

# Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

**Friday 19 April 2013**

**Volume 84, No WA1**



# Contents

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister ..... WA 1

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development ..... WA 3

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure ..... WA 12

Department of Education ..... WA 15

Department for Employment and Learning..... WA 23

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment ..... WA 30

Department of the Environment..... WA 32

Department of Finance and Personnel ..... WA 39

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety..... WA 40

Department of Justice ..... WA 47

Department for Regional Development..... WA 50

Department for Social Development ..... WA 52

Northern Ireland Assembly Commission..... WA 56

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

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Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

# Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 19 April 2013

## Written Answers to Questions

### Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

#### Gender Equality Strategy

**Mr McMullan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Gender Equality Strategy.

**(AQO 3557/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** A review of the Gender Equality Strategy and its associated cross departmental Action Plans is currently underway. The review, which is scheduled to be completed in April, will consider how effectively the Strategy has performed against its objectives; assess the effectiveness of the Action Plans; and make recommendations for the aims, objectives and delivery of the Strategy and Action Plans in the years remaining – 2013-16.

#### Delivering Social Change

**Mr Moutray** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have to bring forward additional signature projects under Delivering Social Change.

**(AQO 3705/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The early work being taken forward under the Delivering Social Change framework is focusing on the needs of children and families in order to ensure that the most urgent and significant problems in our society are addressed – problems such as poor educational outcomes, poor physical and mental health, economic activity, social exclusion and disadvantage.

In line with this initial focus, we have agreed a 'Children and Young Persons Early Action Document' which identifies key priorities to be taken forward over the coming years. The initial six Signature Programmes we announced on 10 October 2012 were designed, therefore, to address some of the key priorities identified within the Early Action Document.

However, you will be aware that the Delivering Social Change framework is seeking to reduce poverty and associated issues across all ages, and so whilst this initial focus is on the needs of our children and young people, its longer term objective is to lay the basis for sustained social improvement for all our vulnerable groups.

We are therefore keen that further programmes are identified as a rolling programme of new initiatives, and we are currently giving consideration to a number of possible future signature programmes for a second phase of work to be taken forward.

However we believe that the greatest influence that Delivering Social Change can have is to change the culture and the core spending within departments. If we can get departments to refocus some of their core budgets then we believe that we can seriously tackle the issues of poverty and deprivation.

## **Report to the Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

**Ms Fearon** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their input to the report to the Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**(AQO 3707/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UK State Party Report is due to be submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child by 14 January 2014 as part of the Periodic Review.

The Department for Education in England leads the process and officials within OFMDFM have been co-ordinating work across the Executive to provide our input, which will include how we have addressed the Concluding Observations from the previous Periodic Review in 2008.

The exercise provides us with an opportunity to take a critical look at the state of children's lives, using the Child Rights Indicator Framework which we are developing with the UNESCO Centre. The Framework will provide an evidence base not just for the report but also for assessing progress on the Executive's 10 year Strategy for Children and Young People and for informing policy development in relation to children and young people over the longer term.

The sector has been closely involved in the development of the framework and we will seek to maintain that collaborative approach to identify gaps in delivery and to address the issues facing children.

We also recognise the importance of the voice of children in the report and will be consulting with children through a range of fora over the next few months.

We recognise that providing input to the report is not an end in itself. Its real benefits lie in the opportunity it provides to re-examine the extent to which children's rights are met and to reinvigorate our efforts to improve the lives of our children and young people.

## **Social Investment Fund**

**Mr Buchanan** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the progress of the Social Investment Fund in the nine designated zones.

**(AQO 3712/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Steering groups from across the nine designated zones have now completed the area planning process and submitted final area plans.

The plans, which were received on 28 February, contain a broad range of projects aimed at addressing critical needs in those zones such as education underachievement, unemployment, health issues and physical regeneration.

The plans and projects are now the subject of a quality assurance review. This process will assess the individual projects against set criteria to ensure the most robust projects are recommended, to maximise impact on the ground.

Following appraisal, we will take decisions on the final projects to be funded and the most appropriate delivery mechanism, with a view to projects commencing in communities soon afterwards.

## **Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 17631/11-15, to detail the nature of the £0.20m in assets that their Department has identified to the Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board, broken down by year.

**(AQW 21458/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The £0.20m in assets scheduled for disposal in 2014/15 relates to the former Regional Government Headquarters Building and associated land in Ballymena.

The projected value is based on a valuation undertaken by Land and Property Services in early 2012 and will be reviewed before the property is offered for sale to take account of the prevailing market conditions at the time.

### **Translation Services**

**Mr Craig** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much their Department spent on translation services for visiting foreign nationals in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 21524/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** Our Department has not incurred any expenditure on such translation services in the last five years.

### **Historical Institutional Abuse**

**Mr Agnew** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what progress has been made on the establishment of an advocacy service for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse.

**(AQW 21626/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** OFMDFM listened to victims' concerns about the need for support services for victims and survivors and as a result ensured that, in January 2012, arrangements were put in place for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse to make full use of the counselling support services provided by Lifeline.

Lifeline operates a free, in confidence telephone line which can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Lifeline will provide up to 6 full counselling sessions with victims and survivors depending on their individual needs. This can be extended further in exceptional circumstances.

Victims and survivors are also provided with the contact details for the Nexus Institute, which provides free counselling and support services to people who have experienced sexual abuse.

In October 2012, at the request of Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse (SAVIA), OFMDFM funded the WAVE Trauma Centre to provide a drop in and counselling facility for victims and survivors in Derry/Londonderry. The meeting place is available from 10am-12pm every Friday morning and a qualified Trauma counsellor is on hand.

A similar meeting place had been provided in Belfast City Centre, but as it was not used, it was discontinued at the end of January 2013.

OFMDFM invited tenders for a broader service for victims and survivors with a closing date of 24 January 2013. Work on this is ongoing.

## **Department of Agriculture and Rural Development**

### **TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail her Department's TV, radio and newspaper advertising campaigns, in each of the last three years; and the spend on each campaign.

**(AQW 21064/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development):****2009/10**

CAFRE	CAFRE recruitment – newspapers, trade press and cinema advertising	£60,969.00
Disease Prevention and Management	Brucellosis awareness – newspaper advertising	£5,444.26
Rural Development Programme	Rural Development Programme – newspaper advertising	£18,000.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£84,413.26</b>

**2010/11**

CAFRE	CAFRE recruitment – newspapers, trade press and cinema advertising	£47,908.00
Disease Prevention and Management	Brucellosis awareness – newspaper advertising	£6,366.58
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£54,274.58</b>

**2011/12**

CAFRE	CAFRE recruitment – newspapers, trade press and cinema advertising	£52,481.17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£52,481.17</b>

**Single Farm Payments**

**Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what action she has taken to assure farmers residing in areas subjected to the recent severe snowstorms, that they will receive their outstanding Single Farm Payments.

**(AQW 21374/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am pleased to say that 2012 Single Farm Payments have already been made to 95% of farmers in the affected areas as a result of actions I took previously to accelerate the processing of inspections in 2012.

EU rules only permit Single Farm Payments (SFP) to be paid when all verification checks have been completed and the correct amount due has been calculated. I am assured that the small number of cases in these areas that have not yet been paid solely because of the need to apply inspection findings to claims will be completed by the end of May. The Department engages on an ongoing basis with individual farmers concerned about their payments and gives them an indication as to when they might expect their payment to be finalised.

A small number of claims each year cannot be paid for reasons beyond the control of my Department. A payment may not be due in all remaining cases because of ineligibility or the application of penalties under scheme rules

Farmers who require information about the estimated timing of payments on SFP claims which have not yet been finalised should contact my Department's Single Farm Payment Branch on Telephone 0300 200 8848.

## Rural Schools

**Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans she has to visit rural schools that are earmarked for closure.

**(AQW 21376/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I have no plans to visit schools earmarked for closure. Decisions around school closures are a matter for the Minister of Education taking account of the educational needs of our children and ensuring that they have access to high quality education regardless of where they live.

## Rural Schools

**Mr Rogers** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussions she has had to date with the Minister of Education on the issue of school closures in rural areas.

**(AQW 21377/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I have previously written to the Minister of Education on a number of occasions regarding the future of rural schools highlighting the important role they play in helping to sustain rural communities. The Minister of Education has responded reaffirming his commitment to sustaining rural communities and outlining his Department's Sustainable Schools Policy.

He has also confirmed that the Sustainable Schools Policy was rural proofed prior to its publication in 2009 and that any decision to close or amalgamate a rural school is subject to an assessment using the criteria set out in the policy, covering a number of factors, not just the number of pupils. He also reaffirmed that it is the quality of education which is his over-riding consideration.

## Farmers' Loss of Livestock

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there have been any claims from farmers for loss of livestock due to the snow in the Craigantlet Hills area of North Down.

**(AQW 21381/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Claims are recorded by the Postcode area of the farm. Records to date show one claim received from the BT23 area, which includes the Craigantlet Hills, and one from the BT25 area. In that case the animals were grazed in the Craigantlet hills.

## Use of Helicopters: Drop Supplies

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department paid for the use of helicopters to drop supplies to farmers stranded by snow.

**(AQW 21384/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** In line with standard procedure and Treasury protocols, the Ministry of Defence expects to be reimbursed when it provides support to the civil authorities throughout Britain and the north of Ireland. The detail of the actual costs for the use of helicopters to drop supplies to farmers are still being worked out and have not yet been presented to the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Irish Air Corps have indicated that there would be no charge for the aerial support provided by them to get supplies of fodder to livestock.

## Extreme Weather Conditions

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have been affected by the recent snowstorms.

**(AQW 21385/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The affect of the adverse weather on farmers continues to unfold. At the 11 April fallen stock had been collected from 660 farms. 94 farmers have had feed moved to livestock by soft tracks

and there have been 46 air drops. 373 calls have also been received relating to other adverse weather issues such as requests for fodder and structural damage.

### **Financial Assistance to Farmers**

**Mr Wells** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether her Department can provide financial assistance to farmers whose outbuildings were damaged during the recent heavy snow.

**(AQW 21394/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am very aware of and fully sympathise with the very difficult situation our farmers find themselves in at this time due to circumstances outside their control, not least in the context of the recent snow storm.

No funding is planned for structural damage to outbuildings that were damaged during the snow storm. It is expected that such damage would be an insurance matter. I have obtained Executive agreement to hardship funding measures to assist farmers worst affected by livestock losses arising from the recent snow storm. The first element of this is that my Department will pay for the costs of collection and disposal of fallen stock from those farmers most severely affected. This relieves those farmers of a potential cost to their business and protects both the environment and animal health by encouraging the proper disposal of fallen stock.

I also intend to bring to the Executive proposals for a hardship scheme, which will be the second element of the hardship measures. The hardship scheme will help to mitigate the costs of the livestock losses that have been sustained by farmers arising from the snow storm. This will be under the EU de minimis rules and capped at a maximum of 7,500 euro per farmer, including the collection and disposal costs of the fallen animals. Farmers, who have fallen stock disposed of during the period 2 April – 19 April 2013 by approved renderers, will be eligible for the hardship funding. The scheme will be framed in light of the information gathered on the extent and nature of losses, which we will build as farmers have stock removed and disposed of by the approved renderers. The hardship payment will be specifically for livestock losses. I hope to release details of the scheme and how to apply as soon as possible.

### **Ash Dieback Disease**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what urgent actions are being implemented by her Department, in conjunction with other agencies, in relation to the outbreak of Ash Dieback Disease in Carrickfergus.

**(AQW 21403/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Following confirmation of infection by ash dieback at Whitehead Diamond Jubilee Wood, DARD issued a statutory notice on Friday 5 April 2012 requiring removal and destruction of all the recently planted ash at the site. The Department is in ongoing communication with officials in Carrickfergus Borough Council on the implementation of the required measures including appropriate biosecurity.

Investigations, including further sampling, have been ongoing at a further site at Bashfordsland Wood where a positive result for the pathogen has also been obtained.

### **Extreme Weather Conditions**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many calls have been made to the hotline established to help farmers during the recent extreme weather conditions.

**(AQW 21411/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** At the 14 April 902 calls, relating to the adverse weather conditions, had been received by the DARD helpline.

## Animal Welfare Officers

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the total number of Animal Welfare Officers operating in the Belfast area; (ii) their total open case load; and (iii) the number of prosecutions (a) secured; and (b) pending.

**(AQW 21469/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:**

- (i) There is currently one Animal Welfare Officer based in the Belfast City Council area. However, the 5 Councils which implement the powers in the Welfare of Animals Act 2011, in respect of non-farmed animals, on behalf of the 26 Councils have adopted a flexible approach which allows any of their Animal Welfare Officers to work in any Council area across the north as the volume of cases demand.
- (ii) Belfast City Council currently has 71 open cases. This includes new cases; cases requiring a second visit to check that the recommended action has been taken; cases being considered for prosecution; and cases where prosecution is pending.
- (iii) The provisions in the 2011 Act which enables Councils to investigate animal welfare complaints in respect of non-farmed animals were only commenced on 2 April 2012. This was to honour a commitment given by my predecessor to allow Councils 12 months to prepare for implementation of their new powers. To date, no cases in Belfast City Council area have reached the Courts. However, 5 prosecutions are pending.

## Horse Microchips and Passports

**Mr A Maginness** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the total number of horses that have been microchipped and have valid passports; (ii) the total number that have not been microchipped or have a valid passport; (iii) the current enforcement policy; and (iv) the total number of prosecutions secured in the last five years for horses that have not been microchipped nor have a valid passport.

**(AQW 21569/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** (i) At 2 July 2012, (the most recent figures available from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs), 19,430 passports had been issued by horse Passport Issuing Organisations in the north. My Department does not hold detail on numbers of horses that have been microchipped.

- (ii) My Department does not hold details of the numbers of horses that have not been microchipped nor have a valid passport.
- (iii) In order to protect the human food chain, the Horse Passports Regulations (NI) 2010 are enforced at point of slaughter and at import / export at ports in the north. A limited number of targeted checks are also carried out at horse sales.
- (iv) No prosecutions have been secured in the last five years for horses that have not been microchipped nor have a valid passport. However, as with any scheme from time to time, complaints/concerns may be raised. Any such queries received are fully investigated by my Department.

