that to ensure the best service for patients, the roles and responsibilities of the primary and secondary services need to be established. Updated guidance on Fragility Fracture Services is expected later this year. This will provide clarity on roles and responsibilities and inform future service design.

Recommendation 3: All fracture units should be supported by an acute in-patient orthogeriatric service followed by an orthogeriatric rehabilitation service.

This is available in some units and where further development is required this will be considered as part of the commissioning process.

Recommendation 4: An Information infrastructure to support the monitoring of care and quality of fragility fracture services should be mandatory for all fracture units. This should be achieved by enhancement

of the existing IT infrastructure in fracture units. There is a need to include all fragility fractures in this, especially those treated on an out-patient basis.

The Implementation Group is due to consider IT requirements at a future meeting.

Recommendation 5: The prevention of falls is an important part of reducing fragility fractures. There is a need to ensure effective population approaches to preventing falls and care pathways for older people needing further investigation and intervention.

Local Commissioning Groups and Trusts are considering the need to develop falls services in their locality. For example, the South Eastern Trust has developed a Falls and Osteoporosis Strategy. The South Eastern Local Commissioning Group has agreed to fund a falls co-ordinator to further develop and enhance services in the South Eastern Area.

Recommendation 6: The Directly Enhanced Service in Primary Care to promote early detection and treatment of osteoporosis provides a major opportunity to address the impact of fragility fractures. GPs should be supported in achieving the DES requirements. It is important that this is done in partnership with secondary care.

This Directly Enhanced Service has been replaced by the inclusion of the identification and management of fragility fractures in the Quality and Outcomes Framework as outlined under recommendation 2 above.

Recommendation 7: The Long Term Condition Monies identified in the 2008-2011 funding cycle should be used to implement these recommendations.

This recommendation is no longer relevant. The need for investment in osteoporosis prevention, fragility fracture management and falls prevention is being considered as part of the commissioning process.

Recommendation 8: An implementation schedule for NICE TA 160 and 161 should be developed which would include regional prescribing guidelines on initiation and maintenance of bisphosphonate therapy particularly in primary care together with medicines management support arrangements to promote patient adherence to prescribed medicines.

The National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) Technology Appraisal (TA) 160 and 161 set out recommendations about when certain bone strengthening medicines should be prescribed. A sub group of the implementation group, led by a pharmacist, has been established to take this recommendation forward.

The group will also look at prescribing guidelines and shared care arrangements for the implementation of NICE TA 204 which was issued after the June 2009 report.

Recommendation 9: A regional implementation group should be established to oversee the implementation of these recommendations.

The Group was established in January 2012

Designated Clinical Lead for Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many Health and Social Care Trusts have a designated clinical lead for Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

(AQW 14879/11-15)

Mr Poots: I can confirm that all five hospital trusts have a designated clinical lead for Inflammatory Bowel Disease.

Exercise Regimes as an Adjunct or Alternative to Medication

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how exercise regimes have been developed and promoted as an option for GPs to use in dealing with cases of stress, anxiety and mental health, as an adjunct or alternative to medication.

(AQW 14936/11-15)

Mr Poots: Physical activity referral programmes, involving partnerships between primary care and local leisure services, have been established across Northern Ireland. Anxiety, stress and depression are some of the most common reasons for referral to these programmes.

GP practices have been made aware of physical activity referral programmes by a range of sources including local commissioning organisations, physical activity coordinators, leisure staff, other health care professionals or patients. According to a recent survey, the vast majority of practices (93%) promote the physical activity referral programmes during consultations with their patients.

The Public Health Agency recently reviewed the provision of physical activity referral programmes in primary care settings. The recommendations from this review include an assessment of programmes against the National Quality Assurance Framework (NQAF) standards and development of an action plan against identified gaps; local training needs assessment; standardised monitoring and evaluation of programmes; and development of plans for promotion of programmes.

Car Park Charging for Staff at Acute Hospitals

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to possible car park charging for staff at acute hospitals, what consideration will be given to the location of the hospitals, such as the Causeway Hospital, where there are no other car parking facilities within close proximity.

(AQW 14947/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department's Policy document "Car Parking Provision and Management in the HSC" was published in July 2012 following full public consultation. The policy provides for charging for both staff and visitors and makes particular reference to the consideration of staff charging where charges are already in place for visitors. It also puts an onus on Trusts to engage in local consultation and equality screening in relation to the specific proposals for a particular site. When setting staff charges, consideration should be given to working patterns and pay bands. The policy also requires consideration of environmental and sustainability considerations and the promotion of suitable public transport, in line with the Regional Strategic Transport – Network Transport Plan 2012.

Car park charging for patients and visitors was introduced at Causeway Hospital site on 18th April 2011. The Northern Trust is currently consulting locally on the introduction of staff charges

Clinical Governance of Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to clarify whether the Northern Ireland Prison Service or the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust was responsible for the clinical governance of prisoners who were vulnerable or at risk of suicide between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2012; and whether the Trust is now fully responsible.

(AQW 14950/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust took over responsibility for Prison Healthcare on 1st April 2008. The South Eastern HSC Trust have been assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating care delivery in relation to the mental health needs of their clients in the prison setting. These arrangements fall within the South Eastern HSC Trust's normal clinical and social care governance arrangements.

Overall responsibility and safety of prisoners who are vulnerable and / or at risk of suicide is the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Prison Service except where there is an identified healthcare need.

Vacant Consultant Posts

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of vacant consultant posts in each Health and Social Care Trust; (ii) the specialism of each vacant post; and (iii) and the length of time each post has been vacant.

(AQW 14992/11-15)

Mr Poots: Current and long-term vacancies (actively being recruited to) are routinely collected from Health and Social Care organisations on a six-monthly basis. The last data published were those at 31st March 2012, released in September 2012. This report can be found on the Department's website at: http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/vacancy_survey_march_2012_web_report.pdf

The next survey report, detailing active vacancies at 30th September 2012, will be published in January 2013.

Adult Safeguarding Referrals

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the increase in adult safeguarding referrals across the Health and Social Care Trust areas.

(AQW 15012/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is difficult to explain with absolute certainty why the numbers in adult safeguarding referrals have increased across all Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust areas. However, there has been increased investment in adult safeguarding in the last number of years, which has enabled the establishment of a Health and Social Care Board-led Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership and five Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships centred on each of the five HSC Trusts. Also over that period, we have engaged in awareness-raising activity aimed at making the public and individuals working with adults who are vulnerable more aware of the signs of adult abuse and how to report it when it occurs or is suspected. My department also funded the development of adult safeguarding guidance for voluntary, community and private sectors, which is being supported by a training programme delivered by Volunteer Now.

It is reasonable to conclude that there is a correlation between the increase in the number of adult safeguarding referrals and recent investment and awareness-raising activity.

Finally, we now have a Programme for Government commitment relating to child and adult safeguarding. As part of that commitment, we aim to achieve an increase in the numbers of adult safeguarding referrals and have set targets accordingly.

Adult Protection Plans

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether there are adult protection plans that have yet to be implemented in any Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 15013/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Care Board has indicated that it is not aware of any Care and Protection Plan, once agreed, that has not been implemented.

The immediate care and protection needs of individuals are always addressed at the point of referral as part of interim protection arrangements. The substance of a Care and Protection Plan is agreed by way of strategy meetings and/or case conferences and will be amended as necessary as an individual's needs change. Each Care and Protection plan has an identified person or persons responsible for overseeing delivery of the plan.

Bangor Hospital's X-Ray Department

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what are the future plans for Bangor Hospital's X-ray department.

(AQW 15023/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has advised me that there are no plans to change the provision of x-ray services at the Bangor Hospital.

Pressure Ulcers Following a Hip Fracture

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to reduce the percentage of older people who suffer pressure ulcers following a hip fracture.

(AQW 15059/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has identified Indicators within the Commissioning Directions for the reduction of pressure ulcers in hospital settings and there is an ongoing improvement programme for the prevention of pressure ulcers led by the Public Health Agency using the Institute of Healthcare Improvement Methodology.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the current standards of uniforms, appliances and mobilisation systems available to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the attendant risks resulting from the current provision.

(AQW 15060/11-15)

Mr Poots: Responsibility for assessing the need to replace or upgrade equipment is a matter for the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS).

My Department has this year approved business cases for the replacement of all structural fire kit and the current communications and mobilising system. The NIFRS already has a rolling fleet replacement programme which ensures that the average life of appliances, which is 6.2 years, is maintained.

Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to explain the rationale for the differences in standards between Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and the rest of the UK's Fire and Rescue Services' uniforms, appliances and mobilisation systems.

(AQW 15062/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service adheres to the same standards in terms of uniforms, appliances and mobilisation systems as fire and rescue services in the rest of the UK.

Fire and Rescue Service

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking, in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, to ensure that Northern Ireland has the highest standards in terms of uniforms, appliances and mobilisation systems.

(AQW 15063/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department has approved business cases which will ensure that the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) will be able to replace all structural fire kit over the next 7 years and that procurement of a replacement mobilisation system in 2013 can proceed. The NIFRS already has a Fleet Replacement Programme in place to manage its vehicles.

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Model of Fracture Liaison Service

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans his Department has to rollout the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust model of Fracture Liaison Service across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 15064/11-15)

Mr Poots: One of the recommendations arising from "The Prevention and Management of Fragility Fractures in Northern Ireland" is the establishment of a Fracture Liaison Service for secondary

prevention of fragility fractures in all Trusts that have A&E and Minor Injury Services to ensure secondary prevention is offered to all patients who have suffered a fragility fracture.

The Northern Local Commissioning Group is working with the Northern Trust to develop the best service model for patients in the Northern Trust area.

Education and Public Awareness on Bone Health

Ms Brown asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps his Department is taking to promote education and public awareness on bone health.

(AQW 15066/11-15)

Mr Poots: My Department supports good bone health through the promotion of healthy lifestyles, including the need for regular exercise, a balanced diet, smoking prevention or cessation, and encouraging a responsible approach to alcohol consumption. These activities contribute not only to bone health, but to overall health and wellbeing.

The CMO Physical Activity Guidelines include information and recommendations to improve muscle and bone health, particularly for older adults.

In addition, the Health and Social Care system has, or is in the process of, appointing falls co-ordinators in several areas across Northern Ireland. Part of their work is to ensure that those most at risk of a fragility fracture can access a range of preventative services, including: assessments of osteoporosis risk; falls assessment; falls prevention programmes; etc. They also undertake preventative work and awareness raising through the development and dissemination of information leaflets, accident prevention work, and home safety checks.

Clinical Governance and Health Needs of Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the Northern Ireland Prison Service's policy regarding the clinical governance and health needs of prisoners who carry out acts of self harm; and whether routine investigations are being conducted by appropriately qualified Prison Service staff.

(AQW 15081/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust took over responsibility for Prison Healthcare on 1st April 2008. The Trust have been assessing, planning, implementing and evaluating care delivery in relation to the needs of prisoners who self harm. These arrangements fall within the Trust's normal clinical and social care governance remit.

Overall responsibility and safety of prisoners who are vulnerable and / or at risk of self harm is the responsibility of NIPS except where there is an identified healthcare need.

Management and Care of Vulnerable Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the published external inspection reports that acknowledge that the Northern Ireland Prison Service has made significant changes and improvements in the provision of safer custody and the management and care of vulnerable prisoners, insofar as they relate to healthcare facilities in prison establishments, with particular emphasis on HMP Maghaberry and Hydebank Wood.

(AQW 15084/11-15)

Mr Poots: Prison establishments in Northern Ireland are inspected by the Criminal Justice Inspectorate. The Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority have become involved in the inspection of healthcare services in the NI Prison Service. The following CJINI inspection reports have covered healthcare issues:

- Report of an unannounced follow up inspection of Maghaberry Prison 2009;

- Vulnerable Prisoners – An inspection of the treatment of vulnerable prisoners by the Northern Ireland Prison Service 2009;
- Report of an announced inspection of Magilligan Prison 2010;
- Reports on unannounced short follow up inspections of Ash House and the Young Offenders Centre, Hydebank Wood 2011.

The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust worked with the NI Prison Service to create and open the Donard facility in HMP Maghaberry in 2011. This centre was specifically set up to provide a therapeutic environment within Maghaberry for the most vulnerable prisoners and those with mental health needs and challenging behaviours. The South Eastern HSC Trust is exploring whether a similar centre could be opened in Hydebank Wood.

Clinical Consultation of the UK Safe and Sustainable Review of Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Clinical Consultation of the UK Safe and Sustainable Review of Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services allowed one year's notice to complete documentation and make preparations for England and Wales, but only five working days were given in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 15094/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW 14715/11-15.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety should the proposed changes to Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services be implemented, how Northern Ireland will retain or attract the best paediatric cardiologists, nurses or specialist staff if we cannot offer them the same training and career opportunities that are available in other centres in the UK.