## Visit to the Sperrins

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. in relation to her visit to the Sperrins on 5 April 2013, which MLAs from the constituencies of (i) West Tyrone; and (ii) East Londonderry were notified (a) in writing; and (b) orally, regarding the visit.

**(AQW 21579/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** When I am visiting a constituency, Private Office staff will notify all MLA's within that constituency - normally via email.

On 5 April 2013, I visited Plumbridge in West Tyrone. An email advising of this visit was issued to Barry McElduff MLA, Declan McAleer MLA, Michaela Boyle MLA, Joe Byrne MLA, Thomas Buchanan MLA and Ross Hussey MLA.

### **Ash Dieback Disease**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans there are to replace the trees lost to Ash Dieback Disease in Jubilee Wood, Whitehead.

**(AQW 21590/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** As Jubilee Wood belongs to Carrickfergus Borough Council, replanting of trees will be their responsibility. Forest Service will provide advice and guidance on the options available in managing the woodland including selection of alternative species for planting, if required.

### **Craigtlet Hills Area of North Down**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there has been any claims for deceased animals, due to the recent bad weather, from the Craigtlet Hills area of North Down.

**(AQW 21598/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** There has been one claim for eligibility from the Craigtlet Hills area of North Down and this was approved on 09 April 2013.

### **Rural Development Programme**

**Mr Ross** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the delivery of the current Rural Development Programme.

**(AQO 3764/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Implementation and delivery across each Axis and Funding Measure of the Rural Development Programme 2007-13 continues to make good progress and I want to see a Rural Development Programme that delivers the greatest benefit for everyone living or working in our rural areas. There have been many successes to date and these include:-

- Focus Farms Programme, which has enabled 13,800 farmers to learn, share experiences and solve common problems;
- Farm Family Options Programme, which has encouraged 3,000 farm family members to increase their skills and awareness, with financial benchmarking support provided on almost 1,800 farming enterprises;
- Farm Modernisation Programme, where over 2,900 farmers have benefited, with letters of support to a further 2,500 farmers being issued under Tranche 3;
- Agricultural and Forestry Processing and Marketing Grant Scheme, where some £18 million has been invested in 78 agri-food businesses;
- Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowance, which is claimed annually by some 13,500 farm businesses, resulting in another £25m entering the rural economy;
- Agri-environment schemes, where on average £25 million has been provided each year enabling 12,000 farmers to undertake positive environmental actions to enhance our countryside;
- The Woodland Grant Scheme provides £8.9m of support;
- Axis 3 of the Programme, which makes a positive contribution to raising the quality of life in rural areas. Over 1,300 projects have been supported with grant aid of £30m. This has assisted 294 farm businesses to diversify, supported 238 micro-enterprises in our countryside, supported 89 tourism actions and created 319 new jobs.

I want to build on these notable successes and will continue to monitor and review with my officials, Programme Stakeholders and Delivery Bodies ways to keep expenditure on track. As at 31 December 2012, approximately £324 million of NIRD spend has been declared to the European Commission.

### **Single Farm Payments: Trees and Hedgerows**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the guidelines on the existence of large trees and hedgerows with regard to the entitlement to Single Farm Payment.

**(AQO 3767/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** My Department has published guidelines on Land Eligibility to help farmers determine whether or not land is eligible for Single Farm Payment (SFP) when making a claim on their Single Application Form. The SFP Scheme is an area-based scheme and farmers may only claim for land which is in agricultural use. Hedges and trees are valuable landscape and wildlife features and hedges are eligible for payment provided they are not wider than two metres from the centre of the hedge.

The guidelines also make it clear that hedges which exceed two metres wide, at the base, are not eligible for payment and that these features must be deducted from the claimed field area. This is because this land is not considered to be in agricultural use.

In a similar way, land beneath trees that are in a single line, or in a small clump, which have grazing available underneath right up to the trunk, is considered eligible for Single Farm Payment. However if there is bare ground or mulch under the trees, a deduction should be made in the claim to take this ineligible area into account.

I would encourage all farmers who are making a claim to check their maps and verify the eligibility of their hedgerows, and the land beneath large trees, when making their 2013 claim.

### **Dogs**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the numbers of dogs destroyed as a percentage of dogs licensed across council areas.

**(AQO 3768/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** While Councils provide my Department with statistical information regarding their enforcement of the Dogs Order 1983, there is not a direct read across from the numbers of dogs destroyed to the numbers of dogs licensed. For example, while in 2012 there were 123,034 dogs licensed in the north of Ireland there is no direct correlation between the 1,664 dogs which were humanely destroyed. This is because most stray dogs that are humanely destroyed by Councils are unlicensed. Licensed dogs are more easily traced back to their owners and are therefore less likely to be destroyed. I believe that a better comparison to make is the number of dogs destroyed as a percentage of dogs impounded. For example, in 2012 of the 8,676 stray and unwanted dogs that were impounded by Councils, 19%, that is 1,664 dogs, which could not be rehomed, were humanely destroyed.

The Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 introduced compulsory microchipping here in April 2012 to help promote responsible dog ownership. Having a microchip means that stray dogs can be reunited quickly with their owners and will reduce the number of dogs that are destroyed each year.

### **Culvert Drainage**

**Mr Clarke** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what process the Rivers Agency uses to advise farmers on how to size pipes for the drainage of culverts.

**(AQO 3769/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Anyone, including farmers, seeking to culvert a watercourse must apply to Rivers Agency for consent under Schedule 6 of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973. On receipt of the application, Rivers Agency will provide advice regarding the appropriate pipe size. It is worth noting that the applicant is responsible for ensuring that all other approvals are in place.

## Agrienvironmental Scheme

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of the agri-environmental scheme that is currently in operation.

**(AQO 3770/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** My Department currently delivers a number of agri-environment schemes and there are 12,000 farmers in these schemes and 450,000 hectares of agricultural land is being managed for environmental benefit. This equates to almost a third of farmers in schemes and over 43% of the agricultural land area under agreement. The schemes are funded from the Rural Development Programme and since it began in 2007, participants have received some £159 million in funding, which is, on average, £25 million each year being provided to the local rural economy.

In 2011, CAFRE students carried out a survey of scheme participants on behalf of DARD. The results indicated that 86 per cent of respondents were satisfied with their scheme and over half of the respondents stated that they had noticed an improvement in wildlife on their farmland. Further environmental success was reported recently by the RSPB, indicating that yellowhammer populations were higher on farms under Countryside Management Scheme agreement when compared to those that are not under agreement. This shows that agri-environment schemes are making a positive difference to wildlife.

More recently farmers have been less willing to take up new agreements under NICMS. I have instructed officials to take the reasons for this into account during development of a new agri-environment provision for the next RDP. A key design aim for any new scheme will be to strike a balance between the provision of sustainable environmental benefits, making the new scheme simpler and easier for farmers to implement, and ensuring that DARD can administer and control the scheme effectively in line with EU Regulations.

## Agri-food Strategy

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the progress being made in developing an agri-food strategy.

**(AQO 3771/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The Agri-Food Strategy Board has met regularly since it was established last year and it has also engaged extensively with a wide range of stakeholders.

The Board established nine sectoral sub-groups, each chaired by a Board member to consider specific challenges, opportunities and priorities for each of our key sub-sectors. These sub-groups comprised over 80 stakeholders drawn from industry and related government departments/agencies and their reports have been considered by the main Board.

In parallel to this, the Board engaged with the wider stakeholder base through a public Call for Evidence and received almost 40 responses from a range of interests, including farming, food, forestry, environmental, academic and public body representatives. In addition, the Board has had separate meetings with Minister Attwood on planning and regulation, Minister Farry on skills and innovation, Minister Wilson on finance and the CEOs of the NIEA and NITB. The Board also held a workshop on "Growing Sustainably" with a number of environmental interest groups.

All of this work has informed development of the Board's over-arching report to Ministers and I met with the Chair last month to discuss the key themes emerging. Not surprisingly, these included issues around focussed marketing, an increased emphasis on innovation and skills, and the need to ensure planned growth of the sector is sustainable, both economically and environmentally.

I am pleased to see that the Board's work is well advanced and I look forward to receiving its report to the DETI Minister and myself in the very near future.

## **Ash Dieback: Carrickfergus**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on Ash Dieback disease in Carrickfergus.

**(AQO 3772/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** Ash Dieback has been detected at two woodland sites in Carrickfergus. Following inspections and testing in March 2013, presence of the disease has been confirmed in recently planted ash trees at Whitehead Diamond Jubilee Wood. A statutory notice requiring the removal and destruction of the ash at the site has been issued, and this work should finish by the end of April. A further single ash tree has tested positive for the disease at another site – Bashfordsland Wood. Further investigations are ongoing to establish the source of this infection and decide on appropriate action at the site.

## **Bovine Viral Diarrhoea**

**Mr Flanagan** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what departmental support is available to assist the farming industry with Bovine Viral Diarrhoea.

**(AQO 3773/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** At farm level, production diseases such as BVD can have a significant impact on productivity. Such diseases are not subject to national control programmes and because their impacts are mainly at farm level, it is the responsibility of industry to take the lead in tackling them.

Industry has therefore set up Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI), a not-for-profit organisation that will lead on the development and promotion of initiatives to tackle production diseases such as BVD. AHWNI has already initiated a voluntary BVD programme of 'tag and testing', which began in January this year.

In support of this industry-led initiative, I recently announced start-up funding of up to £125,497 to help AHWNI deliver the BVD eradication programme. The funding will provide much of the infrastructure for the BVD eradication programme and also help industry develop a Johne's Disease control programme.

In addition, and in conjunction with AHWNI, my Department is also delivering a programme through the Rural Development Programme to raise awareness about BVD and how to tackle it, and the economic and welfare advantages of doing so.

## **Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework**

**Ms Brown** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation framework.

**(AQO 3774/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am very pleased with the progress that has been achieved in relation to the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework which is on course to meet its specific Programme for Government Target including spend of £4m in the 2012/13 financial year. A range of initiatives under the framework are well advanced and are providing valuable assistance in addressing rural poverty and isolation issues. This includes: the Assisted Rural Travel Scheme; support for the Rural Support charity; support for Rural Community Development work; the Maximising Access in Rural Areas (MARA) Project; the Farm Family Health Checks Programme; the Connecting Elderly Rural Isolated project; the Rural Borewells Scheme; a Youth Employability Programme and a Young Entrepreneur's Project; and Fuel Poverty energy efficiency work.

I am particularly pleased that the Rural Borewells Scheme is well underway with work on site at 27 locations and that offers of support under the Rural Challenge Programme have commenced.

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

### World Police and Fire Games: Sponsorship

**Dr McDonnell** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what sponsorship deals have been secured for the World Police and Fire Games 2013.

**(AQO 3787/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** 2013 World Police and Fire Games Limited has secured agreement for £1.2M of benefit in kind and £408,000 in cash sponsorship which has exceeded the target of £1M of benefit in kind and £400,000 in cash sponsorship.

The range of sponsors includes major international companies such as Fujitsu, Diageo, Kukri Sports, Deloitte, Danske Bank and Coca Cola. Also many local companies have come on board to provide support for the Games including Translink, Tayto, Donnelly Brothers Limited, Chain Reaction, the Ramada Hotel and Fonacab.

A full list of the sponsors, can be found on the 2013 World Police and Fire Games web site at [www.2013wpfg.com](http://www.2013wpfg.com)

Whilst the target in relation to sponsorship has been achieved World Police and Fire Games Ltd are continuing to discuss sponsorship opportunities with private sector companies.

### Stadia Development Project: Legal Challenge

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what short and long term impacts the recent legal challenge in respect of EU Regulations around grant aid may have on the stadia development project.

**(AQO 3780/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I have been advised that Crusaders FC have recently lodged an application seeking leave to apply for a judicial review.

I will not speculate further on the specific matter, as it is subject to legal proceedings.

### World Police and Fire Games: Local Participation

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what efforts her Department is making to encourage participation in the World Police and Fire Games 2013 by local communities in areas where events will be held.

**(AQO 3781/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** World Police and Fire Games Ltd has engaged with all local councils to identify opportunities for them to organise or host events related to the Games. These engagements have highlighted opportunities for volunteering, accommodation and local businesses.

The Company has also conducted a volunteer recruitment campaign and particularly targeted local communities to encourage people to get actively involved in the Games. 393 volunteers from neighbourhood renewal areas have signed up.

The Company's Education Programme encourages schools to participate in activities surrounding the Games and the Young Ambassadors Programme will be rolled out in schools across the north.

The Company will also be implementing a marketing plan to highlight to people the opportunity to attend the sporting events themselves and there will be road shows at various events across the north, and promotion at a range of public venues including shopping centres, libraries and leisure centres.

Furthermore, my Department is developing a complementary cultural programme for the Games which will offer a rich cultural experience to local people as well as to visitors for the Games.

### **Líofa: Unionist Communities**

**Ms McGahan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on Líofa initiatives in unionist communities.

**(AQO 3782/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Líofa initiative is about making Irish accessible to people of every background. I firmly believe that the Irish language belongs to everyone and forms a vital part of our shared cultural heritage. It should be something that unites us rather than divides us.

My Department through Foras na Gaeilge funds the Irish Language Officer post in East Belfast Mission. Irish language lessons are held regularly in East Belfast and the first ever dianchúrsa (intensive course) took place in the East Belfast Mission last month. Such developments indicate an increasing interest in the language among those from Protestant and Unionist backgrounds. I have asked my Department's Líofa Development Officer to meet with East Belfast Mission to discuss how my Department can assist their work and provide practical support.

Líofa recently took part in a major cross-community event in Derry organised by the Grand Orange Lodge and the GAA to bring together young people from Protestant and Catholic schools to explore our cultural richness through sharing and learning. Such events provide a good opportunity to promote Líofa to all communities.

### **Sports Clubs: South Antrim**

**Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure which sports clubs in the South Antrim constituency have applied for funding from her Department in the past twelve months.

**(AQO 3783/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Sport NI, which is the primary funder of sport in the north of Ireland, has advised that no sports clubs in the South Antrim constituency have applied for funding in the past twelve months. Prior to that, in the three financial years to March 2012, Sport NI provided over £1.46m of exchequer and Lottery funding to support sporting development in South Antrim. Furthermore, since 2009, Sport NI has awarded Antrim Borough Council and Newtownabbey Borough Council over £950k of Lottery funding through the Active Communities Programme to encourage greater participation in sport in areas including South Antrim.

### **Strabane Canal**

**Ms Boyle** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what discussions she has had about the opening of the Strabane Canal.

**(AQO 3784/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I have visited the Strabane Canal but I have not had any formal discussions about the opening of the canal. I have, however, instructed my officials to contact the Strategic Investment Board to explore any assistance which could be provided in this matter.

It would be desirable to bring all navigable waterways across the island under the umbrella of Waterways Ireland (WI).

However, at the NSMC Plenary meeting in June 2012, Ministers endorsed the recommendation that no further action is taken at this time to extend the remit of Waterways Ireland. I have, however, instructed my Officials to keep this matter under review.

The Member will wish to note that during my visit to the Strabane area I visited Moor Lough and discussed with local Councillors their plans for the redevelopment of the Lough. I am pleased to confirm that my officials are currently taking forward work to improve the facilities for anglers at Moor

Lough as part of my Departments contribution to the Council's wider proposals for the redevelopment of the Lough. I have committed some £15K to date and it is estimated that the works will be finished by the end of May 2013.

### **First World War Commemorations**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how much funding her Department is providing towards commemorations of the First World War.

**(AQO 3785/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The First World War is one of several major anniversaries from the 1912 – 1922 period. Organisations and programmes already funded by my Department will play a key role in telling the stories and different interpretations behind these events.

A diverse range of activity is being developed from within existing budgets and will extend across libraries, museums and PRONI. The Arts Council also provides support to eligible projects which fall within the remit of each funding programme. To date no applications have been received in relation to commemorating the First World War.

Via the Community Festivals Fund my Department allocates a total of £450,000 annually to local councils, who match and administer the fund. Events remembering the past can be supported if in keeping with the Fund's guidelines which include inclusive approaches to commemoration.

NI Screen is supporting three productions so far, with combined funding of £335,000, that tie-in with World War One. These will include a factual drama serial, a feature film and a documentary.

I have also offered the Somme Heritage Centre £90k, across three years, to develop an educational programme linked to the First World War and the Battle of the Somme. This will increase knowledge of these key events and help to build relationships and inclusive approaches to remembering the past.

### **St Patricks Day Spring Carnival**

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the Saint Patrick's Day Spring Carnival which attracted 15,000 spectators.

**(AQO 3786/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** My Department had no role in the organisation or funding of this event.

The Carnival was included in the City of Culture programme as a significant event taking place in the City but was not funded by the Culture Company. As it is an ongoing local council initiative, no financial assistance was requested from the Culture Company for the Carnival.

However, it is very encouraging to see such well attended events taking place in Derry City of Culture in what will be a fantastic year for the City in 2013.

### **Gaelsceal**

**Mr Humphrey** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure why the Irish language newspaper Gaelsceal is no longer in circulation.

**(AQO 3788/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** At a meeting of the board of Foras na Gaeilge on the 25th of January 2013 it was decided to end the contract with the company Torann na dTonn to publish the newspaper Gaelscéal. The funding contract, worth €400,000 per year, was awarded to Torann na dTonn in 2010. The company was given two months notice before the funding ended.

This decision by the Foras na Gaeilge board was taken in the context of value for money. In 2012 the newspaper had average sales of 1,314 copies per week. Despite efforts made by Torann na dTonn since the company was founded in 2010 it never reached a sales level satisfactory to either Torann na dTonn or Foras na Gaeilge.

The board of Foras na Gaeilge recognise that providing a readable news service in Irish to the public is important and plans are being made to cater for this need in the near future.

## Department of Education

### Education and Skills Authority Headquarters

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education how many staff will be employed at the Education and Skills Authority headquarters.

**(AQW 20891/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education):** It is expected that ESA will have a small central office to support the ESA Chair, ESA Board members and the Chief Executive. No decisions have been made as to the staff complement that will be required within the central office.

### Southern Education and Library Board: Long-Term Absence

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Education what was average time taken within the Southern Education and Library Board to (i) phase return to work; or (ii) dismiss teaching staff with long-term absence, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 21338/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Southern Education and Library Board has provided the information outlined in the table below.

Year	From first day of absence until a Phased Return to Work	From first day of absence until Teacher was granted Ill Health Retirement
2008	27	51
2009	26	43
2010	29	65
2011	34	53
2012	44	71

### Primary Schools in the Southern Education and Library Board Area

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister of Education to detail the age profile of the teaching staff in primary schools in the Southern Education and Library Board area.

**(AQW 21340/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information is contained in the table below.

Number of teachers working in primary(1) schools in the Southern Education and Library Board Area by age, 2011/12

Age group	No. of teachers
24 and under	31
25-29	220
30-34	298
35-39	366

<b>Age group</b>	<b>No. of teachers</b>
40-44	427
45-49	277
50-54	233
55-59	186
60 and above	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,070</b>

**Source:** Teacher Payroll and Pensions Administration System

**Note:**

- 1 Includes preparatory departments of grammar schools.

### **Early Years Capital Funding Scheme**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of applications received to the Early Years Capital funding scheme to date, broken down by council area.

**(AQW 21342/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The following table summarises the total number of applications to the Early Years Capital fund received by the Childcare Partnerships, per council area.

<b>Council Area</b>	<b>Number</b>
Antrim	1
Ards	1
Armagh	3
Ballymena	3
Ballymoney	3
Carrickfergus	3
Cookstown	4
Coleraine	3
Down	2
Derry	5
Dungannon	3
Fermanagh	9
Larne	1
Limavady	4
Newry & Mourne	3
Omagh	6
Magherafelt	5
Moyle	1

Council Area	Number
Strabane	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>

### Curriculum Reserve Fund

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education how much funding each Education and Library Board has allocated from its Curriculum Reserve Fund in each of the last three years, broken down by sector.  
**(AQW 21395/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Details of how much each Education and Library Board has allocated from its Curriculum Reserve Fund in each of the last three years, broken down by sector, is detailed in the table below.

#### FUNDING ALLOCATED TO SCHOOLS FROM CURRICULUM RESERVE BY EACH OF THE ELBS IN THE LAST THREE FINANCIAL YEARS

		<b>BELB £'000</b>	<b>NEEELB £'000</b>	<b>SEELB £'000</b>	<b>SELB £'000</b>	<b>WELB £'000</b>	<b>Total £'000</b>
2010-11	Controlled	36	108	144	97	-	385
	Maintained	190	24	75	95	-	384
	Irish Medium	12	-	-	-	-	12
	<b>Total (2010-11)</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>781</b>

		<b>BELB £'000</b>	<b>NEEELB £'000</b>	<b>SEELB £'000</b>	<b>SELB £'000</b>	<b>WELB £'000</b>	<b>Total £'000</b>
2011-12	Controlled	216	75	156	125	-	572
	Maintained	288	15	198	70	-	571
	Irish Medium	-	-	-	-	-	-
	<b>Total (2011-12)</b>	<b>504</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,143</b>

		<b>BELB £'000</b>	<b>NEEELB £'000</b>	<b>SEELB £'000</b>	<b>SELB £'000</b>	<b>WELB £'000</b>	<b>Total £'000</b>
2012-13*	Controlled	380	-	67	41	-	488
	Maintained	582	-	77	108	-	767
	Irish Medium	50	-	-	-	-	50
	<b>Total (2012-13)</b>	<b>1,012</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,305</b>
<b>Overall Total</b>		<b>1,754</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,229</b>

\* The 2012-13 figures are unaudited and are therefore subject to change.

### Colleges and Higher Education Establishments

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what is the timetable for the notification of student teacher numbers for 2013/2014 to colleges and higher education establishments.  
**(AQW 21501/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am giving careful consideration to the 2013/14 intake numbers for initial education courses and will ensure the Higher Education Institutions are notified of their intakes as soon as a final decision is made.

### Education and Library Boards: Redundancy Proposals

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to outline the approval process for redundancy proposals made by the Education and Library Boards during the last three years.

**(AQW 21505/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department has no approval role in determining which posts to make redundant. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, as the employer, to determine which teaching posts to declare redundant, following the application of open and transparent redundancy criteria, based on the particular needs of the school concerned.

However I have set aside funding to assist employing authorities to make cost reductions at the school level through redundancies in the 3 years up to 31 August 2013. My officials have put in place a process and determined criteria, which employers must follow, in order to secure approval for the related redundancy costs and access to available funding. These processes have evolved over time.

The current process is that each Employing Authority having assured itself that the payback period is clearly demonstrated (no more than 2 years for teaching staff and 3.25 years for non-teaching staff) and that there is a reduction in full time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers, is required to submit to the Department a pro forma demonstrating cost savings within the appropriate payback period and provide an assurance statement from the Accounting Officer confirming same.

To ensure a clear accountability trail, employers are also required to have individual schools sign an assurance statement confirming that their redundancies are bona fide and that they will not increase FTE staff numbers without prior approval.

Following review and confirmation of compliance with requirements my officials confirm budget cover for the required cost accordingly.

### Translation Services

**Mr Craig** asked the Minister of Education how much his Department spent on translation services for visiting foreign nationals in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 21528/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:**

2007/2008	NIL
2008/2009	NIL
2009/2010	NIL
2010/2011	£261.00
2011/2012	NIL

### Nurture Units

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education what plans he has for expanding the work of the nurture units in the future.

**(AQW 21545/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The findings of the planned evaluation of nurture provision, including the 20 new nurture units being created under the Delivering Social Change Signature Project, will inform a policy position on this type of intervention, including the targeting of any future expansion.

## Primary Schools: Nurturing Projects

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Education what use will be made of the experience gained by primary schools in nurturing projects when they no longer receive funding.

**(AQW 21546/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** An evaluation of nurture provision is planned which will inform the future policy position of this form of intervention. The Department is mindful of the experience that has been gained by schools with nurturing projects which no longer receive funding. Some of these schools have already written to the Department and identified issues which will be factored into consideration as the research and evaluation model is developed.

## Education and Library Boards: Redundancy Proposals

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education to outline the criteria used by his Department to approve redundancy proposals from Education and Library Boards.

**(AQW 21556/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My Department has no approval role in determining which posts to make redundant. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors, as the employer, to determine which teaching posts to declare redundant, following the application of open and transparent redundancy criteria, based on the particular needs of the school concerned.

However I have set aside funding to assist employing authorities to make cost reductions at the school level through redundancies in the 3 years up to 31 August 2013. My officials have put in place a process and determined criteria, which employers must follow, in order to secure approval for the related redundancy costs and access to available funding. These processes have evolved over time.

The current process is that each Employing Authority having assured itself that the payback period is clearly demonstrated (no more than 2 years for teaching staff and 3.25 years for non-teaching staff) and that there is a reduction in full time equivalent (FTE) staff numbers, is required to submit to the Department a pro forma demonstrating cost savings within the appropriate payback period and provide an assurance statement from the Accounting Officer confirming same.

To ensure a clear accountability trail, employers are also required to have individual schools sign an assurance statement confirming that their redundancies are bona fide and that they will not increase FTE staff numbers without prior approval.

Following review and confirmation of compliance with requirements my officials confirm budget cover for the required cost accordingly.

## Education and Skills Authority: Careers Advice

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Education what arrangements exist within the Education and Skills Authority for the provision of careers advice, given that such provision within the Education and Library Boards is being reduced.

**(AQW 21587/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) will deliver all of the functions of the organisations that it will replace, including careers advice. As with other services, the transformation to a single, streamlined organisation will ensure that this key service is delivered more efficiently and effectively. Decisions on the organisational arrangements for the delivery of the service have not yet been taken.

## Area Education Planning

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Education to outline the plans envisaged as a result of the Area Education Planning process under the auspices of the Omagh Learning Community.

**(AQW 21655/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) draft post-primary area plan reflects the commitment to the development of the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus (LSEC). Lisanelly is a flagship infrastructure project within the Programme for Government and future capital funding for the development of the post-primary sector in the Omagh area will be directed toward the Lisanelly Shared Education Campus.

I am moving ahead with plans to provide new accommodation for Arvalee School & Resource Centre at Lisanelly as soon as possible.

The Western Education and Library Board (WELB) draft post-primary area plan also reflects the intention to progress proposals arising from the NI Commission for Catholic Education (NICCE) review of post-primary provision. However no school specific proposals arising from this work have as yet been submitted to or agreed by the Department.

The full detail of the proposals can be viewed on the WELB website ([www.welbni.org](http://www.welbni.org)).

### **Belmont House School and Foyleview School in Derry**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Education to outline the plans for merging Belmont House School and Foyleview School in Derry.

**(AQW 21688/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am aware that the Western Education and Library Board (WELB) has been in discussion with the Board of Governors of both Belmont House and Foyleview Schools regarding a proposal for a merger.

At the present time the Board is following the statutory process leading to the publication of a Development Proposal to support this intent. However, until a Development Proposal is published, the issues concerned are entirely a matter for the WELB to consider.

### **First Preference Nursery School Places**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Education how many children in the Derry City Council area did not receive their first preference nursery school place for the 2013/14 academic year in the first round of places awarded; and how many places are still available, broken down by electoral ward.

**(AQW 21689/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Funded pre-school places are available in statutory nursery schools and nursery units attached to primary schools and in voluntary/private settings in receipt of funding under the Pre-School Education Programme.

The information requested is not held broken down by electoral ward. The table below details the position at the end of Stage 1 of the pre-school admissions process in relation to applications to pre-school providers in the Derry City Council area:-

No. of applications to pre-school providers in Derry City Council area	1481
No. of children who secured their 1st preference of pre-school place	1205
No. of applications withdrawn	2
Total no. of children placed	1412
No. of children unplaced	67
No. of funded pre-school places remaining available in Derry City Council area	135

## Maghera High School

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Education what plans there are for the use of the site of Maghera High School.

**(AQW 21711/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The North Eastern Education and Library Board had previously received a number of expressions of interest in this site. However due to Health and Safety concerns the Department endorsed a proposal to demolish the school, following asbestos decontamination, before any further action should be taken.