(AQW 15096/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW 14716/11-15.

Adults on the Autistic Spectrum

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what facilities and assistance are available for adults on the autistic spectrum in the Northern Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 15101/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health and social care services, including those for people with autism, are provided on the basis of assessed need and are not based on a diagnosed condition. People with assessed needs, including adults with autism, have their needs met through access to a wide range of services and facilities including occupational therapy, day care, respite and other social support services.

Specifically in relation to autism, as required by the ASD Action Plan, all Trusts now have Autism Co-ordinators in post to provide a central point for access and advice and help to ensure that service provision across the region is consistent.

In addition, in June 2012 I launched the regional Adult Autism Care Pathway, which provides guidance to adults, professionals and families on autism. Trusts are currently in the process of developing and actioning their implementation plans for the Adult Care Pathway. The Northern Health & Social Care Trust is implementing the element of the Care Pathway which relates to Adult Diagnosis, within the resources currently available. The Trust also provides an Adult ASD Link Service which offers support, advice and signposting for adults aged 18 years and over with a diagnosis of autism.

My Department is also leading on the development of a cross-departmental whole-of-life strategy for autism services, and I expect to publish that strategy for consultation later this year, with the approval of Executive colleagues.

Parking Charges for Staff at the Antrim Area Hospital and the Causeway Hospital

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what plans he has to introduce parking charges for staff at the Antrim Area Hospital and the Causeway Hospital.

(AQW 15105/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Northern HSC Trust is currently consulting locally, including HSC staff and Trade Union Side, on the terms of proposals for staff charging at Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital.

Goal Line Youth, Portadown

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 14812-11/15, to detail the application opening and closing dates relating to the Public Health Agency Small Grant programme.

(AQW 15136/11-15)

Mr Poots: I understand that the Public Health Agency (PHA) Small Grant Scheme for the Southern Area opened on 05 September 2012 and that the closing date for the scheme was 12:00 Noon on 03 October 2012.

Applications were invited from community/voluntary groups based and working within the five District Council areas of Armagh; Banbridge; Craigavon; Dungannon & South Tyrone; Newry & Mourne. The aim of the Public Health Agency is to improve the health and social wellbeing of the population and to reduce inequalities in health. Two separate grant schemes were available, all of which will be targeted to address health and social wellbeing among the population living locally.

I have been informed that this scheme was brought to the attention of Goal Line Youth Trust by the Community Development worker in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust area but the group did not submit an application. Further information and contacts in respect of the PHA Small Grant funding is available online at:

<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/news/pha-southern-area-health-improvement-small-grants-now-open>.

Dental Fluorosis

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 14558/11-15, whether environmental impact assessments are carried out on fully fluoridated areas.

(AQW 15159/11-15)

Mr Poots: The water supplies in Northern Ireland are not fluoridated.

Older People: Social Isolation

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline his plans for reducing social isolation in older people, including those with dementia.

(AQO 2585/11-15)

Mr Poots: Given the wide range of circumstances which can lead to social isolation, the solutions require involvement and input across a range of services designed to help people remain active and involved in their communities.

My Department published a Service Framework for the Health and Wellbeing of Older People for consultation on Wednesday 3rd October. The overall aim of the Framework is to improve the health and wellbeing of older people in Northern Ireland, promote social inclusion, reduce inequalities in health and improve HSC quality of care for all older people, including those who suffer from dementia.

Within the South Eastern locality the Public Health Agency are currently funding a 'Safe and Well' service targeting older people at risk of social isolation. This service has been developed with a range of local partners and offers a co-ordinated response from local statutory, voluntary and community partners to assess and address the needs of at risk older people. There are similar schemes in all LCG localities, funded from various sources. The PHA is currently working to develop a regional service model and to support the implementation of the model with LCGs as part of the future development of older people's services.

Direct Payments for Providing Care

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people, in each Health and Social Care Trust area, receive direct payments for providing care.

(AQW 15194/11-15)

Mr Poots: Direct payments can be made to an individual to pay for their own care or directly to a carer for providing care.

Table 1 details the number of direct payments made directly to carers for providing care, in each Health and Social Care Trust, for the last four quarters.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF DIRECT PAYMENTS PAID TO CARERS.

HSC Trust	Quarter ending			
	September '11	December '11	March '12	June '12
Belfast	0	0	0	0
Northern	0	0	0	0
South Eastern	133	91	50	105
Southern	0	0	0	0
Western	15	11	11	5
All Trusts	148	102	61	110

Source: DHSSPS CC8 Returns provided quarterly by HSC Trusts

Construction of the Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the construction of the Health Care and Day Care Centres in Banbridge, including the completion date of construction and the commencement of services.

(AQW 15198/11-15)

Mr Poots: Enabling works for Banbridge Health & Care Centre and Day Care Centre were completed at the end of August 2012. The site has been secured in preparation for the appointment of the main contractor.

The design team continues to develop the tender package which is due to be issued in December 2012. Following successful appointment of a Contractor, it is anticipated that they will be on site by May 2013 with completion of the building by December 2014 and the commencement of services from this date.

Health: North/South Shared Services

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the actions he is taking to develop shared health services on a north-south basis.

(AQO 2594/11-15)

Mr Poots: In regards to the issue of North South collaboration Transforming Your Care (TYC) recognises that we can all benefit from North South collaboration, especially in those areas where we do not have sufficient volume to support specialist services. The consultation process for TYC is imminent and I hope to update members in detail when that consultation has concluded. In the interim mutual areas of interest are being discussed. These will focus particularly in the short term on secondary care services.

I meet regularly with Health Minister James Reilly from the Republic of Ireland and officials in both jurisdictions are working together to develop projects which have the potential to deliver real benefits for patients on both sides of the border. I would refer members to my Statement of 17th September when I provided an update regarding the fourteenth North South Ministerial Council in the Health and Food Safety Sectors, which was followed by a debate. The update included items of collaboration relating to: the considerable programme of activity being taken forward by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT), health promotion on alcohol misuse, radiotherapy services, research projects, suicide issues, Child Protection and Saferfood.

In addition, I would remind members of the recent (25th September) debate on the future service model for paediatric congenital cardiac services (PCCS). The consultation document on PCCS includes an option for an all-Ireland model and in this regard my officials and HSC Board officials are working closely with colleagues in the South. Consultation has commenced and I would hope to be in a position to announce a decision on the future approach early in 2013.

In addition the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ambulance Service in the Republic.

Causeway Hospital: Consultants

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many vacancies there are in the nine person consultant medical team at the Causeway Hospital.

(AQO 2595/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are currently 5 vacancies in the 9 person consultant medical team covering all of the medical specialties at the Causeway Hospital. This is made up of 2 vacancies in respiratory medicine and 1 vacancy in each of the following specialties - cardiology, geriatric medicine and gastroenterology. It is very unusual to experience this level of vacancy in a small team. The vacancies have all occurred recently and have come about through a mixture of retirements and staff moving to other hospitals. Northern Health and Social Care Trust is actively seeking to fill these vacancies and in the short term the situation is being managed through the use of locums.

Eating Disorders

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what specialised services are available for adolescents with eating disorders.

(AQO 2596/11-15)

Mr Poots: I refer the member to my response to AQW 13815/11-15.

Department of Justice

Internal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many departmental staff are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations; and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

(AQW 14560/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): Suspension from duty is governed by the NICS Staff Handbook and careful consideration is given on a case by case basis. Within the Department of Justice, there are six

members of staff currently facing internal investigations. A split between those suspended and not suspended has been withheld. This is to protect the identity of the individuals concerned as disclosure would be contrary to the Data Protection Act 1998.

Marian Price

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the dates of any representations Amnesty International has made to his Department in relation to Marian Price.

(AQW 14564/11-15)

Mr Ford: Amnesty International wrote to my Department on 13 February 2012. It asked me to clarify the basis upon which a decision regarding the continued detention of Mrs Marian McGlinchey (Price) would be taken. It also raised concerns in relation to claims that Mrs McGlinchey had been subjected to prolonged solitary confinement while in Maghaberry Prison and that she had been unable to access the necessary healthcare provision.

I responded to Amnesty International on 24 March and addressed the issues raised.

Information on Sex Offenders

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice how communities can access information on sex offenders living in their areas.

(AQW 14572/11-15)

Mr Ford: Disclosure of information on sex offenders takes place, as a child protection measure, under normal police operating practices. Parents and others who have immediate concerns about any individual who they fear is posing a risk to the safety of a child can, and should, go to the police at any time about their concerns. The PSNI have in place public protection teams to deal with these issues.

Legal Aid Budget

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Justice to detail the total amount paid from the Legal Aid budget to the top thirty recipient QCs during each year financial year from 2000/01 to 2005/6.

(AQW 14607/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information sought is not currently in the public domain and the Northern Ireland Legal Services Commission has to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act (the DPA), when considering whether to publish personal information. This requires the Commission to consult the individuals whose personal information is the subject of a request for publication.

As the process required by the DPA could not be completed within the required timeframe for answering Assembly Questions, it is not possible to answer the Question at this time but I will provide the information as soon as it is available.

Offence of Paying for the Services of a Prostitute

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to upgrade the offence of paying for the services of a prostitute, who has been coerced or subjected to force, from a summary offence.

(AQW 14612/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have no plans to alter the sentencing arrangements for this offence, which is an offence of strict liability with no defence for those who claim not to know the prostitute had been coerced. This sets the parameters for appropriate levels of sanction.

However, I have asked my officials to look at the existing offence to see if any changes are required.

'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study'

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Justice what consideration his Department has given to the Belfast City Council commissioned 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study' published in March 2012; and (ii) what action has been taken to implement the recommendations relevant to his Department.

(AQW 14649/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is represented on the Holyland Interagency Group and has, in conjunction with other representatives of this group, considered the 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study' and is committed to delivering on the relevant recommendations.

This Strategic study has identified two specific supporting actions for my Department to deliver, namely, the implementation of Fixed Penalty Notices for disorder offences and the exploring of commencement of additional legislative proposals in the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, to address the consumption of alcohol in public.

My Department has already implemented, through the provisions in the Justice Act 2011, Fixed Penalty Notices. These notices came into force in June 2012 and have given police additional powers to deal with a range of incidents including being drunk in a public place, disorderly behaviour and behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace. My officials are also currently in discussions with the Police Service of Northern Ireland to explore options to implement additional legislative proposals in the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 to address the consumption of alcohol in public.

My Department is currently developing actions to improve community safety, not only in the Holyland area, but in all communities across Northern Ireland on foot of the publication of a new Community Safety Strategy.

The establishment of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, which will play a vital role in ensuring the objectives of the Community Safety Strategy become reality on the ground, is another commitment designed to improve safety within local communities.

Legislation in Relation to Violent Crime

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether he will review legislation in relation to violent crime, whereby alcoholism or substance addiction leads to diminished responsibility being used in defence mitigation.

(AQW 14675/11-15)

Mr Ford: The law on diminished responsibility applies only to charges of murder and not to violent crime more generally. It was revised by way of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and at this stage I have no plans for a specific review in this area.

People Charged with Misconduct in Public Office

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases of people charged with misconduct in public office are currently in the court system, broken down by court division.

(AQW 14677/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently six cases involving six defendants before the Crown Court charged with misconduct in public office, two cases in Downpatrick and four in Belfast.

Gerry McGeough

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the dates of any representations that Amnesty International has made to his Department in relation to Gerry McGeough.

(AQW 14679/11-15)

Mr Ford: Northern Ireland Prison Service has no record of any representations from Amnesty International on behalf of Mr Gerry McGeough.

Prison Officers Dismissed from the Northern Ireland Prison Service

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13387/11-15, whether the £44,281.74 aligns with the figures held by the Civil Service Appeal Board for the same period of time.

(AQW 14680/11-15)

Mr Ford: The figure provided by the Northern Ireland Prison Service reflects the amount of compensation decided by the Civil Service Appeal Board (CSAB) to date. This figure reflects the year (during the five year period 01 July 2007 – 30 June 2012) in which the individuals were dismissed on grounds of discipline and whose appeals to CSAB were successful.

The CSAB reports in financial years and their figures reflect the year in which compensatory awards are decided. The most recent published annual report of the CSAB is for the year ending 31 March 2011.

Edward Paul Murphy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13723/11-15, (i) on how many other occasions this has occurred; and (ii) whether he decided that it was unnecessary to issue a public announcement.

(AQW 14681/11-15)

Mr Ford: Further to my answer in AQW 14505/11-15, I can confirm that there are no other cases that match the specific circumstances of this case and that Edward Paul Murphy is the only defendant to have been released in error as a result of this particular circumstance. Given that there are no other cases the issue of a public announcement is not applicable.

Prison Officers

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice how many prison officers are currently in post.