As this work has only just been completed on 11 March 2013 a decision regarding the cleared site has still to be reached.

The Board has indicated that at least two of those previously enquiring about this site, Comhairle na Gaelscolaíochta and Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, are still interested. This is currently under consideration.

If it is decided that the site is not to be used for educational purposes it may be officially declared surplus. At this stage the process as outlined by DFP in the Central Advisory Unit's 'Disposal of Surplus Public Sector Property' will be followed. (Full details as per link below).

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/disposal\\_of\\_public\\_sector\\_property.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/disposal_of_public_sector_property.pdf)

## Schools: Board of Governors

**Mr McClarty** asked the Minister of Education who will have responsibility for appointing Boards of Governors in grant aided schools when the Education Bill becomes law.

**(AQO 3789/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Education Bill as currently drafted makes the Education and Skills Authority responsible for the appointments to school Boards of Governors that currently fall to the Department and the education and library boards. Other categories of governors will continue to be nominated or elected as set out in Schedules 4 to 7 to the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986 and Schedule 5 to the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989.

## Dromore Central Primary School

**Mr Craig** asked the Minister of Education why the construction of the new Dromore primary school has been delayed.

**(AQO 3798/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Dromore Primary School is a controlled school and is being taken forward by the SELB. It was originally anticipated to commence work on site July 2013.

In light of updated population data for the Dromore area in December 2012 the SELB reviewed the planned provision for the school and revised the provision from a 28 classbase to a 25 classbase. Subsequently the Economic Appraisal and design are being updated and the revised target date for commencement of construction is January 2014.

## Voluntary Grammar Schools: Sectoral Body

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education whether the proposed Education Bill will include a sectoral body for Voluntary Grammar schools.

**(AQO 3799/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** My established policy position is that sectoral bodies must be non-statutory, and that no sectoral body will be specified in law. I have no plans to establish a sectoral body for Voluntary Grammar schools.

## Schools: Emotional Health and Well-being

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Education why his Department has shelved the initiative Optimising Achievement through a whole school approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing.  
(AQO 3800/11-15)

**Mr O'Dowd:** The 'Optimising Achievement' materials which promote a whole school approach to social and emotional literacy were developed through an initiative of the Regional Training Unit (RTU). This work was begun initially in partnership with Together4All and most recently with Barnardo's.

The Department did provide financial assistance to RTU to sustain its partnership arrangement. This funding finished at the end of December 2012 and at that point the materials were ready for piloting at some later date with schools.

The Department did not commission these materials, however, I do view their development as compatible with the need for schools to recognise the importance of pupils emotional health and wellbeing. The Department's own work in this area under the "i-Matter" Programme has provided resources to schools to encourage pupils to seek timely support when they are experiencing stress. The priority at the moment within the 'iMatter Programme' is the development and piloting of an audit tool for use by schools to assess their current approach to promoting pupils' emotional health and wellbeing and how that might be improved. Responding to identified training needs comes after that.

## Primary Schools: Area Plans

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister of Education, in relation to the Draft Area Primary Plan, to outline the proposed timescale for finding a local solution to combining primary schools.  
(AQO 3801/11-15)

**Mr O'Dowd:** Area Planning is about providing strong, vibrant schools delivering high quality education by using the limited resources available efficiently and effectively.

It is the responsibility of the school managing authorities in the first instance to bring forward proposals for future primary provision in their areas. There is, however, no standard proposed timescale for finding a local solution to combining primary schools.

Consultation on the draft primary plans will allow for wide ranging discussion and dialogue at a local level which it is hoped will result in more practical and sustainable solutions being brought forward, including the potential for increased sharing of accommodation and resources.

Now is the time for managing authorities, schools and local communities to look to the future and difficult decisions will need to be made in the best interests of the children.

It is important, however, that the area planning process is not used to delay necessary decisions. I will therefore continue to make decisions on any Development Proposals published in advance of agreed area plans.

## Delivering Social Change: New Teachers

**Mr Copeland** asked the Minister of Education how many new teachers have been employed to date through Delivering Social Change in order to raise educational attainment.  
(AQO 3802/11-15)

**Mr O'Dowd:** Two hundred and thirty recently graduated teachers will be appointed prior to the beginning of the 2013/14 academic year. It is envisaged that the recruitment exercise will run during May and June 2013.

A Strategic Oversight Group has been established and has undertaken a considerable amount of work to develop the final recruitment scheme and ensure it is practicable and compatible with legal requirements.

The project will ensure extra support for children in primary schools to achieve the expected levels in reading and maths at Key Stage 2. It will also provide tuition to pupils in post-primary schools who are not predicted to get at least a 'C' grade in GCSE English and/or maths.

The criteria for the identification of eligible teachers have been developed taking into account advice received from the Equality Commission. The criteria for the identification of eligible schools have also been developed and it is planned that schools will be invited to apply for the extra resource and begin the recruitment exercise in April.

### Education Bill: Inspections

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister of Education why inspections have been included in the Education Bill, rather than in a separate stand-alone Bill.

**(AQO 3803/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** New provisions on inspection require only 5 clauses, which would not justify or require a separate Bill. Inspection is better dealt with in the current Education Bill, along with the other matters covered by the Heads of Agreement.

## Department for Employment and Learning

### Southern Regional College

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many full time, part time or full time equivalent students are studying for foundation degrees and degrees awarded under licence from other universities and degree awarding institutions, in the Southern Regional College, in each of its campuses.

**(AQW 21507/11-15)**

**Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):** Student enrolments on foundation degrees and other higher education (HE) level courses at each Southern Regional College (SRC) campus are detailed below by mode of attendance for the 2011/12 academic year, the latest year for which validated data are available.

#### FOUNDATION DEGREE ENROLMENTS AT SRC CAMPUSES

SRC Campus	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Banbridge	0	55	55
Newry	205	135	340
Portadown	70	20	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>485</b>

#### ENROLMENTS ON OTHER HE PROVISION AT SRC CAMPUSES

SRC Campus	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Armagh	35	50	85
Banbridge	70	70	140
Lurgan	60	125	185
Newry	110	700	815
Portadown	0	195	195
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>1,145</b>	<b>1,420</b>

**Source:** Further Education Statistical Record

**Note:** Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1, 2 rounded to 0. Therefore figures may not sum to the total.

## Southern Regional College

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many full time, part time and full time equivalent staff are employed in each of the campuses of the Southern Regional College teaching foundation degrees and degrees licensed from other universities and degree awarding institutions.  
(AQW 21508/11-15)

**Dr Farry:** Each further education college, in its capacity as an employing authority, is responsible for all employment related matters. Consequently, my Department does not hold the information requested. I have asked the Director of Southern Regional College to respond to the Member directly on this matter.

## Southern Regional College: Courses

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many new courses, and in which academic fields, have been developed by the Southern Regional College in each of its campuses, in each of the last five years.  
(AQW 21509/11-15)

**Dr Farry:** My Department does not hold the lists requested by the Member, as information relating to the number of new courses is a matter for individual colleges.

My officials have contacted the Directors of the Southern Regional College who has confirmed that the information is not readily available, and could only be obtained at significant cost.

Therefore, as it is only available at disproportionate cost, I am not in a position to provide this information to the Member.

## Further and Higher Education Colleges

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many students, full time, part time or full time equivalent, are studying for foundation degrees and degrees awarded under licence from other universities and degree awarding institutions, in further and higher colleges.  
(AQW 21510/11-15)

**Dr Farry:** Student enrolments on foundation degrees and other higher education (HE) courses at each Northern Ireland (NI) further education (FE) college are detailed below by mode of attendance for the 2011/12 academic year, the latest year for which validated data are available.

### FOUNDATION DEGREE ENROLMENTS AT NI FE COLLEGES

College	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Belfast Metropolitan	400	105	505
Northern Regional	30	210	240
South East Regional	85	110	195
Southern Regional	275	210	485
South West	285	245	530
North West Regional	80	195	275
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,145</b>	<b>1,080</b>	<b>2,225</b>

### ENROLMENTS ON OTHER HE PROVISION AT NI FE COLLEGES

College	Full-Time	Part-Time	Total
Belfast Metropolitan	1,170	1,840	3,010

<b>College</b>	<b>Full-Time</b>	<b>Part-Time</b>	<b>Total</b>
Northern Regional	230	915	1,150
South East Regional	475	795	1,275
Southern Regional	275	1,145	1,420
South West	105	785	890
North West Regional	575	780	1,355
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,385</b>	<b>6,255</b>	<b>9,090</b>

**Source:** Further Education Statistical Record

Note: Figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1, 2 rounded to 0. Therefore figures may not sum to the total.

### **Further and Higher Education Regional Colleges: Courses**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many new courses, and in which academic fields, have been developed by further and higher education regional colleges in each of their campuses, in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 21511/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I would refer the Member to the reply I gave the Member for North Antrim on 13 March 2012.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Answer-Book/2012/120316.pdf>

My Department does not hold the lists requested by the Member, as information relating to the number of new courses is a matter for individual colleges.

My officials have contacted the Directors of the six Regional Colleges who have confirmed that the information is not readily available, and could only be obtained at significant cost.

Therefore, as it is only available at disproportionate cost, I am not in a position to provide the information to the Member.

### **Visually Impaired Employees**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) the number of people employed within his Department who are visually impaired; (ii) the position they hold; and (iii) the percentage they make up of the Department's staff.

**(AQW 21537/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Department for Employment and Learning holds monitoring information on the number of employees who have a disability. The monitoring information held by the Department does not specify the types of disabilities its employees have.

### **Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 17631/11-15, to detail the nature of the £0.45m in assets that his Department has identified to the Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board, broken down by year.

**(AQW 21585/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The receipt is in respect of the disposal of Felden, a former Government Training Centre which was included in the 2012-13 Departmental Budget at £0.45m

## South West College

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 20592/11-15, whether the South West College has repaid any funding to his Department in consequence of the KPMG report. **(AQW 21646/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** As outlined in AQW 20592/11-15, in response to the investigation conducted by KPMG, my Department has instigated a comprehensive assurance exercise, across all six Further Education colleges, to ensure compliance with the original Letter of Offer and identify if there are any areas of concern.

This exercise is ongoing and is due to finish at the end of May 2013. Once this exercise has completed, the Department will consider the findings, and take action as appropriate, which may include recouping funding from Colleges.

## Youth Employment Scheme: South Belfast

**Mr McGimpsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the opportunities created by the Youth Employment Scheme in South Belfast. **(AQO 3805/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Since the launch of the Youth Employment Scheme in September 2012, over 900 employers have signed agreements to participate in the scheme.

At the 29th March 2013, these employers had offered a total of 1,685 opportunities, to which 3,626 young people had been submitted. To date, 517 young people have taken part in the scheme and, of these, over 200 have secured full-time permanent jobs. In addition, 354 young people have started temporary jobs under the First Start initiative.

Members asked specific questions about South Belfast and South Down. In South Belfast, 74 employer agreements have been signed and 119 opportunities made available to young people. Twenty-one young people have availed of these opportunities, with seven having secured full-time employment. Also, 19 young people have found temporary employment under the First Start initiative in this area. In South Down, 174 employer agreements have been signed and 265 opportunities made available to young people. Sixty-one young people have availed of these opportunities, with 16 having secured full-time employment. First Start in this area has employed 21 young people.

In addition to the Youth Employment Scheme, my Department is also funding a number of new initiatives under the Executive's 'Pathways to Success' strategy, to increase the opportunities available to unemployed young people in South and West Belfast and South Down. These include a Collaboration and Innovation Fund, which will fund activity to help 2,800 disadvantaged 16 to 24 year olds from Belfast, to improve their employability by gaining work-related skills. Similar activity will also be funded in South Down to help over 1,100 unemployed young people. There is also a Community Family Support Pilot Programme, which will help young people living in six of the most disadvantaged families in West Belfast to re-engage with education, employment or training.

Furthermore the Local Employment Intermediary Service, more commonly known as LEMIS, provides personalised assistance to help unemployed young people residing in West Belfast and South Belfast to overcome their barriers to work. The service is also available on an outreach basis in South Down to young people with a common barrier to employment.

My assessment is that we have the right measures in place. Forty percent of participants on the Youth Employment Scheme find full-time permanent employment. However, we must do more to encourage young people to participate, young people have only taken up 30% of the opportunities available. I am actively considering how we might improve uptake going forward. I would ask members to promote the Youth Employment Scheme to businesses in their areas and encourage their young unemployed constituents to avail of all the opportunities on offer.

## **Welfare Reform: Benefits Offices**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what extra resources he has allocated to Benefits Offices to assist customers with the impact of Welfare Reform.

**(AQO 3811/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I assume that the Member means Jobs and Benefits Offices and the resourcing of the Employment Service as opposed to benefits, which is the responsibility of the Department of Social Development.

The Department for Employment and Learning is a key delivery partner to the Social Security Agency. It supports unemployed and economically inactive customers impacted by the Welfare Reform changes, to help them move closer to and into work.

The introduction of Universal Credit, a major element within the Welfare Reform Programme, is therefore expected to have major implications for the Employment Service within my Department.

As the lead department for Welfare Reform, the Department for Social Development is responsible for calculating the numbers who are likely to make a claim to Universal Credit.

These estimates will then inform any additional Employment Service resource that may be required to support the roll-out of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland, currently planned to commence in April 2014.

A specific resource impact of Welfare Reform has resulted from the Incapacity Benefit Reassessment, which commenced in February 2011.

As a direct response, to support those customers who were subject to the Incapacity Benefit Reassessment process, I launched a new specialist 'Work Connect' employment programme in September 2012.

The Employment Service recruited 19 additional frontline staff in 2011/12, and a further 39 staff will have been recruited by the end of 2012/13. Therefore, in total, there will be 58 additional frontline staff by the end of March 2013 to assist with the impact of Welfare Reform to date.

## **Manufacturing and Food Processing: Skills Requirements**

**Mr Moutray** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what efforts are being made by the Department to link with large manufacturing businesses and food processing plants to ascertain their current skills requirements, given the ever changing environment in which they operate.

**(AQO 3812/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** As advanced manufacturing and food and drink processing have been identified by me as priority sectors, a great deal of work has been undertaken to identify and address the skills needs.