(AQW 14689/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prison Officer and Prison Support Grades in post at 31 August 2012 are as follows:-

- Principal Officer - 41
- Senior Officer - 125
- Main Grade Officer - 831
- Custody Prison Officer - 119
- Operational Support Grade - 13
- Night Custody Officer - 162.5

Prison Service: Ranks

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the different ranks within the Prison Service.

(AQW 14690/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current grade structure of staff appointed to the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) is set out in the tables below:-

NIPS Grade Structures

- Governors - Grades 1-5
- Principal Officer
- Senior Officer

- Main Grade Officer
- Custody Prison Officer
- Night Custody Officer *
- Operational Support Grade *
- Principal Prisoner Custody Officer
- Senior Prisoner Custody Officer
- Prisoner Custody Officer

* Night Custody Officer (This is a closed grade from 15 October 2012)

* Operational Support Grade (This is a closed grade from 1 July 2012)

A Target Operating Model is due to be implemented from 15 October 2012 and this will change some areas of the current grading structure.

NIPS also employ staff appointed under the NICS conditions of service in the following grades:-

NICS Staff

- Administration Assistants to Grade 3 (including specialisms such as psychologists, accountants, teachers)
- Boiler man
- Contractor Escorts
- Cleaners
- Female Searchers
- Kitchen Porter Drivers
- Drivers
- Labourers
- Kennel Assistants
- Cook/Assistant Cook
- Storeperson

Human Trafficking in the North Down Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice what measures his Department is taking to prevent human trafficking in the North Down area; and what steps are being taken to raise local awareness of the problem.

(AQW 14727/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice is taking forward a raft of work to address the issue of human trafficking, in partnership with colleagues in other departments, statutory agencies, law enforcement agencies and many others. The Organised Crime Task Force's Immigration and Human Trafficking Sub-group is playing a major role in tackling the issue. It is important to recognise that the steps to tackle human trafficking - prevention, prosecution and protection - apply across Northern Ireland and have an international dimension.

Specific measures being taken to tackle trafficking include -

- Training for staff from the Public Prosecution Service, Health and Social Care Trusts, PSNI and others. For example, some 2800 PSNI officers and staff have successfully completed an online training package, to assist in the recognition of signs of trafficking.

- Raising awareness of human trafficking by the Blue Blindfold campaign which was re-launched last year. This reinforced the message that human trafficking happens across Northern Ireland; sought to make people aware of the signs to look out for; and encouraged members of the public to report their suspicions to Crimestoppers.
- The development by the OCTF of a multi-lingual “Visitor or Victim?” leaflet and poster targeted at potential victims. These are displayed at key places where victims might be, including ports, main railway stations, health centres and doctors’ surgeries.
- The Department’s commitment to developing a multi-lingual leaflet for victims, in conjunction with Amnesty International.
- The work being taken forward on a project to change mindsets to drive down demand for all forms of organised crime.
- The proposals on engagement with Non-Governmental Organisations which are being drawn up and will be announced at an event on ‘Tackling Trafficking Together’ on Anti-Trafficking/Anti-Slavery Day on 18 October.

Mandatory Drug Tests for People Arrested and Charged with Disorderly Incidents

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what consideration he has given to introducing mandatory drug tests for people arrested and charged with disorderly incidents who are in an intoxicated state through alcohol and have become violent, and who may use their intoxication as a defence in court.

(AQW 14744/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are currently no plans to introduce mandatory drug tests for those offenders who are in an intoxicated state when arrested for a disorderly incident.

The Public Prosecution Service has advised that there is case law to indicate that the courts would generally not accept alcohol intoxication as a defence and, in many cases, it is considered to be an aggravating factor.

Report by Professor Roy McClelland into Non-Natural Deaths in Prisons

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) to provide a copy of the recommendations in the report by Professor Roy McClelland into non-natural deaths in prisons; and (ii) on what date all 30 recommendations were implemented by the Northern Ireland Prison Service.

(AQW 14745/11-15)

Mr Ford: Professor Roy McClelland’s report into non-natural deaths in Northern Ireland Prisons, made 30 recommendations to the Northern Ireland Prison Service, detailed at Annex A.

The Prison Service does not have a record of the date each recommendation was implemented. The McClelland report was overtaken by a number of external reports and further changes in the management of vulnerable prisoners and changes to delivery of healthcare have subsumed many of the recommendations.

Although the McClelland report predates the transfer of healthcare to the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, requests for information on healthcare related matters should be directed to the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

ANNEX A

- 1 A review of prisoner involvement in the PAR 1 process should be considered including consideration of prisoners’ initial awareness that a form is being opened supply of information to prisoners about the PAR 1 process and prisoners being present at case conferences.
- 2 As part of the case conference procedures under the PAR 1 process each prison should develop policies and practices for prisoners which encompass the necessary practical measures to reduce risk informed by individual risk assessment.

- 3 There should be clear information for all frontline staff about features of suicide risk including past illness behaviour and social circumstances.
- 4 The PAR 1 document should be adapted to identify triggers.
- 5 There should be safer custody arrangements in each establishment and in each segregation unit. Better safety requires improved observation arrangements as well as attention to removal of ligature points.
- 6 There is a need to develop processes that assess monitor intervene and plan the improved transfer of information relevant for risk assessment between disciplines within prison including use of the PAR 1 form.
- 7 The vehicle by which this information should be passed on is the care plan. Guidance and training should be provided by the prison service highlighting appropriate ways of sharing and transferring information regarding high "at risk" prisoners.
- 8 A 'family hotline' should be established within each prison to enable family members to obtain and pass on information regarding prisoners that may be relevant to suicide risk reduction.
- 9 Each prison should introduce; listener /buddy systems to support people with mental health problems.
- 10 There is an urgent need to improve necessary transfer of clinical and other relevant background information from the community into prisons within the prison and from the prison back into the community.
- 11 The quality and utility of reception and health screening in particular for mental health problems and suicidal ideation urgently requires to be improved.
- 12 Clear protocols for action should be in place to address problems identified at the reception health screen.
- 13 A multidisciplinary mental health team approach to the management of offenders suffering from mental health problems should be established as a priority.
- 14 Improving activity levels work placements education for vulnerable prisoners and therapeutic day care regimes should be established as components of care for this group. More attention to detail should go into the way that vulnerable prisoners spend their day.
- 15 There should be strengthening of the multidisciplinary mental health care team with triage of cases suitable for referral to individual key workers.
- 16 Further study of the pathways to care for prisoner - patients would be useful to highlight gaps between prisoner needs and service provision.
- 17 Headquarters must raise the profile of prisoner care issues including suicide and self-harm. They should plan now to replace the PAR 1 form once the limitations of this system have been reached.
- 18 A Head of Healthcare senior management post should be created on the board of each establishment management team or a nurse manager appointed to sit as Head of Healthcare as a matter of urgency.
- 19 Governors and their management teams must display more leadership on suicide and risk management procedures in order to protect the vulnerable.
- 20 Robust self-audit and national audit procedures on all standards should be introduced as a high priority in order to drive up care standards at a local level.
- 21 Prisoner health and care issues should be moved out of industrial relations procedures.
- 22 A review should be conducted aimed at reducing the level of control in establishments wherever possible especially in Ash House where the levels of control are unnecessarily high for the management of female offenders.
- 23 Ash House should operate as a separate establishment with a clear therapeutic ethos and new residential facilities to allow progression of female prisoners.

- 24 There is an urgent need for training in the use of the PAR 1 process and in particular the importance of the care plan and for multidisciplinary involvement in the care of people at risk of suicide and self harm.
- 25 Prison staff need to have access to a programme of training on matters relating to mental health and specifically in the recognition assessment and management of prisoners "fit risk".
- 26 Personality Disorder services should be established for women with security needs outside the prison setting or jointly by prison and Health and Personal Social Services.
- 27 In-reach mental health support for each establishment should be initiated with priorities for the female site and adolescents at Hydebank Wood.
- 28 Health and Personal Social Services should become responsible for the delivery and development of all clinical services within NIPS establishments.
- 29 An Implementation Plan must be developed as a priority for the recommendations of all recent reports informed by the present recommendations. This is essential for a much needed reform of the prisons' duty of care and modernisation of mental health services in Northern Ireland prisons.
- 30 The Implementation Strategy should be monitored regularly and subject to a review at 3 years taking full account of the recommendations of this Review and the Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability (NI).

NIPS: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13783/11-15, in the absence of the actual submission can he confirm if any record of the content exists, and if so, to provide it.

(AQW 14787/11-15)

Mr Ford: I confirm that, as with the actual submission, no other record of its content exists. The documents were the property of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO). Officials from the NIO have confirmed that these have been destroyed in accordance with guidance for the Disposal and Retention of Documents.

Investigation into Deaths in Custody

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice (i) who investigated the deaths in custody on 7 September 2002 and 3 March 2004, (ii) what recommendations did the investigator make to the Northern Ireland Prison Service, and (iii) how many recommendations were successfully implemented.

(AQW 14788/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prior to the establishment of the Prisoner Ombudsman's remit to investigate deaths in custody, internal investigations following a death in custody were carried out by the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS).

A Governor from Magilligan Prison conducted an inquiry into the circumstances of the 7 September 2002 death in custody. The recommendations made following this inquiry are attached at Annex A.

A Governor from Prison Service Headquarters was appointed to conduct a review into the circumstances of the 3 March 2004 death in custody. The recommendations made following this inquiry are attached at Annex B.

Given the lapse in time since these reports were published, officials have been unable to locate any paperwork to confirm what recommendations were completed at the time. The NIPS disposal schedule allows for death in custody documents in Headquarters to be destroyed after five years and therefore related documents may no longer be available. However, recent changes in the management of vulnerable prisoners and changes to delivery of Healthcare have subsumed the recommendations outlined above.

ANNEX A

- 1 The Inquiry Team recognises and endorses the general concern and in particular that an adult institution is an inappropriate place to commit a juvenile female.
- 2 Prison Service Headquarters should consult with all relevant bodies to consider the provision of a secure community based facility for juveniles with personality based disorders within Northern Ireland.
- 3 The Terms of Reference for the Suicide Working Group be extended to include the management of juveniles with personality disorders.
- 4 Staff training in relation to identifying the signs and symptoms of personality disorders was not sufficient to meet the demanding situations and the consistent needs of such individuals and should take place as a matter of priority.
- 5 This training should be extended to key staff at YOC Hydebank Wood.

ANNEX B

- 1 A separate healthcare facility should be made available for female prisoners, especially for those with personality disorders, or behavioural problems, which would be more 'patient friendly' than the Close Supervision Unit in C1 landing.
- 2 The current male ratio in Mourne House should be reviewed, with the current 80:20 Male to Female ideally being reversed.
- 3 A review needs to take place of the number of staff needed to ensure that the Healthcare facility in HMP Maghaberry operates in an effective and efficient manner.
- 4 A review needs to be undertaken as to the deployment of Psychiatric nursing staff.
- 5 Healthcare staff must be made aware of the importance of correctly completing the Initial Reception Health Screen documentation. The staff member should actively enquire as to whether or not there is any documentation, such as PACE 16 form, which could contain valuable and pertinent information about the inmate and help to give a more accurate indication of risk indicators. They should have available, not only the medical file but also the prisoner's general file.
- 6 All staff must be aware of the necessity to fully complete documentation relating to 'At Risk' prisoners, especially in their medical files and in the PAR1 document.
- 7 Consideration should be given to developing the Listener scheme such as operates in HMP Magilligan.
- 8 That were practicable, case conference following deaths in custody should take place after the Coroner's inquest, in order that any pertinent comments made by the Coroner may be taken into consideration.
- 9 Permission for 'At Risk' prisoners, especially when the subject of a live PAR1 and especially when locked on their own, to have possession of clothing with draw-string adjusters, or footwear with laces, needs to be reviewed.

NIPS: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13781/11-15, to clarify if this document, or its contents, have been requested in relation to any court or tribunal proceedings.

(AQW 14790/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no record of the document or its contents being requested in relation to any court or tribunal proceedings.

Inquiry into the Criminal Justice Services

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the measures being taken by his Department to implement the recommendations in the Justice Committee's Report on its Inquiry into the Criminal Justice Services available to Victims and Witnesses of Crime in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 14829/11-15)

Mr Ford: I was very pleased to welcome the Justice Committee's report of its inquiry into services for victims and witnesses of crime. As I said in the Chamber on 3 July, I commend the Committee on what is clearly an extremely important piece of work and the Committee's thorough approach to it. I have accepted, or accepted in principle, each of the Committee's thirty recommendations, and my Department has written to the Committee to confirm how these will be taken forward.

I can assure the Member that work is already underway to give effect to those recommendations. Within the next few weeks, I plan to publish for consultation a new five-year strategy, aimed at improving access to justice for all victims and witnesses of crime. The content of the draft strategy has been substantially influenced by the Committee's recommendations.