I chair the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering Services Working Group, involving employers and representatives from further education colleges, universities, employer bodies and other government departments. Several large manufacturing businesses are represented on the group, which is working proactively to agree the skills needs of the sector and the interventions required.

I have commissioned research to ascertain the skills needs of the advanced manufacturing and engineering sector. The research will assess the skills profile of the sector, carry out a salary survey and highlight any skill imbalances which exist, or are forecast to exist.

Discussions are also ongoing with members of the group to develop an Aerospace Academy. It is proposed that the Academy will feature a number of short and long term interventions, such as a possible conversion course in Computer Numerical Control Machining (CNC).

My Department has also established a Future Skills Action Group with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, Invest NI and stakeholders and employers from the food and drink processing sector. I launched its three year Skills Action Plan last June, which sets out the skills issues identified by employers and available evidence, and details the actions to be taken to address them. This

includes the identified need to raise management and leadership skills across the sector, and an indicated shortage of food technicians.

My officials respond quickly to agreed skills shortages in key sectors and we will continue to work with employers on other issues and themes, such as improving career attractiveness and communication.

My Department is undertaking a review of apprenticeships and youth training policy, which will provide us with a further opportunity to enhance the matching of skills to the specific needs of businesses. The review process will include engagement with business representatives.

### **Education and Employment 14 to 19 Year Olds**

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what discussions have taken place with the Department of Education regarding the development of a strategy for 14-19 year olds.  
**(AQO 3813/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Firstly, I welcome the recent announcement by the Minister for Education to extend the budget for the Entitlement Framework for the next two years.

This will enable the excellent collaboration between further education colleges and schools to continue; colleges will be doing all they can to ensure that this is the case.

The Department of Education and my Department are committed to ensuring that, through the education and training system, every young person has the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. To that end, I have agreed a number of high-level principles with the Minister for Education for the provision of education for 14 to 19 year olds. In particular, we agree that the needs of pupils should come before the needs of institutions, whether schools or colleges. We also agree the importance of avoiding duplication in the delivery of a stimulating and economically-relevant curriculum for our young people.

Senior officials from my Department meet regularly with officials in the Department of Education to consider these important issues, and will continue to do so. Currently, a formal 14 to 19 strategy has not as yet been produced.

I am confident that colleges will continue to provide excellent support to schools in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework. For example, in the 2011/12 academic year, there were almost 14,000 college enrolments through the Entitlement Framework. Performance on this provision is high, with learner retention and achievement rates of 99% and 89% respectively.

### **Training for Success: Northern Regional College**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the provision of Training for Success courses in the Northern Regional College.  
**(AQO 3814/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Training for Success programme provides a flexible menu that allows young people to enter training at an appropriate level and progress to a stage where they can maximise their individual potential. It is delivered through three strands, Skills for Your Life, Skills for Work, and Programme Led Apprenticeships which were introduced as a contingency measure in 2009.

Northern Regional College is one of 31 contracted training providers that deliver Training for Success and Programme Led Apprenticeships throughout Northern Ireland. Current occupancy records show that, across Northern Regional College's three sites, eight young people are participating on Skills for Your Life, 31 are participating on Skills for Work Level 1 and 310 on Programme Led Apprenticeships.

The Member will be aware that in November 2012 the training provision within the Northern Regional College was inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate and evaluated as inadequate. This was in contrast to the further education provision which was evaluated as good.

Within the training provision there was variation in quality across the vocational areas: engineering, for example, was evaluated as very good, while plumbing, bricklaying and wood occupations were

inadequate. A lack of work placements for trainees, particularly on Skills for Work and Programme Led Apprenticeships, to enable them to develop their occupational skills sufficiently and achieve their targeted frameworks, was identified as a weakness.

The Department is currently working with the College to ensure that a robust improvement plan is devised and implemented as a priority. The effectiveness of these improvements will be closely monitored by the Education and Training Inspectorate on behalf of the Department.

### **South West College, Enniskillen**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any progress on the development of a new site for South West College, Enniskillen.

**(AQO 3816/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The South West College is preparing a business case to address accommodation needs at its Fairview campus in Enniskillen. We anticipate having a draft presented to the Department, for assessment, by June 2013.

Considerable work has been undertaken by the college in developing the draft business case, and initial indications are that the preferred option will be a new build on the site of the old Erne Hospital. This option would involve the development of a shared services site with a range of other public sector bodies. Discussions are ongoing between the college and other local parties.

No firm decisions can be made on options or capital requirements until the business case is complete. The project forms part of my Department's advanced planning, and a bid will be made in respect of the South West College to the next Comprehensive Spending Review.

### **Stranmillis University College and Queens University, Belfast: Merger**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the proposed merger of Stranmillis College and Queen's University.

**(AQO 3817/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** I have already previously updated members on the proposed merger. I also made a statement on teacher education issues to the Assembly on 28 November 2011.

I have commissioned a two-stage study of the teacher education infrastructure in Northern Ireland. The first stage of this has now been completed and I will make a statement on this to the Assembly in the near future. The second stage will commence in the coming months.

### **Unemployment: Literacy and Numeracy**

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what programmes his Department has in place to assist people who are unemployed to gain basic literacy and numeracy skills.

**(AQO 3818/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** 'Essential Skills' is my Department's primary programme to help people in Northern Ireland gain literacy and numeracy skills; this extends to those who are unemployed.

Individuals can enrol directly onto Essential Skills courses in further education colleges. In addition many of my Department's other programmes identify people with low levels of literacy and numeracy; depending on the programme they are on, such individuals are either required or encouraged to follow an Essential Skills course. For example, those on the Steps to Work programme or on Training for Success, who are assessed as having a literacy or numeracy need, are offered appropriate Essential Skills courses.

Under the Executive's 'Pathways to Success' Strategy, my Department will fund new approaches to help unemployed young people, particularly those who are not in education, employment or training, to gain among others, qualifications in the essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. The new initiatives

include the Community Based Access Pilot Programme, the Collaboration and Innovation Fund, and the Community Family Support Programme.

For 18 to 24-year-old benefit claimants, my department has put in place the Youth Employment Scheme. Participants undertake an audit of their skills, which provides an initial detailed diagnosis of needs, including literacy and numeracy, and makes recommendations on how to address those needs.

The Local Employment Intermediary Service will continue to fund basic pre-entry level tuition within community organisations for unemployed adults to assist them to participate on courses in Essential Skills.

Finally, the Learner Access and Engagement Programme, which will commence in September 2013 following a successful pilot evaluation, will provide support to marginalised adults to undertake suitable further education, including Essential Skills.

My Department's programmes focus strongly on helping people to gain literacy and numeracy skills, particularly those who are unemployed; this remains a top priority for me.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Northern Ireland Tourist Board

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the Northern Ireland Tourist Board is abiding by legislation that requires all public bodies to take positive steps in promoting the Irish language and promoting the traditional form of place names.

**(AQW 20002/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** The Northern Ireland Tourist Board abides by Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and recognises its obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages; and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

### TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail her Department's TV, radio and newspaper advertising campaigns, in each of the last three years; and the spend on each campaign.

**(AQW 21063/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** During 2009/10 and 2010/11 the Department did not commission any TV, radio or newspaper advertising campaigns. In 2011/12, the Department spent a total of £253,549 on developing and implementing the EnergyWise campaign.

### Economic Advisory Group

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the discussions she had with the Economic Advisory Group during the meeting on 5 March 2013.

**(AQW 21108/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The main agenda item during my meeting with the Economic Advisory Group on 5th March 2013 was discussing the Group's findings and recommendations from their recently published 'Review of Access to Finance for NI Businesses' report. The Group also discussed their soon to be published Annual Report and initial thoughts on their forward work programme.

## Security of Power Supply

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the potential impact on security of power supply within Northern Ireland post 2015, as a result of the reduction in power generation across the UK, as a consequence of power station closures due to the Large Combustion Plants Directive and the reduced capacity of the Moyle Interconnector; and what contingencies are being put in place.

**(AQW 21330/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The Large Combustion Plant Directive has impacts post 2015 on existing power generation plant at the AES owned sites at Ballylumford and Kilroot.

My officials have been engaging with the Utility Regulator and the system operator SONI to consider how best to ensure there is a sufficient future conventional generation capacity margin and therefore adequate security of electricity supply for Northern Ireland.

It is also important to progress the new North-South electricity link and I have encouraged Mutual Energy to restore the Moyle electricity link with Great Britain to its full capacity as soon as possible.

## Creative Industries Report

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what impact the recent findings of the Creative Industries Report will have in helping to generate and create employment.

**(AQO 3815/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The recent findings of the "Inquiry on Maximising the Potential of the Creative Industries" by the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure has highlighted a number of issues relating to realising the full economic potential of the Creative Industries sector.

I fully recognise the importance of the Creative Industries as one of those sectors that offers good potential for growth and for helping to rebuild and rebalance the Northern Ireland economy. To that end, Invest NI has prioritised its support for the Creative Industries to reflect those areas that offer the greatest potential for growth, both in terms of employment and exports, as well as driving a shift to higher added value and higher productivity levels, namely Film & Television production, Digital Media and Music.

My Department, together with officials in Invest NI, will continue to work closely with colleagues in DCAL to address any barriers to growth and will use the findings of the inquiry to inform the draft Collaborative Framework to Support the Creative Industries.

## Rapid Deployment of Broadband Networks

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) the timescales to review the EU guidelines for the application of State Aid rules in relation to the rapid deployment of broadband networks; and (ii) any obstacles to their early roll out.

**(AQW 21413/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Department's analysis of the new EU guidelines for the application of State Aid rules in relation to the rapid deployment of broadband networks is ongoing. Officials are working with the UK National Competency Centre and suppliers in assessing baseline data, and consultation responses to ensure compliance with these guidelines. It is the intention to deliver these services by 2015.

## North West 200

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what benefits, in terms of visitor numbers and television coverage, are generated as a result of the North West 200.

**(AQW 21465/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** An economic impact study carried out by Cogent/Millward Browne, commissioned by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB), found that the North West 200 attracted 49,387 visitors to the event in 2012.

In terms of television coverage no survey was commissioned by NITB directly.

According to the event evaluation report provided by the North West 200 organisers, the 2012 event generated BBC coverage totalling 300,000 viewers via 3 programmes in May. The report revealed that the figures for online viewing were over 100,000 and people who saw content through the BBC's NW200 Facebook page averaged 120,000. The highlights programmes had a 23% share of the Northern Ireland viewing audience.

## **G8 Summit**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the long term economic benefits from hosting the G8 summit and to detail whether her Department has investigated the impact hosting the summit has had in any other countries.

**(AQW 21540/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The G8 Summit offers an unprecedented opportunity to showcase Northern Ireland not only to world leaders but to international media as a safe, secure and welcoming place for investment, to work and to experience as a culturally rich tourism destination.

My Department, supported by the Strategic Investment Board, is currently developing the scope, approach, methodology and timetable for the production of an economic impact analysis of the G8 Summit on Northern Ireland. It is too early in the process to accurately quantify the economic impact of hosting the G8 in Northern Ireland; however it is hoped that the findings of the evaluation will be available by the end of 2013.

Contact has also been made with representatives from the G8 Gleneagles 2005 Summit in order to identify and share lessons learned.

## **Unconventional Oil or Gas Resources**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the proposed licensee PL 1/13 has indicated any intention to search for, or to extract unconventional oil or gas resources.

**(AQW 21692/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** No. The applicant, CHx LLC, has not indicated any intention to search for, or to extract, unconventional oil or gas resources.

CHx LLC has stated that its primary exploration targets are Triassic, Permian and Carboniferous sandstones, similar to the rocks that form the reservoirs in many producing oil and gas fields elsewhere in the UK and Northwest Europe.

# **Department of the Environment**

## **Planning Applications**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment (i) to detail the (a) Article 31; and (b) Article 33 planning applications currently under consideration; and (ii) for how long each case has been under consideration.

**(AQW 19721/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment):** There were 60 Article 31 applications in May 2011. Of these 37 have been determined. I have announced my decision on a further 5 and of these 4 are being appealed to the Planning Appeals Commission. This represents 42 decisions on Article 31 applications - over two thirds of the total of applications in May 2011. In addition, since May 2011

8 new applications have been received of which 4 have been determined. There are currently 31 live Article 31 applications these are set out in Appendix A. I anticipate a new phase of Article 31 decisions over coming weeks and in advance of the summer recess.

Article 33 Appeals against non-determination, are decided by the Planning Appeals Commission. Records indicate that there are 11 Appeals yet to be decided. These are set out in Appendix B.

#### APPENDIX A

	Reference	Date Received	Applicant	Proposal	Location
1	F/1999/0465/0	23/12/1999	Larne Marina Company	Site for Waterfront leisure development	Off Chainé Memorial Road, Curran and Drumaliss, Larne
2	A/2004/0976/F	17/09/2004	Tesco Stores	Proposed foodstore	Land at the junction of Bunrana Road & Templemore Road, Derry (To PAC)
3	A/2006/0180/0	24/02/2006	McCormick Properties & Crumley Construction	Food Store	Lands off Bunrana Road, Londonderry
4	S/2008/0630/F	04/06/2008	Rose Energy Ltd	Biomass fuelled power plant	Ballyvannon Road, Glenavy, County Antrim (To PAC)
5	P/2009/0163/F	12/02/2009	The Hill Partnership c/o Ostick & Williams	Comprehensive mixed use development	Carnbane Way/Shepherds Way Roundabout, Newry
6	H/2009/0264/0	06/05/2009	JHT Upperlands Ltd	Heritage led regeneration	Former William Clark & Sons Ltd, Upperlands, Maghera, Co Londonderry
7	S/2009/0579/F	12/06/2009	Rose Energy Ltd	Water abstraction facility and water pipeline	Ballyvannon Road, Glenavy, County Antrim (To PAC)
8	O/2009/0477/F	31/07/2009	Homecare (NI)	Proposed retirement village and nursing home	Within the grounds of Manor House, Milford, Co Armagh

	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Location</b>
9	A/2009/0689/0	21/08/2009	D & A Properties Ltd	Mixed use regeneration development	Drumahoe Industrial Estate, Drumahoe, Londonderry (To PAC)
10	X/2009/0858/0	26/11/2009	Comber Consortium	Mixed use development	Lands south east of the Comber by-pass
11	O/2009/0792/F	15/12/2009	NIE Plc	Proposed Interconnector	From new substation at Trewmount Road, Moy to link to proposed network in the Republic of Ireland (Public Inquiry)
12	Y/2010/0087/0	05/03/2010	Lagmar Properties Ltd	Retail store, petrol filling stations, industrial units	Former Rolls Royce factory, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald
13	X/2010/0296/0	02/04/2010	Marm Developments	Mixed use development	Lands at Marm Factory site, 20 Comber Road, Newtownards
14	A/2010/0241/0	12/04/2010	GSB Guernsey Trading Ltd & GML (NI) Ltd	Mixed use development including hotel, offices, healthcare facility	Lands to the east of Crescent Link, north of Sevenoaks, Londonderry
15	A/2010/0240/0	12/04/2010	GSB Guernsey Trading Ltd & GML (NI) Ltd	Retail superstore	Lands to the east of Crescent Link, north of Sevenoaks, Londonderry (refused – related to 14)
16	S/2010/0041/F	19/05/2010	Lisburn Energy Recovery Ltd	Proposed energy from waste gasification plant and ancillary infrastructure	211 Moira Road, Lisburn

	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Location</b>
17	H/2010/0254/F	24/05/2010	Merit Investments & Properties	Retail food superstore, petrol filling station	Moneymore Road, Magherafelt
18	Z/2010/1006/0	26/07/2010	Belfast Harbour Commissioners	Mixed use development	City Quays, Clarendon Dock, Belfast
19	Z/2010/1284/0	10/09/2010	The Trustees of the Diocese of Down and Connor	Mixed use development	Glenmona (former St. Patricks site) west of Monagh By-Pass, Springfield Road, Belfast
20	X/2010/0819/F	02/11/2010	JHT Newtownards Ltd & Asda Stores Ltd	Redevelopment of site to provide foodstore, petrol filling station	Former Scrabo High School site, Scrabo Road, Newtownards
21	H/2011/0103/0	25/02/2011	RSL Developments	Proposed foodstore, petrol filling station	Land between Thornhill Avenue and Oakvale Manor, Magherafelt
22	H/2011/0104/0	25/02/2011	Forbes Furniture Group	Demolition of existing furniture store and erection of supermarket	Lands including Forbes Furniture store, existing Lidl store and vacant site, Castledawson Road, Magherafelt
23	H/2011/0145/F	14/03/2011	Corbo Ltd	Food superstore, dental surgery, filling station	40 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt
24	X/2011/0189/0	14/03/2011	Castlebawn Development Ltd	Foodstore	Comber Road, Castlebawn Roundabout, Southern Relief Road, Newtownards
25	U/2011/0138/F	06/04/2011	Ballyclare Developments Ltd	Mixed use development	Former Spinning Mill, Hillhead Road, Ballyclare
26	A/2011/0226/F	07/04/2011	Caw Properties Ltd c/o Rapport Architects	Food superstore, hotel	Lands at Gransha Londonderry

	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Location</b>
27	L/2011/0359//F	08/04/2011	Townland Properties Ltd	Tourist destination resort	Gublusk bay, Killadeas, Co Fermanagh
28	J/2011/0433/0	18/11/2011	Riverside Building and Development Ltd	Mixed use cross border development	Lifford, Strabane
29	K/2012/0373/F	06/07/2012	Omagh Minerals Ltd	Underground mine and associated surface level works	56 Upper Botera Road, Cavanacaw, Omagh
30	S/2012/0691/F	19/11/2012	Maze Long Kesh Development Corporation	Erection of Peace-building and Conflict Resolution Centre, car parking, public realm and ancillary works utilising existing access from Halftown Road	Former Maze Long Kesh prison site to south of Lower Maze FC (33 Bog Road) and 9-35 Bog Road, Halftown Road, Lisburn BT27
31	F/2011/0256/F	09/12/2011	Quarryplan Ltd. (Omya UK Ltd)	Lateral extension of Demesne Quarry southwards into Tully Field,	Tully Field Parishagh Quarry and Denesne Quarry, 17 Munie Road, Glenarm, Larne

**CURRENT ARTICLE 33 APPEALS AS OF 10 APRIL 2013 APPENDIX B**

<b>Pac Ref</b>	<b>Planning Ref</b>	<b>Date Lodged With Pac</b>	<b>No of Weeks Lodged with PAC</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Address</b>
2011/A0249	W/2011/0438/F	09.01.12	63 weeks	Erection of 39 apartment units for the active elderly	55-66 Clifton Road, Bangor
2012/A0024	B/2012/0009/F	25.04.12	47 weeks	Retention of extension to granny flat	12 Drumbane Road, Dungiven
2012/A0079	Z/2012/0352/0	02.07.12	38 weeks	Apartment development of 217 units	Site bounded by Little York Street, Great George's Street and Nelson Street, Belfast

<b>Pac Ref</b>	<b>Planning Ref</b>	<b>Date Lodged With Pac</b>	<b>No of Weeks Lodged with PAC</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Address</b>
2012/A0180	T/2012/0123/F	15.10.12	23 weeks	Site for new wind turbine, hub height 51.5m and blade tip height of 66.5m with control room	Approx. 585m east from 12 Laurel Lane, Belfast
2012/A0186	J/2011/0148/F	05.11.12	20 weeks	Proposed 11 no. wind turbines (maximum base to blade tip height of 125m) with ancillary developments	Meenablagh, Tullycar, Altamullan Townlands, Aghyaran
2012/A0188	V/2005/0206/0	09.11.12	19 weeks	Residential development with new primary vehicular access onto Upper Road (between 111 & 113) and secondary unconnected vehicular access from Downview Road, including associated site works	Lands fronting and south of 1-10 Goldenview Park, west of Downview Road and north and east of 7-11 School Lane, Greenisland
2012/A0201	S/2012/0408/F	26.11.12	17 weeks	Housing Development (reduced site and numbers)	Opposite 4 & 6 Brankinstown Road, Aghalee
2012/A0212	S/2012/0153/0	05.12.12	15 weeks	Supermarket with associated Petrol Filling Station	Site formerly occupied by Down royal Public House, Ballinderry Road, Lisburn
2012/A0224	B/2012/0162/F	04.12.12	15 weeks	Proposed 250KW Wind Turbine to serve a farm 45m to Hub.	335m west of 120 Curragh Road, Dungiven

<b>Pac Ref</b>	<b>Planning Ref</b>	<b>Date Lodged With Pac</b>	<b>No of Weeks Lodged with PAC</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Address</b>
2012/A0229	S/2012/0152/F	20.12.12	13 weeks	Erection of single storey extension to rear and erection of retaining wall to rear.	17 Haddington Hill, Lisburn
2012/A0252	X/2012/0447/F	15.01.13	10 weeks	Proposed dwelling in accordance with CTY 8.	Lands at 57 Belfast Road, Newtownards

### **Legal Challenges Against Planning Decisions**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of the Environment how many legal challenges have been taken against planning decisions over the last three years.

**(AQW 20076/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** Legal challenges to planning decisions made by the Department can be made through the courts by way of Judicial Reviews (JRs) and the Department has been party to cases over the years.

The Department does not hold a complete central record of all legal challenges on planning decisions made over the last three years. However, based on information currently available, approximately 25 Judicial Reviews were taken against planning decisions between April 2010 to date; half of which remain ongoing. I have instructed officials to collate an accurate up-to-date database for all JRs taken on planning decisions over the last 3 years.

### **Professional Planners**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment how many professional planners will be (i) transferred to local government; and (ii) retained centrally, when planning duties are transferred to councils.

**(AQW 20722/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The arrangements for the transfer of planning functions to local government on 1 April 2015 are ongoing. A key part of these preparations is the development of Workforce Models in collaboration with local government staff to ensure that the right number of professional planning staff transfer to councils in 2015. This work is ongoing and will be subject to further consultation with local council officers and electoral representatives through the Regional Transition Committee (RTC) which I chair.

We will also consult with Trade Union Side. Therefore this is work in progress. I will continue to ensure that electoral representatives on the RTC and in the Committee are informed as information becomes available.

Good and strong work is being advanced on reform – the Executive funding package, now Executive agreement on the functions to be transferred, the public consultation on the severance scheme which commenced in late March, regulations on statutory transition committees to the Assembly shortly and the Reorganisation Bill now circulating to Assembly colleagues before Executive consideration is evidence of this.

## Professional Planners

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of the Environment how many planning service staff will be (i) transferred to local government; and (ii) retained centrally, when planning duties are transferred to councils.

**(AQW 20723/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** The arrangements for the transfer of planning functions to local government on 1 April 2015 are ongoing. A key part of these preparations is the development of Workforce Models in collaboration with local government staff to ensure that the right number of professional planning staff transfer to councils in 2015. This work is ongoing and will be subject to further consultation with local council officers and electoral representatives through the Regional Transition Committee (RTC) which I chair.

We will also consult with Trade Union Side. Therefore this is work in progress. I will continue to ensure that electoral representatives on the RTC and in the Committee are informed as information becomes available.

Good and strong work is being advanced on reform – the Executive funding package, now Executive agreement on the functions to be transferred, the public consultation on the severance scheme which commenced in late March, regulations on statutory transition committees to the Assembly shortly and the Reorganisation Bill now circulating to Assembly colleagues before Executive consideration is evidence of this.

## Councils: Power to Rename Streets

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of the Environment when he will bring forward proposals to give councils the power to rename streets.

**(AQW 21349/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** I intend to consult on proposals on councils' powers in relation to street naming

later this year. The consultation will provide an opportunity for interested parties to give their views on any changes that may be required in relation to councils' powers to rename streets in their districts.

## Lough Foyle: Transboundary Ramsar Site

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he would facilitate a visit to Lough Foyle by the head of the Ramsar Secretariat, who has expressed an interest in exploring the designation of Lough Foyle as a Transboundary Ramsar Site.

**(AQW 21473/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood:** In my previous correspondence dated 29 March 2013 I indicated I had written to the Dublin Minister to ascertain his view on the designation of that part of Lough Foyle which fall within the jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland.

I would welcome a visit by the head of the Ramsar Secretariat in relation to the Ramsar designation. I await the Dublin Ministers response.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail his Department's TV, radio and newspaper advertising campaigns, in each of the last three years; and the spend on each campaign.

**(AQW 21061/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):** Details of advertising campaigns by my Department in each of the last three years are provided in the following table.

<b>Financial Year Advertising Campaign</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>
<b>2009-10</b> NI Direct Flooding Incident Line	£36,279
<b>2010-11</b> Land and Property Services Direct Debit Campaign Northern Ireland Census 2011	£9,824 £529,240
<b>2011-12</b> Northern Ireland Census 2011	£101,783

### **Civil Service Staff Officer Vacancies**

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, pursuant to AQW 20052/11-15, to detail the current Civil Service Staff Officer vacancies based in the North West, in each Department.

**(AQW 21238/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** At 21 March 2013, the Northern Ireland Civil Service had 2 Staff Officer vacancies in the North West. For the purpose of this response, the North West is defined as the District Council Areas of Derry, Strabane and Limavady.

### **2009 Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement**

**Mr Hussey** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) how many staff from his Department, who were on secondment to the old Police Authority or the Northern Ireland Office between 2003 and 2009 were mistakenly paid both limbs of the settlement under the agreed 2009 Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement; (ii) what was the total amount that was mistakenly paid to these members of staff; (iii) from where did the money that was mistakenly paid come; and (iv) whether HM Treasury has requested that this money be clawed back.

**(AQW 21512/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** DFP made 7 payments to former NIPB headquarters staff who had returned to the NICS totalling just over £41,000, which was paid from the funding set aside for the NICS equal pay settlement. The NIPB made payments to a further 18 staff totalling just over £159,000. HM Treasury has not asked us to reclaim any monies paid out to NIPB staff.

## **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety**

### **New Build for Oakridge Social Education Centre, Dungannon**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when a new build is scheduled for Oakridge Social Education Centre, Dungannon.

**(AQW 21354/11-15)**

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has been developing a business case for Oakridge Social Education Centre. Timing of business case appraisal is dependent on the likelihood of capital funding availability.

Only after the business case has been through the approval process will I be able to confirm a specific timetable for the project.

## Health and Social Care Campus in Derry

**Ms Maeve McLaughlin** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the Health and Social Care campus in Derry will proceed following the findings of the Health Infrastructure Board.

**(AQW 21359/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** You will be aware that I have just announced that two new Health and Care Centres are to be built in Lisburn and Newry.

Future Health and Care Centres across Northern Ireland will proceed based on a prioritisation process in light of budgetary constraints. The Health Infrastructure Board will continue to provide me with advice on this area of work.

Any future investment decisions will be subject to the normal business case approval process and availability of funding.

## Ban on Smoking in Cars

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he plans to announce a consultation on introducing a ban on smoking in cars.

**(AQW 21420/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Banning smoking in private vehicles is one of a range of measures being considered by my Department to reduce smoking prevalence and protect people from the harm caused by second-hand tobacco smoke. Smoking on public transport vehicles and in work vehicles is already banned under the provisions of the Smoke-Free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007.

In 2012, I commenced legislation banning sales of tobacco products from vending machines and prohibiting displays of tobacco products in large shops. The display ban legislation will be extended to small shops from April 2015. In addition, I recently introduced a Bill to the Assembly aimed at strengthening sanctions against retailers who sell tobacco products children and young people who are under 18 years of age. I am also giving consideration to the introduction of standardised packaging for tobacco products following a UK-wide consultation on this issue.

As part of this range of measures, it is my intention to consult on a range of options around banning smoking in cars shortly.

## Indemnity for First Responder Volunteers

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what progress has been made by (i) his Department; (ii) the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service; and (iii) the Health and Social Care Board regarding indemnity for first responder volunteers.

**(AQW 21421/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Officials in my Department are leading on this issue and are working with key interests to explore how volunteers in Community First Responder (CFR) schemes can be indemnified. The focus of attention is on enabling the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service to provide appropriate indemnity cover to CFR schemes, and I am hopeful that a potential solution will be identified in the near future.