It is my hope that slightly over half of the Committee's recommendations will be implemented over the next two financial years. The draft strategy will, of course, be shared with the Committee prior to publication for public consultation. I look forward to continued collaborative engagement with the Committee in this important area.

Right of Legally Held Firearms to be Discharged to Defend Life and Property

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice, in light of comments made by Judge Michael Pert QC about the right of legally held firearms to be discharged to defend life and property, whether he intends to review the law.

(AQW 14875/11-15)

Mr Ford: The law already provides that people are entitled to use reasonable force in resisting crime, the reasonableness of the level of force in any individual case being a matter for the courts. My view is that existing law in Northern Ireland already provides sufficient protection for householders. I am considering nevertheless the value of issuing public guidance on the use of reasonable force and my officials have been working with both the Public and Crown Prosecution Services. I will be consulting with the Justice Committee.

Clamping on Private Land

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister of Justice whether he intends to review the law permitting clamping on private land.

(AQW 14909/11-15)

Mr Ford: The issue of wheel clamping on private land was included as part of a wider consultation run by the Department of Justice on the future regulation of the private security industry in Northern Ireland. This consultation closed on 24 August. The next step will be for me to consider the consultation responses, together with other evidence and research.

The reply I gave on 5 October 2012 sets out the current legal position on the private clamping of cars. (Official Report Col WA246)

Sex Offenders Accommodation in Muckamore

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Justice why sex offenders have been given accommodation in Muckamore; and what level of consultation was undertaken with residents in the locality prior to this decision.

(AQW 15028/11-15)

Mr Ford: Any offender with mental disorder who is being prosecuted for an imprisonable offence or who is serving a prison sentence can be remanded, committed or transferred to a hospital for assessment or treatment of their mental condition. Under the provisions of the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986, the identification of any particular hospital is a matter for the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety through the relevant Health and Social Care Trust.

Any offender serving a community based sentence and in need of similar assessment or treatment could be placed in hospital in a similar way. Any consultation that might be required would be a matter for the relevant Trust.

Policing: Funding

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Justice what discussions his Department has had, and is planning to have, with the PSNI and HM Treasury about additional funding for policing.

(AQO 2604/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice funding allocation was agreed by the Executive for the years 2011-15. This included £45m of additional security funding from the Executive for the PSNI.

In addition, working with DFP, access to a further £199.5m was secured from the Treasury to meet PSNI security pressures.

Discussions have not begun with the PSNI and Policing Board about a future spending review period.

Any future discussions with the Treasury about additional funding for policing in the next spending review period would be led by DFP on behalf of the Executive.

Animal Cruelty: Sentencing

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice to outline his plans for having discussions with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development about increasing sentences for acts of deliberate and severe animal cruelty.

(AQO 2605/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for policy in this area, and during the debate on the issue on 24 September, she indicated that she had no plans to increase the penalties introduced in the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Sentencing within this legislative framework is a matter for the Judiciary, and the Lord Chief Justice, in his Programme of Action, is enhancing the structures by which the judiciary ensure consistent and appropriate sentences. Under this Programme, sentencing guidelines for offences of animal cruelty, heard in the Magistrates' Courts, will be developed in the near future.

Should there be any proposals for change to the existing legislative framework, my role is to ensure that these fit proportionately within the overall system of penalties available in Northern Ireland.

As yet, I have not been approached by the Agriculture Minister about a meeting, but would be very happy to discuss these issues with her.

PSNI: Agency and Associate Staff

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Justice to outline his Department's role in developing the business case to re-tender the contract for temporary workers or associate staff engaged by the PSNI.

(AQO 2606/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI is responsible for developing business cases. My Department's role is to approve those which fall outside the PSNI's delegated limits.

My Department considers business cases for approval on the same basis and Value for Money criteria, regardless of the classification.

In addition, an Economist from my Department provides advice and support to improve the PSNI's business case and economic appraisal capability.

Firearms Licensing

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Justice what action he intends to take to review the cost of firearms licensing, including potential efficiency savings.

(AQO 2607/11-15)

Mr Ford: At PSNI's request, the processes in Firearms Licensing Branch were reviewed by consultants from the Delivery and Innovation Division in the Department of Finance and Personnel. Following this work to assist in reviewing fees, the DOJ commissioned the Delivery and Innovation Division to carry out a review of the actual cost of providing a firearms licensing system based on how the service will operate in future, as opposed to how it presently functions. This latter review naturally took account of the earlier work.

In June I launched a public consultation on firearms licensing fees (and other issues). It was based on the conclusions in the report for the Department. The 12 week public consultation period ended on 20 September 2012. The responses have now to be considered.

The proposed new fees in it are designed to achieve full cost recovery as the DFP guidance expects.

PSNI: Business Cases

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Justice to outline the involvement of his Department in the development of business cases by the PSNI which are classified as Top Secret.

(AQO 2608/11-15)

Mr Ford: The PSNI is responsible for developing business cases, regardless of the security classification. My Department's role is to approve those which fall outside the PSNI's delegated limits.

My Department considers business cases for approval on the same basis and Value for Money criteria, regardless of the classification. The numbers of cases which are highly classified is very small.

In addition, an Economist from my Department provides advice and support to improve the PSNI's business case and economic appraisal capability.

PSNI: Agency and Associate Staff

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Justice why he has declined to meet with the trade unions representing police support staff about their concerns on the use of agency and associate staff by the PSNI.

(AQO 2609/11-15)

Mr Ford: As I previously informed the House on 25 June, the awarding and management of contracts by the Police Service is an operational matter for the Chief Constable, for which he is accountable to the Policing Board.

I take assurance from the effectiveness of the accountability arrangements through which the Board have given this particular attention.

I explained this to NIPSA by letter and declined a meeting as I had no role in this issue.

PSNI: Agency and Associate Staff

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice what steps have been taken by his Department in response to increasing public concern about the use of associate and agency staff by the PSNI.

(AQO 2610/11-15)

Mr Ford: The use of associate and agency staff by the PSNI has been the subject of considerable attention by the Policing Board and will be before PAC on Wednesday. I look forward to the outcome of that scrutiny.

Whilst the award and management of contracts by PSNI is an operational matter for the Chief Constable, I shall be seeking assurance as to the overall governance of police resources.

Policing and Community Safety Partnerships

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister of Justice what steps he intends to take to remove members of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships who have links to, or are members of, proscribed organisations.

(AQO 2611/11-15)

Mr Ford: Members of Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, and District Policing and Community Safety Partnerships in Belfast, undertake an important role in improving their communities. As such, they must operate in a transparent and accountable manner.

The Northern Ireland Policing Board has responsibility for appointing independent members to PCSPs and DPCSPs. On application, individuals are required to sign a declaration against terrorism and, if successful at interview, will undergo a criminal records check.

The Justice Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 disqualifies individuals who have been convicted and imprisoned or detained during the five years prior to their application from holding membership.

Members can be removed if:

- in the case of independent members, they fail to disclose a conviction or have demonstrably acted in breach of the terms of a declaration against terrorism; and/or
- they are convicted of a criminal offence after appointment.

It would not be the role of my Department to remove these members – rather it is the responsibility of the Policing Board or the relevant Council, with the approval of the Board, as set out in the Justice Act.

I will be reviewing the Code of Practice for the appointment of independent members to PCSPs and DPCSPs and will further consider this issue.

Magilligan Prison

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the contribution that the staff and facilities at HMP Magilligan make in the delivery of prison services.

(AQO 2612/11-15)

Mr Ford: Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland last carried out an inspection of Magilligan Prison in 2010, giving it a positive report on an improving prison. At that time, CJINI assessed that the outcomes for prisoners at Magilligan were reasonably good, based on the four tests of a healthy prison – safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement. However the inspection team raised concerns about the physical environment and the standard of some of the accommodation in the prison.

In its report of October last year the Prison Review Team also endorsed the contribution made at Magilligan, highlighting some examples of effective working partnerships which had been forged between the prison and education and training providers in the local community. However the Team also observed that much of the prison's current accommodation is “wholly unsuitable”.

On my visits to the prison I have been impressed by the attitudes and work of the staff I have seen there. I share the assessments made by both CJINI and the Prison Review Team and I welcome the positive contribution to public safety through reducing the risk of reoffending which is being made at Magilligan Prison.

Department for Regional Development

Illegal Republican Sectarian Symbols, Flags, Emblems or Graffiti

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, in relation to areas where there are illegal republican sectarian symbols, flags, emblems or graffiti on lamp posts, and other property owned by his Department, which have been in place for sometime, to detail (i) whether these areas are 'no go areas' for departmental and arm's-length body staff; and (ii) how many areas are presently classed as such.

(AQW 14562/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department's Roads Service has signed up to the multi-agency Joint Protocol in Relation to the Display of Flags in Public Areas. Under the Protocol, Roads Service will, when called upon by the lead Agency, provide the access equipment and resources to remove unwanted flags and emblems, once agreement has been reached for their removal and where they are not easily accessible for the local community.

My Department does not regard any locations where there are illegal symbols, flags, emblems or graffiti on lamp posts or other Departmental property to be 'no go areas' for staff. Consequently, there are no areas currently classed as 'no go areas'.

Belfast City Council Commissioned 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study'

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration his Department has given to the Belfast City Council commissioned 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study' published in March 2012; and (ii) what action has been taken to implement the recommendations relevant to his Department.

(AQW 14648/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service and Translink have been represented at inter-agency working group meetings relating to the 'Holyland and Wider University Area Strategic Study'. I understand that the draft report and action points were discussed at the most recent meeting of this group.

As the Member may be aware, one of the recommendations contained within the report concerns an integrated plan for transport and traffic management. To this end, my Department's Roads Service has introduced a number of corner waiting restrictions within the Holylands area in order to facilitate traffic movements. In addition, Roads Service officials are currently involved in a consultation process with residents from the area, regarding a number of issues relating to traffic management, resident parking arrangements and public transport.

Transfer of Funds from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to the Executive

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department intends to compel a transfer of funds from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to the Executive, or whether it is now accepted that such is not legally possible.

(AQW 14707/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is investigating with Belfast Harbour Commissioners collaborative means to secure a transfer of funds. No conclusions have yet been reached whether any legislation is necessary.

Water and Sewerage Charges to NI Water: Rebates

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the rebate available to people who pay water and sewerage charges to NI Water and are billed for rates by Land and Property Services; and (ii) how any rebate is calculated.

(AQW 14752/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that (i) there are two methods of charging non-domestic customers for water - namely measured or unmeasured. Measured charges are based on meter readings and unmeasured charges are calculated using the net annual valuation of the property determined by Land & Property Services. For measured water charges a domestic allowance is granted to reflect the payment of rates on the property and where a measured sewage charge is applicable an allowance is also available. For unmeasured customers a reduction of the full rate is granted which is regarded as a 'proxy' for a domestic allowance.

(ii) The domestic allowance has been calculated at 200 cubic metres per year for measured water charges and where a measured sewage charge is applicable customers will not be charged for the first 190 cubic metres of sewage discharged. The allowances are automatically deducted from the gross water and sewage volume to determine the billable water and sewage volumes for every bill issued. The reduction in the full rate for unmeasured customers is 50%.

Cross-Sectoral Anti-Flood Project for the Newcastle Area

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions his Department has had with its arm's-length bodies to ensure that a cross-sectoral anti-flood project is developed for the Newcastle area, so that events of 5 July are not repeated.

(AQW 14754/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I sympathise with all those who have suffered from flooding in recent months. My Department has ongoing discussions with Northern Ireland Water (NIW) about a range of flood mitigation issues including in the Newcastle area. It and NIW also have discussions with The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's Rivers Agency which is the statutory drainage and flood defence authority for Northern Ireland.

I have been advised by NIW that the flooding in Newcastle on 5 July was caused by the level and intensity of rainfall exceeding the design capacity of the sewer system. Since 2007, NIW has invested over £14 million on infrastructure in the Newcastle area. £4.4 million has recently been invested on improvements to the sewerage network in order to address capacity and quality issues. My Department's Roads Service routinely cleans all road gullies in urban areas twice a year, including those in areas which were affected by flooding on 5 July (these gullies were cleaned between 3 and 6 weeks before the flooding occurred).

I will continue to make the case for additional investment in our water and roads drainage infrastructure. However, I can give no guarantee that additional investment, beyond that outlined above, will be made in the Newcastle area in the immediate future.

Unfortunately the topography, geology and historical pattern of development of the Newcastle area mean that no sewerage system could completely eliminate the risk of flooding. Extreme rainfall events will always have the potential to overwhelm sewers and drainage systems.