## Community Resuscitation Strategy Steering Group

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many times the Community Resuscitation Strategy Steering Group has met since the Ministerial announcement in January 2013.

**(AQW 21422/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** To date the Community Resuscitation Strategy Steering Group has met once. This meeting was a joint meeting of the Community Resuscitation Strategy Steering Group and the Community Resuscitation Strategy Working Group and was held in February.

### **Northern Ireland Community Resuscitation Strategy**

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what interim plans are in place to ensure the models of practice in the Western, Northern and South Eastern Health and Social Care Trusts will be maintained during the development of the Northern Ireland Community Resuscitation Strategy.

**(AQW 21424/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Non-recurrent funding has been provided by the Public Health Agency for the Community Resuscitation Development Officer posts in the Northern and Western Health and Social Care Trusts until March 2014.

The British Heart Foundation Northern Ireland continues to provide funding for a Community Resuscitation Development Officer in the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust. This funding is in place until October 2013.

### **GP Practices: Minimum Practice Income Guarantee**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action he is taking to help rural GPs maintain coverage of their areas after the cuts in the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee.

**(AQW 21433/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** On 29 January 2013 my Department initiated a consultation with GPs on proposed revisions to the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract for 2013/14. The proposals included the delivery of equitable funding across GP practices over a seven year period from 2014/15 building on negotiations with the General Practitioners Committee nationally last year. This would include the erosion of the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee.

The consultation ended on 22 March and agreement was subsequently reached with the NI GPC on changes for 2013/14. Further work will be undertaken this year with the NI GPC on a detailed assessment of the issues and potential implications for individual practices, to ensure that the finite resources available are distributed equitably across practices in line with patient needs. The Department has deferred any action on the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee until the further work has been undertaken.

### **Transforming Your Care**

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what resources his Department will provide for GPs to help them identify, follow up and manage the health checks for all that are proposed in Transforming Your Care.

**(AQW 21434/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Transforming Your Care did not propose annual health checks for the population and there are no plans to introduce them in Northern Ireland.

There was an Assembly debate on the issue of annual health checks on 4 February following a Motion proposed by the Health Committee. Whilst I am in favour of the principle of the proposal I did highlight during the debate the need to ensure that proper consideration was given to the significant resource implications attached to providing such checks for the population, given that current resources are targeted at meeting the needs of patients based on clinical need. I also cautioned on the need to ensure that decisions on policy need to be evidence-based.

## GP Practices: Minimum Practice Income Guarantee

**Mr Kinahan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what consultation he had with representatives of GPs before bringing forward his plans to cut the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee.

**(AQW 21435/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** On 29 January 2013 my Department initiated a consultation with GPs on proposed revisions to the General Medical Services (GMS) Contract for 2013/14. The proposals included the delivery of equitable funding across GP practices over a seven year period from 2014/15 building on negotiations with the General Practitioners Committee nationally last year. This would include the erosion of the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee.

The consultation ended on 22 March and agreement was subsequently reached with the NI GPC on changes for 2013/14. Further work will be undertaken this year with the NI GPC on a detailed assessment of the issues and potential implications for individual practices, to ensure that the finite resources available are distributed equitably across practices in line with patient needs. The Department has deferred any action on the Minimum Practice Income Guarantee until the further work has been undertaken.

## Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 17631/11-15, to detail the nature of the £5.23m in assets that his Department has identified to the Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board, broken down by year.

**(AQW 21454/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department has identified to the Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board potential capital receipts of £5,268,500 for the period 2012/13 to 2014/15. These receipts will be achieved through the disposal of surplus property assets.

The £5,268,500 disposal receipt is broken down into annual targets as follows:

2012/13	£3,728,500
2013/14	£1,260,000
2014/15	£280,000

## Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children have received the measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine in each of the last ten years.

**(AQW 21468/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is given as two doses, with uptake measured by the number of children who have received the 1st dose by their 2nd birthday and the 1st and 2nd dose by their 5th birthday.

The table below shows the number of children who have received the first dose at age 2 for the past ten years.

Year	Total Children	Children Vaccinated	% Uptake
2003	21532	18884	87.7
2004	21297	18659	87.6
2005	21632	19523	90.2

Year	Total Children	Children Vaccinated	% Uptake
2006	22253	20236	90.9
2007	22392	20516	91.6
2008	23423	21112	90.1
2009	24324	22267	91.5
2010	25222	23259	92.2
2011	24771	23029	93.0
2012	25397	24158	95.1

The table below shows the number of children who have received both doses at age 5 for the past ten years.

Year	Total Children	1st & 2nd dose MMR	%
2003	23611	20541	87.0
2004	22984	19615	85.3
2005	21808	18716	85.8
2006	22059	19086	86.5
2007	21812	18824	86.3
2008	22247	19745	88.8
2009	22847	20531	89.9
2010	22780	20727	91.0
2011	23698	21642	91.3
2012	24730	22459	90.8

## Organ Donor Register

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of people who signed the organ donor register in the last five years subsequently withdrew from the scheme.

**(AQW 21475/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The information requested has been supplied by NHS Blood and Transplant, which is the organ donation organisation for the UK and is responsible for matching and allocating donated organs.

The information is shown in the following table –

### CURRENT REGISTER STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND RESIDENTS WHO JOINED THE NHS ORGAN DONOR REGISTER (ODR) BETWEEN 1 APRIL 2008 AND 31 MARCH 2013

Status	Number	Percentage
Still on ODR	159,943	98.7%
Registrant deceased	1,748	1.1%
Registrant withdrawn	306	0.2%
Total registrations	161,997	100%

## Stillbirths

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in cases where a pregnant woman has discovered by ultrasound that her foetus has no heartbeat, what the average waiting time is for delivery of the dead foetus.

**(AQW 21480/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Every situation is assessed and managed individually. The decision in relation to the time between diagnosis of no foetal heartbeat and delivery is agreed by the doctor in collaboration with the woman and her partner. The woman will usually return within 24 to 72 hours for delivery.

## GP Contracts

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the negotiations on GP contracts.

**(AQW 21547/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I explained in my written statement to the Assembly on 12th April the changes to the GMS Contract for 2013/14 were agreed with NI General Practitioners Committee (NIGPC) on 29 March following a consultation exercise which commenced on 29 January 2013 and concluded on 22 March.

## Cancer Treatment

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the cancer treatment afforded to older people here compared with their counterparts in Britain; and what assurances he can give that older cancer patients are not being discriminated against because of their age.

**(AQW 21548/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am not aware of any evidence that clinically essential treatments available in other parts of the UK are being denied to Northern Ireland cancer patients.

A patient's age will not disqualify them from receiving the healthcare they require.

Decisions about medical treatment are made by clinicians and are determined by clinical factors taking into account the patient's condition and a consideration of the risks and benefits of particular treatments.

Cancer incidence rises dramatically with age, most likely due to a build-up of risks for specific cancers that increase with age. My Department published a Service Framework for Cancer Prevention, Treatment and Care in 2011 which provides the health service and the public with clear information about the standards of services that apply for cancer patients in Northern Ireland. The Framework supports the increased integration of services across professional and institutional boundaries and places the patient and their care at the centre of the service.

## Specialist Cancer Treatment

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what assurances he can give that patients here are afforded the same opportunity for specialist cancer treatment as those in Britain; and that patients are not being discriminated against because of their postcode.

**(AQW 21549/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am not aware of any evidence that clinically essential treatments available in other parts of the UK are being denied to Northern Ireland cancer patients.

For patients who require treatment and care that fall outside the range of services normally commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board their clinician may apply for an Individual Funding Request or an Extra Contractual Referral. The Health and Social Care Board process for considering those requests may be found at the following link: [http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol\\_ECR\\_and\\_IFR\\_arrangements.pdf](http://www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/pdf/Protocol_ECR_and_IFR_arrangements.pdf).

## New Hospital in Omagh

**Mr Byrne** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the construction of the new hospital in Omagh.

**(AQW 21563/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The enabling works on the Omagh Local Hospital are continuing. Road widening of the Donaghane Road and demolition work was completed in March 2013 and the construction of a new outer link road, sewage and drainage infrastructure is ongoing. The procurement process for the construction of the main hospital building is scheduled for completion by Autumn 2013, with contractors on site soon after. The planned construction timescale for completion by the end of 2015 remains, with the hospital expected to open in 2016.

## Samaritans Funding

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much core funding was provided to the Samaritans in each of the last three years; and how much will be provided in each of the next three years.

**(AQW 21628/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Samaritans received £16,538 core funding from the DHSSPS in each of the last 3 years.

It is not possible to confirm the level of funding that will be made available to voluntary and community organisations for the years 2013/14 to 2015/16. Officials are assessing budgetary priorities for the year ahead and once this process is complete organisations will be contacted regarding funding available in 2013/14.

## Positron Emission Tomography Scans

**Mr Eastwood** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety which hospitals perform Positron Emission Tomography scans; and what is the current waiting list in each location.

**(AQW 21670/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Positron Emission Tomography scans are carried out in the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast. The waiting time for a Positron Emission Tomography Scan, at 31st December 2012, the most recent quarter for which figures are available, is outlined in the table below.

### WAITING TIME IN WEEKS FOR A PET SCAN AT ROYAL VICTORIA HOSPITAL

	0 - 6 weeks	> 6 - 9 weeks	> 9 - 13 weeks	>13 - 21 weeks	>21 - 26 weeks	> 26 weeks	>26 - 36 weeks	> 36 weeks	Total
Number of patients waiting	136	23	19	57	46	92	0	0	373

**Source:** SDR1(Part 2) return

## Hip Replacement Surgeries

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of hip replacement surgeries commissioned by the Northern Local Commissioning Group in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 21672/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Information is not readily available on the number of hip replacement surgeries commissioned by the Northern Local Commissioning Group.

However information is available on the number of hip replacement procedures carried out in HSC Hospitals in Northern Ireland for those patients who reside in the Northern Local Commissioning Group area, in each of the last three years.

Year	Number of Procedures	
	Elective	Non-elective
2009/10	515	255
2010/11	488	275
2011/12	542	282

**Source:-** Hospital Inpatient System

It should be noted that hip replacement procedures were identified using the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys tabular list of operations and procedures (OPCS-4) codes W37, W38, W39, W46, W47, W48, W93, W94 and W95. The figures in the answer refer to operations carried out in the primary procedural position only.

### Health and Care Centre in Derry

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the planned health and care centre in Derry.

**(AQW 21691/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** As you will be aware, I have just announced that two new Health and Care Centres are to be built in Lisburn and Newry using a third party development procurement route.

My plan is for a further roll-out of Health and Care Centres across Northern Ireland. Decisions on when each one will happen will have to take into account the available budget, both capital and revenue, and will be subject to the normal business case approval process and availability of funding.

## Department of Justice

### Newtownards Courthouse

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice what investments will be made at Newtownards Courthouse to ensure that it can accommodate the increased numbers arising from the closure of Bangor Courthouse.

**(AQW 21405/11-15)**

**Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice ):** Newtownards Courthouse can already accommodate the increased sitting days arising from the closure of Bangor Courthouse. An additional consultation room has been made available at minimal cost. There are now five consultation rooms at Newtownards Courthouse where solicitors can meet clients in private.

Disabled access at Newtownards Courthouse includes ramped access to the building, power assisted doors and a lift to the courtrooms on the first floor. The lift is being upgraded this year. There are also disabled toilet facilities and a disabled parking bay within the court precincts. Lift access to the first floor court office is not available, but an area on the ground floor is available for disabled court users to access court office services.

## **Newtownards Courthouse**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice what is being done to improve disability access to Newtownards Courthouse.

**(AQW 21406/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Newtownards Courthouse can already accommodate the increased sitting days arising from the closure of Bangor Courthouse. An additional consultation room has been made available at minimal cost. There are now five consultation rooms at Newtownards Courthouse where solicitors can meet clients in private.

Disabled access at Newtownards Courthouse includes ramped access to the building, power assisted doors and a lift to the courtrooms on the first floor. The lift is being upgraded this year. There are also disabled toilet facilities and a disabled parking bay within the court precincts. Lift access to the first floor court office is not available, but an area on the ground floor is available for disabled court users to access court office services.

## **Newtownards Courthouse**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice what is being done to ensure that solicitors can access private spaces in Newtownards Courthouse in which to meet their clients.

**(AQW 21407/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Newtownards Courthouse can already accommodate the increased sitting days arising from the closure of Bangor Courthouse. An additional consultation room has been made available at minimal cost. There are now five consultation rooms at Newtownards Courthouse where solicitors can meet clients in private.

Disabled access at Newtownards Courthouse includes ramped access to the building, power assisted doors and a lift to the courtrooms on the first floor. The lift is being upgraded this year. There are also disabled toilet facilities and a disabled parking bay within the court precincts. Lift access to the first floor court office is not available, but an area on the ground floor is available for disabled court users to access court office services.

## **Secure College at Hydebank Wood**

**Mrs McKeivitt** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the development of plans for a secure college at Hydebank Wood, as envisaged by the Prison Review.

**(AQO 3727/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** In my statement to the Assembly on 19 March, I reiterated my commitment to the reconfiguration of Hydebank Wood as a secure college and outlined some of the key components of the proposed concept. I now anticipate that the Prison Reform Oversight Group will consider the proposed concept in more detail at its next meeting and that the development paper will be published by the summer.

However, I am not waiting to begin the work needed. Many of those components are actively being managed through the prison reform programme, some of which are short term work packages and some of which will take longer to implement. For example, in my statement I noted that work to improve the physical environment at Hydebank Wood and to make it more conducive to learning has already commenced. I also noted at the heart of the secure college approach will be the introduction of a revised learning and skills curriculum.

I also, in response to a question from Mr Maginness on my statement, noted the details of the best way to provide that curriculum are being explored, and that tendering issues might have to be taken into account. That being the case, it is unlikely that a revised curriculum and delivery model will be in place before 2014.

The benefits of this and other components may not be realised immediately and there is therefore still some detailed planning and co-ordination work required to achieve the secure college concept as

envisaged by the Prison Review Team. Notwithstanding this, I am hopeful that the next inspection of Hydebank Wood by CJINI will recognise significant improvements from the inspection in February of this year.