Fair Employment Tribunal Case on the Appointment of the Chair of NI Water

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 13421/11-15, to detail the costs incurred by his Department in relation to the Fair Employment Tribunal case on the appointment of the Chairperson of NI Water, including a breakdown of legal fees, travel costs and all the other expenses.

(AQW 14755/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer to the previous answers I gave to AQW 13171/11-15 on 6 July and AQW 13421/11-15 on 10 July.

This case will not be concluded until the outcome of the Remedies Hearing is known. I will not therefore be in a position to provide a breakdown of legal fees and all other expenses in advance of this.

Road Calming Measures for the Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to introduce road calming measures for the Beechfield Estate, Donaghadee.

(AQW 14758/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has no immediate plans to introduce traffic calming measures in the Beechfield Drive area of Donaghadee. This location has been assessed/reviewed annually since 2007. When compared against all competing traffic calming requests within the Ards Borough Council Area, this location remains at a low of priority and therefore is unlikely to merit inclusion in Roads Service Southern Division's traffic calming programme for the foreseeable future.

By-Pass in the Donaghadee Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to create a bypass in the Donaghadee area to alleviate traffic congestion.

(AQW 14761/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that all the resources currently available for strategic road improvements are focused on the trunk road network, and are committed up to 2014-15, primarily on the A5, A8 and A2 projects. Funding beyond this timeframe is dependent upon future budget settlements. However, in the present economic climate it would appear that future funding will not be sufficient to deliver the current Strategic Road Improvement Programme within the timescale envisaged in my Department's Investment Delivery Plan for Roads.

The Strategic Road Improvement Programme reflects the Executive's current policy for development and transportation as set out in the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS), the Regional Development Strategy, which the RTS supports, and the three transport plans through which the RTS is being implemented.

In these circumstances, while I can appreciate the benefits a bypass in the Donaghadee area may provide to alleviate traffic congestion, I regret to advise that since it would not attract a high priority, when compared to other schemes, there are currently no plans for such a bypass.

Roadside Advertising Signage for Businesses

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to reviewing the policy in relation to roadside advertising signage for businesses, particularly given the current economic situation.

(AQW 14762/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: While I appreciate and understand the difficult trading conditions being experienced by many retailers across Northern Ireland, the illegal erection of advertising signs along the public road is an offence under The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. Furthermore, such signage can be a distraction to motorists and as such, can have significant road safety implications. An increase in the number of signs would likely increase the risk of accidents and injuries. Given that this is an issue of road safety, which must take precedence over commercial considerations, my Department currently has no plans to review or amend the current policy.

Staff Facing Internal Investigations

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development how many members of staff in his Department are currently (i) suspended due to internal investigations, and (ii) not suspended whilst facing internal investigations.

(AQW 14789/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There are currently no staff in my Department who are suspended due to internal disciplinary investigations.

Seven staff in the Department are facing internal disciplinary investigations and are not currently suspended from work.

Travelwise Initiative

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline (i) how the Travelwise initiative can be advanced in rural areas, and (ii) how it has been promoted in South Down.

(AQW 14798/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department through its Travelwise initiative is promoting a range of sustainable travel options for the journey to work or education by promoting more walking, cycling, greater use of public transport and car sharing. These alternative modes are just as appropriate for journeys in rural areas as elsewhere.

Officials from my Department have made visits to schools, colleges and workplaces in the South Down area and have promoted the sustainable travel options to staff and

pupils alike. More visits are programmed.

Resurface the Footpath in High Street, Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development if there are plans to resurface the footpath in High Street, Millisle.

(AQW 14805/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I assume that the Member is referring to Main Street, Millisle. Should this be the location, then I can advise the Member that my Department's Roads Service has no plans, at present, to carry out resurfacing on this footway.

Should this not be at this location, I would advise the Member to contact Mr Stanley Lamb, Section Engineer for the Ards area, who can be contacted at the Ards Section Office, 2 Jubilee Road, Newtownards, BT23 4YH (Tel: 02891819328) and he will arrange to meet with you to discuss the issue.

Dropped Kerb Schemes Planned for the Missile Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what dropped kerb schemes are planned for the Missile area.

(AQW 14806/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has no immediate plans to install any dropped kerb measures in Millisle. I am advised that dropped kerbs were recently installed on Ballymacruise Drive, close to its junction with Main Street. Further measures will be considered upon receipt of individual requests, and assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Capital Works to Improve Water Infrastructure

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the areas in Belfast which have been identified for capital works to improve water infrastructure following the recent flooding.

(AQW 14808/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that drainage area plans designed to improve drainage and reduce the risk of out of sewer flooding have been established for many areas across the Province.

Within the Belfast area, the recently completed Belfast Sewers Project has proven very successful in reducing the risk of out of sewer flooding to central Belfast, and parts of the Ormeau and Ravenhill Roads. Two further studies are on-going in the east and south Belfast areas. The Sydenham Strategic Study Project will recommend drainage improvements to the eastern areas of the city, and the Glenmachan Street Strategic Study will recommend drainage improvements to the southern areas

of the city. Both studies are planned to be completed early next year following which approval will be sought to implement any recommendations suggested.

In order to help address flood mitigation and pollution, NIW has identified a number of measures with a total cost of approximately £10 million which could be completed within 2012/13, including some in the Belfast area. I have sought funding for this work through the June monitoring round and 'Invest to Save' initiatives. Unfortunately these bids have been unsuccessful. I will continue to explore options for securing funding which will allow these measures to be accelerated.

Areas Susceptible to Further Flooding

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Regional Development what practical measures or resources his Department has considered providing to those residents living in areas susceptible to further flooding. **(AQW 14809/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: I sympathise with all those who have suffered the inconvenience and expense of flooding over the summer.

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is the statutory drainage and flood defence authority in Northern Ireland. I have been advised by DARD that its Rivers Agency is currently working with Belfast City Council and the Consumer Council to scope the options for individual property protection.

My Department's Roads Service and Northern Ireland Water (NIW), along with, DARD's Rivers Agency and a number of local Councils, have recently agreed a sandbag protocol. This will enable Councils that have signed up to the protocol to access additional stocks of sandbags for distribution to the public when there is an imminent danger of flooding to properties.

However, it must be recognised that there are limitations to the effectiveness of any such measures.

The most important contribution that my Department and NIW can make to flood mitigation is to continue to ensure our road drainage and sewer infrastructure performs to its maximum capacity when we experience heavy rainfall.

Rural Transport Fund

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development why the current Rural Transport Fund is being paid annually to the community transport suppliers delivering Dial a Lift services. **(AQW 14820/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: Funding from the Rural Transport Fund to all rural community transport providers is agreed annually and the level of funding is determined on the business plans and the annual financial plans provided by each organisation. Grants are generally paid to the providers on a quarterly basis.

Rural Transport Fund

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development why the Rural Transport Fund cannot be awarded to community transport suppliers until the end of the current budget term in March 2015. **(AQW 14821/11-15)**

Mr Kennedy: Community transport suppliers continue to be awarded grant from the Rural Transport Fund. Funding from the Rural Transport Fund to all rural community transport providers is agreed annually and the level of funding is determined on the basis of the annual financial plans provided by each organisation.

Rural Transport Fund

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department accepts that the Rural Transport Fund will continue until March 2015 and to outline the reasons for not providing longer term funding to community transport providers.

(AQW 14822/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: It is my intention, based on current budgets, that the Rural Transport Fund continues until 2015. Currently annual grant settlements are agreed with the rural community transport providers. It is likely that this will continue up to the end of 2014/15 but we have to be mindful of potential procurement guidance in committing to longer term funding at this time.

In addition work is continuing in a number of areas towards the merger of the organisations with the ultimate aim of having seven partnerships who will receive funding to provide services across all of Northern Ireland. When this process has been completed the options for long term funding mechanisms can be considered.

Domestic Properties Disconnected from the Water Supply

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many domestic properties in 2011 were disconnected from the water supply as a result of non-payment of water charges.

(AQW 14847/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that since water charges for domestic properties have not been introduced, no domestic properties have been disconnected from the water supply.

Rural Primary Schools in the Coleraine Area

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many rural primary schools in the Coleraine area have requested that Roads Service provide additional traffic safety precautions in the vicinity of the school, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14848/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of rural primary schools, in the Coleraine Borough Council area, which have requested that my Department's Roads Service provides additional traffic safety precautions in the vicinity of the school, in each of the last five years, are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of rural primary schools requesting additional traffic safety measures
2007	1
2008	1
2009	1
2010	2
2011	1
Total	6

Dualling of the A6

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development what preparatory work, in relation to the dualling of the A6 will, be carried out in the 2012/13 financial year.

(AQW 14849/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that the Public Inquiry into the proposals for the dualling of the A6 from Londonderry to Dungiven, including a dual carriageway bypass of Dungiven, finished on 2 October 2012. My Department's Roads Service will now follow up on undertakings given during the Inquiry process and will continue to progress the detailed design, in consultation with affected landowners and other stakeholders. The Department expects to receive the Inspector's Report by March 2013.

I should also advise that a Public Inquiry into an alternative junction provision at Castledawson to connect to the proposed A6 dualling between Randalstown and Castledawson was held in February 2012. The Department has received the Inspector's Report and is currently considering the recommendations with a view to responding before the end of 2012. Further design work arising out of any recommendations made by the Inspector, that are accepted by the Department, will be carried out during the 2012/13 financial year.

Criteria Used to Select a Road for Adoption

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the criteria used to select a road for adoption.

(AQW 14851/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the adoption of roads is addressed through the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980. The following articles specifically relate to the adoption process:

Articles 3 and 7 - provide for the adoption of a road where it has been determined as part of planning application for a residential development.

Article 9 - allows Roads Service to consider a private road for adoption where:

- the majority of the owners and/or frontagers so request it;
- the Department is of the opinion that the street, or part of the street, should become a public road; and
- the road is first brought up to the required standard at the expense of the owners and/or frontagers.

60 Plus SmartPasses

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost to Translink for using 60 Plus SmartPasses on journeys from Belfast Central Station to Bangor in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14856/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There is no cost to Translink in relation to usage of 60+ Smartpasses on its services as the Northern Ireland Concessionary Fares Scheme is funded by my Department. Translink is reimbursed on 'a no better no worse off' principle.

Inspections of Gulleys in the North Down Area

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many inspections of gulleys were carried out in the North Down area in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14857/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it aims to inspect and clean, where necessary, all gullies in urban areas twice each year and gullies in rural areas once each year. This is in line with road maintenance guidelines. This policy ensures that a reasonable level of maintenance is carried out to drainage systems, taking account of the Department's finite funding and staff resource levels.

Roads Service further advises that there are approximately 17,300 gullies in the North Down area which are subject to a passing visual inspection, as part of its routine cyclic road maintenance inspections. The frequency of these inspections is dependent on the classification of the road on which the gullies are located, however, this equates to the inspection of approximately 102,500 gullies annually.

Street Lighting Schemes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what new street lighting schemes are planned for the Millisle area in the next 12 months.

(AQW 14858/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that no new street lighting schemes are currently planned for the Millisle area in the next 12 months.

QUANGOS

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the number of QUANGOS linked to his Department (a) at 8 May 2007; and (b) at 1 October 2012; and (ii) how many people served on them on these respective dates.

(AQW 14908/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

- a At 8 May 2007 there were two Arm's Length Bodies linked to my Department, 15 people served on these bodies on this date.
- b At 1 October 2012 there were two Arm's Length Bodies linked to my Department, 18 people served on these bodies on this date.

Parking Fines Issued in Kilrea and Garvagh

Mr Dallat asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of parking fines issued in (i) Kilrea; and (ii) Garvagh in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 14926/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of the number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued on behalf of my Department's Roads Service in Kilrea in each of the last 12 months are set out in the table below:

Month	PCNs issued in Kilrea
October 2011	7
November 2011	13
December 2011	10
January 2012	9
February 2012	4
March 2012	9
April 2012	2
May 2012	6
June 2012	1
July 2012	9
August 2012	3

Month	PCNs issued in Kilrea
September 2012	6

I can confirm that no PCN's were issued in Garvagh during the same period. There are very few parking restrictions in Garvagh and enforcement is not provided on a scheduled basis.

Water Charges

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development how water charges are formulated for the business community.

(AQW 15020/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that as a regulated utility company, its customer tariffs are regulated by the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (NIAUR). NIAUR carries out a regular review, called a 'price control', in which they determine how much funding NIW will require. This allows NIAUR to set price limits which they use to regulate annual water and sewerage tariffs. To ensure tariff increases are within determined price limits, NIW must submit draft tariffs to NIAUR in advance of each charging year (April to March). NIAUR must approve tariffs before they can be used to bill customers.

Details of all NIW's tariffs for the current charging year can be found in the Scheme of Charges located on its website at <http://www.niwater.com/waterandtradeeffluentcharges.asp>

Freight Carried by NI Railways

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much freight has been carried by NI Railways over the last three years.

(AQW 15078/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that there has been no freight transported on the NI Railways network in the last 3 years.

A2 Road Scheme Between Silverstream Banks and Seapark, Carrickfergus

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the A2 road scheme between Silverstream Banks and Seapark, Carrickfergus, including the proposed timeline for the work.

(AQW 15085/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that the procurement process for the proposed A2 scheme is currently underway. Tender documents are due for return in November 2012 and following assessment and successful completion of the process, an award of tender is expected in February/March 2013. Roads Service anticipates that the construction stage of this scheme will then commence following a short contract mobilisation period and will take approximately two years to complete.

It is anticipated that publication of the Vesting Order to complete the acquisition of the land required for the scheme will take place later this year.

Belfast Bike Hire Scheme

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Regional Development whether agreement has been reached on the mechanism by which members of the public can hire bicycles in the proposed Belfast Public Bike Hire Scheme.

(AQO 2618/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Earlier this year, I announced funding totalling £4.3m over 3 years for four council-led projects which aim to demonstrate how active travel can benefit both individuals and their

communities. Belfast City Council were awarded capital funding of around £700,000 over a 3 year development and implementation period to put a third generation bike hire scheme in place for Belfast.

Tenders will be sought to procure a modern, attractive and technologically sound scheme most suited to the City. Once these tenders have been evaluated the Council will be in a position to consider how the public will gain access to the bicycles.

During the preparation and implementation stages of the project my officials will work closely with Belfast City Council to assist in taking the scheme forward.

Railways: Ballymena to Belfast

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the provision of an hourly train service from Ballymena to Belfast.

(AQO 2619/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink advise that they are currently undertaking a passenger consultation exercise to gauge views on its planned new rail timetable. It is hoped this is complete by end of October 2012.

One of the key changes involves an increase by almost a half in the frequency of services between Belfast and Coleraine, delivering an hourly service for passengers.

I am optimistic that Translink will have implemented the new timetable before Christmas and it is expected, subject to all funding issues being resolved, to introduce major improvements on the Larne line as well. Improvements on the Newry/Portadown service and on the Bangor line are also planned. Translink have also committed to ensure that extra rail capacity will be available on the Coleraine line to facilitate those wishing to visit shops in Belfast coming up to Christmas.

Translink have just taken delivery of 20 new 'class 4000' trains. It is worth saying that we have moved from a position of potential closure of NI Railways to one of a successful, growing and industry leading rail operation. Growth in passenger numbers in the last 10 years have exceeded the target set in the Regional Transport Strategy target by over a third. We consider there to be potential for substantial on-going growth and these developments make this more likely.

Water Charges: SMEs

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Regional Development if any investigation has been carried out into the impact of water charges on small and medium sized businesses, in light of the current economic situation.

(AQO 2620/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Since the Executive unanimously agreed to the extension of water and sewerage charging to all non-domestic consumers from April 2008 charges for water and sewerage services have been reviewed annually. Any revisions must be determined in accordance with a process overseen by the Utility Regulator which protects customer interests.

The Executive continues to subsidise non-domestic customers' charges by providing a domestic allowance for measured consumers while unmeasured customers pay half the full amount.

Kilkeel Bus Station

Mr Wells asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade Kilkeel Bus Station.

(AQO 2621/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I met with Newry and Mourne council in May this year to discuss the possible upgrade of Kilkeel Bus Upgrade. I subsequently wrote to the Chief Executive of the council in September.

The location currently proposed, the old Mourne hospital site, is probably not suited to such a development. Historically it has proven difficult to obtain planning permission for such facilities

adjacent to existing housing. Access to the proposed site is too narrow and, given the on-street parking there, would not be a suitable location for bus movements or access. I am not aware that there is any reference to a new bus terminal/depot at the suggested location in the draft Area Plan. Any new bus facility must be in a suitable location and meet value for money and affordability tests including future overhead costs.

Flooding: Clonduff Estate

Mr Newton asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to alleviate the flooding problems in the Clonduff Estate, east Belfast.

(AQO 2622/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has received reports of flooding on four occasions at this location and two reports of blocked gullies during the last three years.

In addition, Northern Ireland Water officials advise that they have investigated flooding at Clonduff Estate in East Belfast on a number of occasions and were satisfied that the sewerage infrastructure in the area was operating normally during the flooding incidents.

The flooding which occurred in June 2012 was caused by the extreme level of very heavy and persistent rainfall which fell over a short period of time. Rainfall of this magnitude, falling on already saturated ground, is likely to overwhelm drainage systems and in some places lead to flooding.

Concerns have been expressed regarding the ownership and condition of the culvert which passes under Clonduff Drive. Roads Service has checked this culvert and its capacity is not restricted by debris. Another check on its condition is programmed and officials are continuing their enquiries to ascertain who is responsible for its ownership and maintenance.

A22: Flooding

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration has been given to addressing the persistent flooding on the A22 Comber to Dundonald road.

(AQO 2623/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: While the Member has not specified a particular location on the A22 Comber to Dundonald Road where there is persistent flooding, my Department's Roads Service has assumed that the location may be close to the junction with Hillhead Road.

Should this be the location, then I can advise the Member that the problem is caused by material from a private laneway that is being washed onto the road during prolonged periods of heavy rain, causing the gullies on the road to become blocked.

Roads Service has advised that it will pursue the owner of the laneway to carry out remedial works to alleviate this problem.

Should the flooding not be at this location, I would advise the Member to contact Mr Stanley Lamb, Section Engineer for the Ards area, who can be contacted at the Ards Section Office, 2 Jubilee Road, Newtownards, BT23 4YH (Tel: 02891819328) and he will arrange to meet with you to discuss the issue.

Flood Prevention

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has sought additional funding from the Executive in the last year for flood alleviation and flood prevention measures.

(AQO 2624/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been pursuing all funding avenues to prioritise investment in our water and sewerage infrastructure, including flood alleviation measures.

In the June Monitoring round I made a £7 million capital bid for 4 water supply resilience schemes (additional water mains to ensure security of customer supplies during extreme weather like Winter 2010/11). The bid was unsuccessful.

As part of the "Invest to Save" scheme, in July 2012 I made a £17 million capital bid. £7 million for the 4 water supply resilience schemes and £10 million to accelerate a number of sewer projects designed to reduce the impact of severe weather conditions. The bid was unsuccessful.

I will continue making the case for this investment (i.e. the £17m) including options for reprioritising current DRD resources, so I am not just demanding extra funding.

Ultimately, allocation and prioritisation of resources is a matter for the Executive.

Rathlin Island: Roads

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what road improvements are scheduled for Rathlin Island between now and 2015.

(AQO 2625/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that, other than general road maintenance, Roads Service currently has no plans for road improvement schemes on Rathlin Island over the next three years.

However, the Member may already be aware that in June 2009, approximately two kilometres of Rathlin Island's unbound stone roads were surfaced with a bituminous surface at a cost of £150,000 and in 2010, Roads Service also surface dressed 27,000 square metres of the island's existing bitumen macadam roads at a cost of £100,000.

Active Travel Demonstration Projects

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Regional Development if there are any plans to roll out active travel demonstration projects across more council areas.

(AQO 2626/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Earlier this year, I announced funding totalling £4.3m over 3 years for four council-led projects which aim to demonstrate how active travel can benefit both individuals and their communities.

Subject to meeting the conditions in their bid applications, the 4 successful bidders are Derry City Council, Belfast City Council, Strabane District Council and Craigavon District Council.

During the preparation and implementation stages of the projects my officials will work closely with the successful Councils and the results will be used to inform any decisions on the potential roll out of demonstration projects in the future.

I can however confirm that no provision has been made in the current spending round for a further extension of the demonstration projects across other council areas.

Department for Social Development

Top Ten Private Landlords

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development for a list of the top ten private landlords, in terms of (i) value; and (ii) quantity of payments, who receive housing benefit payments from the Housing Executive; and what is the sum of the payments to each landlord.

(AQW 14436/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive advises that the information cannot be provided in the format requested as information about payment of Housing Benefit is only held for landlords/companies and cannot be disaggregated. The Housing Executive further advise that in order not to contravene Data Protection legislation, details of the names of the landlords/ companies cannot be released.

However, the list below details the top ten amounts of Housing Benefit paid to landlords/companies during 2011/12: -

- £545,942
- £521,399
- £521,344
- £483,647
- £419,552
- £369,421
- £359,760
- £357,791
- £351,108
- £336,767

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority

Town Centre Parking and Retail Development in Coleraine

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the proposals for town centre parking and retail development in Coleraine.

(AQW 14511/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department continues to work with the developers of the proposed 'Lanes' and 'Ramparts' development schemes in Coleraine to ensure that both schemes can commence as soon as they are economically viable. In the case of the Lanes scheme the developer is considering some changes including redesigning the amount of retail space. In the Ramparts scheme the potential relocation of educational and training services to the development has not yet been decided. Developers for both schemes are examining the potential funding options available to them to bring the proposals to fruition.

John Lewis Inquiry

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has instructed counsel for the upcoming John Lewis Inquiry and, if so, why and at what anticipated cost.

(AQW 14551/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In 2010 my Department was asked by the Planning Appeals Commission to attend the public inquiry into the planning application for the proposed expansion of Sprucefield to respond to questions about regeneration issues in relation to Belfast City Centre. The Department has instructed legal counsel. This is the standard process followed by Departments in preparing for such an inquiry. The Department does not have a final anticipated cost for counsel's fees as the inquiry has been adjourned.

Regional Infrastructure Support Programme

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the selection criteria and process used for each themed bid in the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme.

(AQW 14647/11-15)

Mr McCausland: For each of the themes the Department adopted a two stage process in terms of putting the new arrangements in place; (a) expressions of interest/applications from interested parties with those deemed best placed to deliver the new arrangements progressing to (b) the normal economic appraisal and decision making process. As is the norm with all the Departments funding arrangements, no commitment to provide funding is made until the decision making process is complete and a formal contract for funding has issued.

The selection criteria for each of the themes are detailed at Annex A.

Annex A

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Women in Disadvantaged and Rural Communities

- Demonstrate that they have expertise to deliver the identified specialist functions on a regional basis, rural and urban across the whole of Northern Ireland
- Demonstrate that they can provide services that are value for money for the support of women in disadvantaged areas and rural areas
- Demonstrate they have the flexibility to provide services outside office hours and at weekends for the benefit of women
- A proven ability to work in partnership/collaboration with other Northern Ireland organisations to avoid duplication and address any gaps in provision
- A proven ability to engage across the voluntary and community sector and with marginalised and isolated Northern Ireland communities
- Demonstrate experience in targeting activities to tackle disadvantage towards women and demonstrate that you meet section 75 obligations
- Demonstrate how they identify and target unmet need and potential for services for women in target areas
- Demonstrate that they can specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact
- Demonstrate administrative efficiency and ability to plan for continuous improvement in quality and reach
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the need for the range of services required to support the needs of women living and working in disadvantaged communities and rural communities across Northern Ireland
- A proven track record of working with local councils and central Government in Northern Ireland to support the delivery of local services for women living in disadvantaged areas and rural areas
- A proven track record of engaging and working with women's groups from all sections of the Northern Ireland community

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Faith Sector Engagement

- Demonstrate that they have the capacity and expertise to deliver the identified functions across the whole of Northern Ireland.
- Demonstrate that they can provide services that are value for money.
- Demonstrate they have the flexibility to provide services outside normal office hours and at weekends.

- A proven ability to engage with the faith-based sector in Northern Ireland and with local communities and people groups.
- A proven ability to target activities to tackle disadvantage regardless of personal values, beliefs, creed or ethnicity.
- Demonstrate that they meet section 75 obligations.
- A proven ability to specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact.
- Demonstrate administrative efficiency.
- Demonstrate planning for continuous improvement in quality and reach.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the need for faith-based activities to address greatest social needs in our communities.
- A proven track record of working with central and local Government to support the delivery of services.

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Voluntary Advice Services

- A proven ability to provide support for voluntary advice services at a regional level which are inclusive of all communities across Northern Ireland.
- A proven ability to provide leadership, representation and support to the Advice Sector.
- A proven ability to lead, plan and manage change within the Advice Sector.
- A proven ability to provide support coverage across Northern Ireland (in both urban and rural areas).
- A proven ability to provide expert advice on a regional basis on legal advice issues.
- A proven track record in providing value for money services.
- A proven track record in working in partnership/collaboration with others to avoid duplication.
- A proven ability to engage with key stakeholders including the community, front-line advice providers, councils and government in supporting the implementation of 'Opening Doors'.
- A proven ability to demonstrate that they meet section 75 obligations.
- A proven ability to specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact.
- A proven ability to demonstrate administrative efficiency.
- A proven ability to plan and manage continuous improvement in quality and reach e.g. geographical, technical, media outlets.
- A proven ability to provide infrastructure support on IT, advice specific training and development and management information systems for advice service delivery.

Selection Criteria - Regional Volunteering Infrastructure

- Please state the estimated total cost of the project, including VAT.
- Please demonstrate that your organisation has the capacity, capability, experience and expertise to deliver the actions identified within the Action Plan.
- Please provide evidence of working collaboratively with regional authorities / organisations involved in volunteering. Please also provide contact names and numbers of regional and local authority officials who may be asked for references.
- Please provide evidence of partnership working with public and private sector organisations.
- Please provide a breakdown of how the programme will be managed, including accountability, financial controls and monitoring arrangements.

- Please provide evidence of how your organisation [consortium] can ensure the successful implementation of the regional actions of the volunteering strategy including section 75 groupings.
- As policy lead for volunteering in Northern Ireland DSD will require its strategic partner for Regional Activity to assist in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the volunteer strategy and determining any changes required.
Does this present any significant issues for your organisation?
- If successful your organisation may have to work in close partnership with other local or regional volunteering strategic partners in implementing the volunteering strategy.
Does this present any significant issues for your organisation?

Regional Infrastructure Support Programme

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department completed an economic appraisal for the women's consortium bid which had been given preferred bidder status in the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme; and to outline the main conclusions of this appraisal.

(AQW 14650/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In terms of putting the new arrangements in place, the Department adopted a two stage process; (a) expressions of interest/applications followed by (b) the normal appraisal and decision making process. As part of the second stage of the process, the Department prepared an economic appraisal for the Women's consortium, however the full decision making process was not complete and, as is the norm, no commitment to provide funding is made until the process is complete and a formal contract for funding has issued.

Selection Process for the Regional Infrastructural Programme

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the (i) processes for expressions of interest; and (ii) criteria applied in the selection process for the Regional Infrastructural programme, including the timescales involved.

(AQW 14732/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department adopted a two stage process in terms of putting the new regional support arrangements in place; (a) expressions of interest/applications from interested parties with those deemed best placed to deliver the new arrangements progressing to (b) the normal economic appraisal and decision making process. As is the norm with all the Departments funding arrangements, no commitment to provide funding is made until the decision making process is complete and a formal contract for funding has issued.

The Expression of Interest stage completed in March 2012, to facilitate contracts for funding being in place by 1 October 2012.

The selection criteria for each of the funding strands are detailed at Annex A.

Annex A

Selection Criteria – Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (RISP)

- Demonstrate that they have the capacity and expertise to deliver the identified functions across the whole of Northern Ireland
- Demonstrate that they provide services that are value for money
- Demonstrate they have the flexibility to provide services outside office hours and at weekends
- A proven capacity for working in partnership/collaboration with others to avoid duplication
- A proven ability to engage across the voluntary and community sector and with communities across NI

- Target activities to tackle disadvantage
- Demonstrate that they meet Section 75 obligations
- Identify and target unmet need and potential
- Specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact
- Demonstrate administrative efficiency
- Show planning for continuous improvement in quality and reach
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the need for the wide range of services required by the VCS
- A proven track record of working with local councils, and central government in NI to support the delivery of local services

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Women in Disadvantaged and Rural Communities

- Demonstrate that they have expertise to deliver the identified specialist functions on a regional basis, rural and urban across the whole of Northern Ireland
- Demonstrate that they can provide services that are value for money for the support of women in disadvantaged areas and rural areas
- Demonstrate they have the flexibility to provide services outside office hours and at weekends for the benefit of women
- A proven ability to work in partnership/collaboration with other Northern Ireland organisations to avoid duplication and address any gaps in provision
- A proven ability to engage across the voluntary and community sector and with marginalised and isolated Northern Ireland communities
- Demonstrate experience in targeting activities to tackle disadvantage towards women and demonstrate that you meet section 75 obligations
- Demonstrate how they identify and target unmet need and potential for services for women in target areas
- Demonstrate that they can specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact
- Demonstrate administrative efficiency and ability to plan for continuous improvement in quality and reach
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the need for the range of services required to support the needs of women living and working in disadvantaged communities and rural communities across Northern Ireland
- A proven track record of working with local councils and central Government in Northern Ireland to support the delivery of local services for women living in disadvantaged areas and rural areas
- A proven track record of engaging and working with women's groups from all sections of the Northern Ireland community

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Faith Sector Engagement

- Demonstrate that they have the capacity and expertise to deliver the identified functions across the whole of Northern Ireland.
- Demonstrate that they can provide services that are value for money.
- Demonstrate they have the flexibility to provide services outside normal office hours and at weekends.
- A proven ability to engage with the faith-based sector in Northern Ireland and with local communities and people groups.

- A proven ability to target activities to tackle disadvantage regardless of personal values, beliefs, creed or ethnicity.
- Demonstrate that they meet section 75 obligations.
- A proven ability to specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact.
- Demonstrate administrative efficiency.
- Demonstrate planning for continuous improvement in quality and reach.
- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the need for faith-based activities to address greatest social needs in our communities.
- A proven track record of working with central and local Government to support the delivery of services.

Selection Criteria - Regional Support for Voluntary Advice Services

- A proven ability to provide support for voluntary advice services at a regional level which are inclusive of all communities across Northern Ireland.
- A proven ability to provide leadership, representation and support to the Advice Sector.
- A proven ability to lead, plan and manage change within the Advice Sector.
- A proven ability to provide support coverage across Northern Ireland (in both urban and rural areas).
- A proven ability to provide expert advice on a regional basis on legal advice issues.
- A proven track record in providing value for money services.
- A proven track record in working in partnership/collaboration with others to avoid duplication.
- A proven ability to engage with key stakeholders including the community, front-line advice providers, councils and government in supporting the implementation of 'Opening Doors'.
- A proven ability to demonstrate that they meet section 75 obligations.
- A proven ability to specify and provide evidence of outcomes and impact.
- A proven ability to demonstrate administrative efficiency.
- A proven ability to plan and manage continuous improvement in quality and reach e.g. geographical, technical, media outlets.
- A proven ability to provide infrastructure support on IT, advice specific training and development and management information systems for advice service delivery.

Selection Criteria - Regional Volunteering Infrastructure

- Please state the estimated total cost of the project, including VAT.
- Please demonstrate that your organisation has the capacity, capability, experience and expertise to deliver the actions identified within the Action Plan.
- Please provide evidence of working collaboratively with regional authorities / organisations involved in volunteering. Please also provide contact names and numbers of regional and local authority officials who may be asked for references.
- Please provide evidence of partnership working with public and private sector organisations.
- Please provide a breakdown of how the programme will be managed, including accountability, financial controls and monitoring arrangements.
- Please provide evidence of how your organisation [consortium] can ensure the successful implementation of the regional actions of the volunteering strategy including section 75 groupings.

- As policy lead for volunteering in Northern Ireland DSD will require its strategic partner for Regional Activity to assist in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the volunteer strategy and determining any changes required.

Does this present any significant issues for your organisation?

If successful your organisation may have to work in close partnership with other local or regional volunteering strategic partners in implementing the volunteering strategy.

Does this present any significant issues for your organisation?

Audit of the Housing Executive

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the timescale for completion of the process and the publication of the audit of the Housing Executive.

(AQW 14736/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I assume the Member is referring to the ASM report. The Housing Executive is currently considering the draft findings in the report and I am awaiting their response. However, in relation to the future publication of the report, much of the information in the report relates to contractors and would be classed as commercial in confidence. I have advised the Housing Executive that any issues in relation to individual contractors will be a matter for the Housing Executive to take forward in line with their contract management arrangements.

Underspend by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the level of underspend by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in the last financial year.

(AQW 14783/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) is a Public Corporation in budgeting terms and the Department's budget outturn reflects the total cash payments made against the approved budget allocations. On this basis the final budget reflects an underspend of £50,000 revenue funding. On the basis of the 2011/12 final NIHE annual accounts, which are accounted for as a Public Corporation, there was a capital underspend of £5 million relating to the Social Housing Development Programme in the 2011/12 financial year. However as the Department's budget outturn is presented on a cash basis this underspend is not reflected in the final comparison between outturn and approved allocations.

Social Housing Development Programme

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development to explain the level of underspend in the Social Housing Development Programme; and how this has impacted on construction targets.

(AQW 14784/11-15)

Mr McCausland: An £8 million underspend in the Social Housing Development Programme has been identified in the current financial year; I am seeking, through the October Monitoring Round, to reallocate this funding to the Co-Ownership Scheme.

Current Programme for Government plans are to deliver 8,000 new social and affordable homes over the four year period 2011-2015. Progress is ahead of target with 2,053 new properties provided in 2011/12. For the current year, the target has always been to provide a further 1,825 new social and affordable homes. While I have had concerns about the risks attached to some aspects of programme delivery, I have met with the Housing Executive and Housing Associations to put in place measures to ensure targets and budgets are met.

Employment and Support Allowance Refusal Decisions

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 13836/11-15, to provide (i) the number of overall appeals to which these figures relate; and (ii) the number of appeals declined at mandatory reconsideration but subsequently won on full appeal hearing,
(AQW 14786/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 13836/11-15, to provide (i) the number of overall appeals to which these figures relate; and (ii) the number of appeals declined at mandatory reconsideration but subsequently won on full appeal hearing.

Answer: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Year	(i) Total Appeals Received	Decisions reconsidered in customer favour upon receipt of an appeal	Appeals declined at reconsideration	(ii) Appeals subsequently heard in customer favour
April 10 to March 11	6498	635	5863	1492
April 11 to March 12	10460	685	9775	2067
April 12 to August 12	8699	341	8358	920
Total	25657	1661	23996	4479

Number of Children Living in Poverty

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the difference in the number of children living in poverty in 2002 compared to 2012.
(AQW 14795/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The total number of children who live in a household which is considered to be in relative income poverty in 2002/03 was 108,300 or 25% of the child population in Northern Ireland. The figure is presented on a Before Housing Costs basis.

The total number of children who live in a household which is considered to be in relative income poverty in 2010/11 was 93,000 or 21% of the child population in Northern Ireland. The figure is presented on a Before Housing Costs basis.

The results are produced using the Family Resources Survey and Households Below Average Income datasets for Northern Ireland. In April 2002 the Family Resources Survey was extended to include households in Northern Ireland, resulting in 2002/03 analysis being the earliest available for Northern Ireland. Analysis of poverty previous to this was only available at the Great Britain level. The latest available information is from the 2010/11 survey year. Results for 2011/12 are expected in June of 2013.

Goal Line Youth, Portadown

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development (i) for his assessment of the contribution of Goal Line Youth, Portadown; (ii) whether he is aware of its present urgent funding needs which, if unmet, will lead to the organisation closing its doors on 31 October 2012; and (iii) what assistance his Department can provide to the organisation as it seeks to continue to meet the needs of over two hundred children, almost 50 percent of whom have special educational and disability needs.
(AQW 14839/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Whilst my Department has had no involvement with Goal Line Youth in Portadown, I do believe that this organisation makes a valuable contribution in delivering important services in

the Portadown area. I have, just recently, received correspondence highlighting the financial crisis this group is facing. I also understand that my Ministerial colleagues with responsibility for matters relating to Health and Education have also been approached. In terms of potential funding opportunities, my Department provides funding to the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) to help support the voluntary and community sector. NICVA operate a 'grant tracker' software package that many organisations have used effectively to identify potential funding opportunities. This can be accessed directly through <http://www.grant-tracker.org/>

Benefits of Installing Reversible Windows

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what are the long term benefits of installing reversible windows instead of casement windows.

(AQW 14886/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive had installed reversible windows universally across all its stock from 2006. However, from 2010, flush casement style windows have been installed in Housing Executive ground floor properties; reversible windows will only be installed in medium and high rise blocks. Casement style windows look identical to fully reversible windows externally, use the same quality hinges, and to date there have been no recorded maintenance costs or replacements undertaken. While reversible hinges have a guarantee of 25 years, the Housing Executive will, in the new/revised specification, require that a casement friction stay hinge provides a 10 year mechanical guarantee, and the suppliers of same will be required to demonstrate compliance with this performance standard.

In relation to costs and health and safety requirements, reversible hinges have three key features: integral child restriction, fire egress and easy clean. A casement hinge is available which reflects all three key features, and it has been confirmed to the Housing Executive as costing approximately 60% that of a reversible hinge.

Home Owners in Negative Equity

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the situation home owners are facing through negative equity as a result of the downturn in the housing market, detailing any relevant statistical information his Department holds; and what steps he plans to take to support people affected by negative equity.

(AQW 15046/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Unfortunately details of the exact number of properties with negative equity are not available for Northern Ireland. Research undertaken by the Council of Mortgage Lenders in August 2011 made reference to 827,000 households in the UK, which is fewer than 8% of those with a mortgage, who had some negative equity in the first quarter of 2011.

It is important to note that negative equity does not create an immediate problem for the majority of persons in such a position. However, two main groups appear to be affected; firstly, those who are experiencing difficulties making mortgage payments; and secondly those who need to move house to take up permanent employment.

Anyone who thinks they are in danger of losing their home due to debt secured on it should seek advice immediately. My Department funds the Mortgage Debt Advice Service, operated by Housing Rights Service, to help those experiencing difficulty making mortgage payments; it can be contacted on 0300 323 0310. My Department also continues to provide help to those receiving certain social security benefits through Support for Mortgage Interest.

Mortgage Repayments

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Social Development (i) to detail the number of home owners who are more than three months behind with their mortgage repayments; (ii) how this compares with the

total number of active mortgages; and (iii) what steps his Department is taking to help people who are unable to meet their mortgage repayments.

(AQW 15047/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Details of the exact number of home owners who are more than three months in arrears on their mortgage payments is not available for Northern Ireland. However, the latest figures issued by the Council of Mortgage Lenders indicates that, in June 2012 157,400 households in the UK have mortgage arrears of 2.5% or more of their outstanding balance. As there are approximately 11.2 million mortgages in the UK, this represents 1.4% of all active residential mortgages.

Anyone who thinks they are in danger of losing their home due to debt secured on it should seek advice immediately. I am aware that a large number of people here experience difficulty meeting mortgage payments. For those people receiving certain social security benefits my Department continues to provide help through Support for Mortgage Interest. My Department also funds the Mortgage Debt Advice Service to help those experiencing difficulty making mortgage payments to avoid the distressing prospect of court action and possible repossession. This free advice service, operated by the Housing Rights Service, has received funding until March 2015. The service operates during office working hours and now includes an online advisor and evening opening hours to 8.00pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays and can be contacted directly on 0300 323 0310.

Decontamination Contract for Fort George

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 10588/11-15, whether the Fort George decontamination project is due for completion by the end of 2013.

(AQW 15162/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Ilex Urban Regeneration Company is currently responsible for the Fort George decontamination project. Ilex has advised that the current timeframe for completing the entire Fort George decontamination project is April 2014.

It should be noted that the timeframe for this project is not fixed as the necessary tests have not yet been completed and the remediation strategy has not been produced and agreed with the Northern Ireland Environmental Agency and City Council's Environmental Health department.

Northern Ireland Welfare Reform Bill

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development whether he, or any of his senior officials, have received correspondence from their counterparts in the Department for Work and Pensions over the last six months expressing concern about the delay in the introduction of the Northern Ireland Welfare Reform Bill.

(AQW 15250/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I received a letter from the Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) dated the 24th May 2012, in which he highlighted potential impacts arising from any delay in the Welfare Reform Bill being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

New Pension Centre

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 14770/11-15, when staff from Carlisle House, who are not permitted to apply for a transfer, will be able to make transfer applications.

(AQW 15324/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Staff in the Northern Ireland Pension Centre in Carlisle House can express their interest in transfer opportunities as they arise, however it may not always be possible for the manager to give approval for an application to be made. Each opportunity as it arises is considered on a case by case basis and in the context of ensuring that sufficient resources are in place at all times to deliver a quality service to 300,000 pensioners in Northern Ireland. This approach is in accordance with the Northern Ireland Civil Service Terms and Conditions of Employment as set out in the Northern Ireland

Staff Handbook which states that “it should be recognised that for business needs it is not always possible to release staff for transfer”.

Red Sky

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Social Development whether any conflict of interest existed between himself and former staff and directors of Red Sky in relation to the review of its handling of maintenance contracts for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

(AQO 2632/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There was no conflict of interest between myself and former staff and directors of Red Sky in relation to the review of the company’s handling of maintenance contracts for the Housing Executive.

DSD: Collaborative Working

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made with delivering on his Department’s commitment to develop and test new ways of collaborative working between Government and the Community and Voluntary sectors and promote more effective partnerships within the sectors.

(AQO 2636/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since the signing of the Concordat for relationships between government and the voluntary and community sector significant progress has taken place in developing partnership and collaborative working. Joint Action Teams are taking forward work looking at areas such as involving voluntary and community sector involvement in government policy formulation, the elimination of excessive bureaucracy and the development of a more outcome focussed approach to funding.

Each Concordat Action Team has representatives from the public service and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Each Action Team reports regularly to joint Forum on progress against the commitments. The Joint Forum report yearly is presented through the DSD Minister to the Executive and Assembly.

The welfare reform process being taken forward by my department also clearly recognises the role of the voluntary and community sectors in providing support in areas such as Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payments, family separation and maintenance issues and has held various information sessions with the sector to keep them updated on developments.

The Child Maintenance Choices team provides help, guidance and support with a particular emphasis on early intervention. This includes engaging with Surestart centres, Community organisations, Advice centres etc in order to ensure there is awareness of the information and support available at the earliest opportunity – particularly for those going through family breakdown.

The SSA Business Plan has as a target - “Foster and promote positive engagement with voluntary and community organisations by working in partnership with NICVA to deliver communications around Welfare Reform.

All Welfare Reform project teams (Universal Credit, Personal Independence Payment and Social Fund) have held various information sessions with the sector to keep them updated with changes to the welfare system that may affect the public.

Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have been awarded zero points following an examination for Employment and Support Allowance at a medical centre.

(AQO 2637/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Since the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance in October 2008, 102,782 customers have participated in the Work Capability Assessment process. It is not possible, due to system limitations, to detail how many of these customers scored zero points.

However it is possible, following implementation of the Medical Services Referral System (MSRS), to provide this information from June 2011 to August 2012. During this period 23,843 customers were awarded zero points following an examination for Employment and Support Allowance.

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Employment and Support Allowance: Work Capability Assessment

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the Work Capability Assessment.

(AQO 2638/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Work Capability Assessment process has an important role in informing decisions as to whether individuals have an entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance. It has been developed with the support of healthcare professionals and the involvement of a number of different charities. In agreeing to the introduction of the Work Capability Assessment, the Northern Ireland Assembly recognised that it would be need to be kept under review and provision was made in Section 10 of the Welfare Reform Act (Northern Ireland) 2007. I asked for a series of independent reviews to be carried out during the first year of its organisation. Professor Malcolm Harrington, an occupational health specialist, was commissioned to undertake this review and his first two reports were laid before the Assembly in September 2011 and November 2011 respectively.

Professor Harrington's third and final review is already underway. To assist this review my Department launched a "call for evidence" on 14 August 2012. A total of 279 responses were received by the closing date of 14 September from individuals and organisations throughout Northern Ireland, which is a significant increase to the 3 responses received in 2011 to the Year 2 call for evidence. The majority of responses, 243, were from individuals with the remaining 36 from professional and voluntary organisations.

The responses received were forwarded to the Department for Work and Pensions on 17 September. They will inform Professor Harrington's third, and final, review with the report of his findings expected before the end of the year.

Whilst I am encouraged that Professor Harrington has not yet recommended a radical re-design of the Work Capability Assessment process, I also have personal concerns about the Work Capability Assessment based on representations made to me by constituents and I have asked my officials to consider if further improvements can be made to specific aspects of the process, including how customers with mental health issues are treated.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has received correspondence since May 2012 from the Department for Work and Pensions which expressed concern about the delay in introducing the Welfare Reform Bill Northern Ireland.

(AQO 2639/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I received a letter from The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP (Secretary of State for Work and Pensions) dated the 24th May 2012, in which he highlighted potential impacts arising from any delay in the Welfare Reform Bill being passed by the Northern Ireland Assembly.

New Mossley, Newtownabbey

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the schemes that are planned for the New Mossley estate.

(AQO 2640/11-15)

Mr McCausland: With regards to the Social Housing Development Programme, Connswater Housing Association has been nominated to deliver 15 new dwellings on Housing Executive owned land at Milewater Road, New Mossley during 2013/14.

The following Improvement/Maintenance schemes are also programmed for the New Mossley area: -

- External Cyclical Maintenance scheme covering Carn Green, Carn Rise and Carn Way: to start in October/November 2012 for 21 dwellings;
- Kitchen Replacement Scheme for Milewater Terrace, New Mossley: to start in January 2013, for 3 dwellings; and
- Window Replacement Scheme for Monkstown/New Mossley: to start in August 2013 for 224 dwellings.

Melvin Bridge, Strabane

Mr McAleer asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on his discussions with the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the Melvin Bridge project in Strabane.

(AQO 2641/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Melvin Bridge project is being promoted by Strabane District Council and neither my Department nor the Department for Regional Development is in the lead on it. I have not had any direct contact with the Minister for Regional Development in relation to the project. However, officials from my Department and from the Department for Regional Development have met with Strabane District Council to discuss how best it might be taken forward. Both Departments will be involved in a project steering group being set up by the Council to take the project forward.

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Revised Written Answers

Friday 12 October 2012

(AQW 14450/11-15)

- (i) The 17 councils that have a payment term for invoices, with some suppliers, of less than 30 days are named in the attached list.

Council name
Antrim
Armagh
Ballymena
Ballymoney
Banbridge
Belfast
Carrickfergus
Coleraine
Craigavon
Down
Larne
Limavady
Lisburn
Magherafelt
Moyle
Newry and Mourne
Newtownabbey

- (i) The 5 councils that have a payment term for invoices, with some suppliers, of more than 30 days are named in the attached list.

Council name
Antrim
Ballymena
Ballymoney
Carrickfergus
Limavady

(AQW 14451/11-15)

- (i) The number of invoices paid within 10 working days of receipt of the supplier's invoice for each council, for the period 1 April to 31 August 2012, is detailed in the table below.

Council	(i)
Antrim	317
Ards	2,731
Armagh	1,437
Ballymena	1,629
Ballymoney	843
Banbridge	816
Belfast	6,977
Carrickfergus	465
Castlereagh	N/A
Coleraine	269
Cookstown	1,182
Craigavon	729
Derry	2,940
Down	1,069
Dungannon & S Tyrone	1,091
Fermanagh	1,781
Larne	611
Limavady	559
Lisburn	1,380
Magherafelt	1,239
Moyle	300
Newry & Mourne	501
Newtownabbey	2,772
North Down	2,575
Omagh	998
Strabane	451

N/A Council has advised that the information is not available

- (ii) None of the 26 District Councils have paid 90% of suppliers within 10 days of receipt of invoice.
- (iii) It should be noted that the recently issued Section 3.1.5 of the DFP Central Procurement Directorate's Guidance Note 06/12, which urges Departments to aim to pay at least 90% of valid invoices within 10 working days, is not mandatory upon district councils. District councils are bodies corporate as defined in the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and as such are independent of central Government. They are responsible for their own financial affairs.
-

Following a number of questions on prompt payments, the department issued guidance in June recommending that councils should record their payment performance for the 2012/2013 year for 30, 10 (or other) day targets. The councils' performance on prompt payments will be published as part of their annual accounts. This circular also encouraged councils to pay suppliers as promptly as possible and to endeavour to match the 10 day prompt payment commitment being made by central government in response to the current economic position and to keep its performance under review.

(AQW 14452/11-15)

The number of invoices paid in total between 1 April and 30 August 2012, including those paid within and outside of 30 days from receipt of invoice, is set out below.

Council	(i) Total no paid	(ii) (a) Paid within 30 days	(ii) (b) Paid over 30 days
Antrim	4,243	1,477	2,766
Ards	5,389	4,669	720
Armagh	4,205	3,943	262
Ballymena	4,529	3,980	549
Ballymoney	2,599	2,495	104
Banbridge	2,160	1,605	555
Belfast	22,794	17,131	5,663
Carrickfergus	2,023	1,212	811
Castlereagh	3,356	N/A	N/A
Coleraine	3,839	2,521	1,318
Cookstown	2,143	2,105	38
Craigavon	4,384	2,586	1,798
Derry	7,482	5,402	2,080
Down	5,063	3,914	1,148
Dungannon & S Tyrone	1,948	1,707	241
Fermanagh	4,209	3,032	1,177
Larne	1,372	1,057	315
Limavady	2,876	2,216	660
Lisburn	5,217	4,995	780
Magherafelt	2,580	2,402	178
Moyle	1,495	965	530
Newry & Mourne	5,640	3,661	1,979
Newtownabbey	6,539	5,563	976
North Down	4,793	4,061	732

Council	(i) Total no paid	(ii) (a)Paid within 30 days	(ii) (b) Paid over 30 days
Omagh	2,422	1,975	447
Strabane	1,467	1,063	404

N/A Council has advised that the information is not available

(AQW 9917/11-15)

As fertilisation and embryology issues are reserved matters, this question should be referred to the UK Government for response.



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