### **Chairperson of the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust**

**Mr Sheehan** asked the Minister of Justice when he was first made aware that the Chairperson of the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust was until recently simultaneously a member of the Resource Group during the period when Resource Group successfully tendered for contracts to provide agency staff to the PSNI.

**(AQO 3728/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** I have been advised by the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust that the Chairperson of the PRRT has provided consultancy services, since 2009, to the Resource Group in his private employment as a consultant.

I am also advised by the Police Service of Northern Ireland that the Resource Group do not provide agency staff to the PSNI.

### **Non-payment of Fines**

**Mrs D Kelly** asked the Minister of Justice how many people are currently remanded in custody for non-payment of fines.

**(AQO 3729/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** On an average day across the 2012 calendar year there were 34 people in prison solely for defaulting on a fine.

### **HMP Magilligan**

**Mr G Robinson** asked the Minister of Justice whether doctors, solicitors and other professionals are no longer subjected to searches upon entry to HMP Magilligan, from 8 April 2013 onwards.

**(AQW 21506/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Any professional visiting a prisoner enters the prison through the Visitors' Search area. There have been no changes to the search procedures in this area.

From 8 April 2013 any professional visiting the prison for any other reason will be subject to searches that are random, unannounced or intelligence led.

### **Protection of Workers Bill at Westminster**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Justice to outline (i) what consideration he has given to the Protection of Workers Bill at Westminster; and (ii) whether he intends to create a similar additional penalty for those who assault workers.

**(AQW 21523/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Protection of Workers Bill at Westminster is a Private Member's Bill, introduced in October 2012. It would create, in England and Wales, a specific offence of assault against persons whose work brings them into face-to-face contact with the public or persons engaged in certain "essential" employment. The maximum penalties proposed in the Bill are six months' imprisonment and/or a £5000 fine on summary conviction.

As a result of the Justice (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 the maximum custodial penalty on summary conviction for common assault against any person is already six months with a £1000 fine also available in the alternative or in addition.

I have no plans at this stage to change the law any further in this area though I keep these matters under review.

## **Policing and Community Safety Partnerships**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of Justice why successful programmes funded through Policing and Community Safety Partnerships during the financial year 2012/13 could not continue to access funding in 2013/14.

**(AQW 21627/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Each Policing and Community Partnership (PCSP) is required to prepare a Partnership Action Plan to address the key policing and community safety issues identified as priorities within their local area. Following local consultations, community engagement and research, PCSPs are currently submitting their Partnership Action Plans for 2013-2015. These plans may identify local community-based projects as part of the solution to local policing and community safety concerns; it is, however, a matter for each PCSP to consider what projects to include within their Plan, including any that may have received funding in the previous year.

## **Death of Baroness Thatcher**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Justice how many arrests have been made for offences arising from on-street parties held in relation to the death of Baroness Thatcher.

**(AQW 21660/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The PSNI has advised that, as of 15 April, there have been two arrests for offences connected to demonstrations which are believed to be related to the death of Baroness Thatcher. A number of follow up enquires are also continuing.

## **Strip Searching: Roe House**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Justice (i) how many strip searches have been carried out in Roe House in the last two years; (ii) on how many occasions contraband was recovered; and (iii) how many prisoners reported injuries after the searches.

**(AQW 21661/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** There have been no full body searches carried out in Roe House landings 3 and 4 in the last two years.

## **Department for Regional Development**

### **Door-2-Door Transport**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline why the new guidelines issued by Disability Action for the interim replacement for Door-2-Door Transport only apply to the northern part of County Down and the eastern part of County Antrim.

**(AQW 21368/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):** I would refer you to the answer to AQW 21367 11-15. I have asked that Disability Action meet you to clarify the position.

### **Door-2-Door Transport**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development how a price increase in the interim replacement for Door-2-Door Transport corresponds with assurances that service levels will remain unchanged.

**(AQW 21371/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer you to the answer to AQW 21367 11-15. There are no changes to the pricing structure under the Disability Action Transport Scheme which commenced on 1 April 2013. I have asked that Disability Action meet you to clarify the position.

## Door-2-Door Transport Scheme

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the fares for the new Door-2-Door Transport scheme will be returned to previous levels when the interim scheme is replaced with a permanent solution.

**(AQW 21372/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would refer you to the answer to AQW 21367 11-15. There are no changes to the pricing structure under the Disability Action Transport Scheme which commenced on 1 April 2013. I have asked that Disability Action meet you to clarify the position.

## Door-2-Door Transport: Disability Action

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development what role his Department has in scrutinising the administration of the interim replacement scheme for Door-2-Door Transport by Disability Action.

**(AQW 21373/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The role for my Department is to ensure that the grant funding given to Disability Action to provide this interim service is used for the purposes it is intended and in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant as set out in our letter of offer to Disability Action.

## Cost of Clearing Roads

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of clearing roads as a result of the recent heavy snow.

**(AQW 21387/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I am not yet in a position to provide detail on all of the costs associated with clearing roads as a result of the recent heavy snow. As there was a significant private sector input to this work, it may be some time before all the contractors' invoices are received and processed for payment. However, it is estimated that the total cost for my Department will be around £3million.

## Larne Railway Line

**Mr Beggs** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of passengers using the Larne railway line, between the stations of Larne and Whitehead, during 2012/13 and how this compares with 2011/12.

**(AQW 21398/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Translink have advised that the total number of passenger movements on the line section between Larne and Whitehead was 262,392 in 2011/12. This number increased to 294,627 in 2012/13 which covered 53 weeks and not 52 weeks as per the previous year.

These numbers do not include passengers using 'flash' passes such as School Passes and Annual Commuter Cards.

## Northern Ireland Water: Sewage Odour in Holywood

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Regional Development what action is being taken by Northern Ireland Water to tackle sewage odour in Holywood.

**(AQW 21404/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that a £3.5 million infrastructure project to resolve the sewage pollution at Kinnegar Lagoons, Holywood is progressing well and is on target to be delivered within its PC13 Business Plan which covers the period April 2013 to March 2015. Subject to the usual statutory approvals and budgetary constraints, NIW propose to commence the project during this financial year with a construction period of approximately twelve months.

While this project will prevent further pollution to the Lagoons, a second complementary project will consider the remediation options for the Lagoons and particularly the odours emanating from the mud at low-tide. NIW has also commenced work on this second phase and it is progressing well with several environmental studies and mud samplings completed. Further impounded water sampling and flood analysis is also planned along with scientific analysis of the results. The emerging findings will be known later in 2013 and any financial and programming implications will be considered at that time in relation to the recommended remediation option.

### **Door-2-Door Transport**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Regional Development why the arrangements for the interim replacement of the Door-2-Door Transport scheme in North Down were not ready for the beginning of April 2013.

**(AQW 21441/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Disability Action, which has operational responsibility for the interim service, has advised me that there has been a temporary delay in the full implementation of the scheme in the North Down area due to the fact that it is awaiting delivery of suitable accessible vehicles from a supplier in Northern Ireland. Disability Action is expecting delivery of these vehicles throughout April and is confident that the full service will be operational by the end of April. Disability Action have continued to provide services during the period in North Down.

### **Effect of Recent Heavy Snowfall on Rural Communities**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Regional Development how many meetings he had with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to discuss the effect of recent heavy snowfall on rural communities.

**(AQW 21489/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I was in regular contact with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development throughout the recent Winter Weather Incident. We spoke on the telephone throughout the incident. We met on Tuesday 26 March 2013 in Kilcoo, near the Dromara Hills, an area which was badly affected. We held a further meeting on Thursday 28 March 2013 in Stormont. Staff in our respective Departments were, of course, in constant contact as part of the multiagency strategic response to the incident and provided mutual support and assistance round the clock to help those people experiencing difficulties.

## **Department for Social Development**

### **TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail his Department's TV, radio and newspaper advertising campaigns, in each of the last three years; and the spend on each campaign.

**(AQW 21034/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):** Please find a breakdown of spend for DSD TV, radio and newspaper advertising campaigns, in each of the last three years:

#### **2009/10**

Pension Reform	£53,102.42
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#### **2010/11**

Child Maintenance Choices	£140,331.82
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**2011/12**

Benefits Uptake	£151,533.37
Child Maintenance Choices	£152,970.02
Boiler Replacement Scheme	£15,914.51

**Disability Living Allowance**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development how many people in Derry have been in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 21259/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The table shows the number of Disability Living Allowance recipients in the Derry City Council Local Government District in each year from November 2008 to November 2012.

<b>Year</b>	<b>*Number of DLA Recipients</b>
November 2012	14,720
November 2011	14,420
November 2010	14,270
November 2009	14,060
November 2008	13,840

\* The figures are rounded to the nearest 10.

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

**Welfare Reform Bill: Clause 69**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the projected cost to the Block Grant, in each of the next five years, from not enacting clause 69 of the Welfare Reform Bill.

**(AQW 21393/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** An initial estimate as to the potential cost to the block grant of not implementing the under-occupancy provisions, and I stress these are very early figures based on current average rent levels, is thought to equate to approximately £17m per annum. This would obviously be a recurring cost.

**Under-Occupancy**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister for Social Development whether there are any circumstances, such as segregation along religious denominational lines, which would affect the implementation of new under-occupancy rules concerning Housing Benefit as proposed by the UK Government.

**(AQW 21440/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Housing Benefit claimants currently living in the social rented sector generally have no restriction placed on the size of accommodation they occupy, and the amount of Housing Benefit to which they are entitled. The proposed introduction of the size criteria restriction will bring the social rented sector more into line with the approach in the private rented sector, where the rate of Housing Benefit is related to the size of dwelling the claimant needs.

Generally, there will be no exceptions to the application of the size criteria rules for claimants, except in specific circumstances: for example, the restrictions are not applicable to supported housing. Therefore, segregation of housing developments along religious denominational rules would not and should not affect the implementation of Housing Benefit size criteria proposals.

When requests for a transfer are made, applicants should indicate one or two locations where they are prepared to live. Applicants can also extend their areas of choice by opting for a wider General Housing Area which would include more estates and possibly a greater choice of landlords. The Housing Executive must make an offer of accommodation which is, as far as possible, within the locale chosen by the applicant. The Housing Selection Scheme Rules provide that all applicants are entitled to receive a maximum of three reasonable offers of accommodation.

### **St Patrick's Barracks Site, Ballymena**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister for Social Development when the newly refurbished housing on the St Patrick's Barracks site, Ballymena, will be ready for occupation.

**(AQW 21442/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Fold Housing Association anticipate that the newly refurbished housing on the St Patrick's Barracks site, Ballymena will be ready for occupation in time for the contract completion date of December 2013.

### **Discretionary Housing Budget**

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the value of the discretionary housing budget.

**(AQW 21519/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Discretionary Housing Budget is detailed in the table below.

<b>Year</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
DHP Budget (m)	£6.944	£5.939	£4.431	£4.431

### **Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and the Chartered Institute of Housing**

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and the Chartered Institute of Housing's estimate of the cost of enacting the under occupancy rate.

**(AQW 21532/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Department has only recently received the detail and has not undertaken an assessment of the costings for implementing the under occupation restriction. As I responded in my response to AQW 21257/11-15 it is too early to assess the costs.

### **Welfare Reform**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development what is the current welfare budget; and what the budget will be in each of the next three years if welfare reforms are implemented in full.

**(AQW 21570/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** Around £5 billion annually of social security spending on Northern Ireland is met directly by HM Treasury in line with the actual entitlement of claimants. This is outside the funding allocated to and managed by the Northern Ireland Executive in the Block Departmental Expenditure Limit for spending on public services such as health and education. This funding relationship, under which HM Treasury carry the direct risk of increased demand, is predicated on Northern Ireland maintaining parity of social security policy with the rest of the United Kingdom.

The social security budget for Annually Managed Expenditure is set on an annual basis through the Estimates process. For 13-14 social security spending on Northern Ireland is estimated to be in the region of £5.36 billion.

Over the course of the subsequent two years spending on social security and budgets are estimated to increase above current amounts. Ongoing work which my Department is taking forward on the financial implications of Welfare Reform shows that Welfare Reform is expected to control the level and rate of the spending increase.

### **Alcohol: Minimum Unit Price**

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the plans to tackle irresponsible alcohol promotions and on the introduction of a minimum unit price for alcohol.

**(AQW 21618/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** I have been concerned for some time about the way in which alcohol is promoted and marketed; in particular about promotions that encourage young people to buy and consume more alcohol than is good for them.

Regulations banning irresponsible drinks promotions such as, "all you can drink for £20" in pubs and clubs were introduced from 1 January 2013.

I have also endorsed the drink industry's Code of Practice on responsible retailing of alcohol. The code seeks to promote best practice and to prevent alcohol being irresponsibly promoted, served or sold.

I have been working closely with Health Minister Poots on commissioning research to model the likely impact of minimum unit pricing in Northern Ireland.

The research is essential as it will help inform our future decisions in this area and allow us to bring forward proposals that will have a proportionate and positive impact on physical and mental health well being in Northern Ireland.

It is intended that an appointment to carry out the research will be made by the end of June and that the research will be complete before the end of 2013.

### **Social Security Agency Buildings: Canteen Closures**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the number of canteen closures within Social Security Agency buildings that are planned in the next three years; (ii) the number of staff that will be made redundant as a result; (iii) the reason for the closures; and (iv) why no Belfast canteens are being closed.

**(AQW 21781/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The canteen services in the Department are outsourced to external providers. One of the providers, Serco, has advised the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) that it plans to withdraw its catering services from eight offices in the Social Security Agency from 30 June 2013. The eight offices are: Armagh Jobs & Benefits Office (JBO); Coleraine JBO; Enniskillen JBO; Falls Road JBO; Foyle JBO; Holywood Road JBO; Newry JBO; and Lisahally Processing Centre. There are no plans for the closure of any other canteen in the next three years.

The staff affected by the canteen closures are employees of Serco, and it is anticipated that that there may be some redundancies among these staff.

The reason for the canteen closures is that Serco has advised the Department of Finance and Personnel that it is not economically viable for them to continue to provide the catering services for the eight Social Security Agency offices listed. The contract with the provider included the provision for termination in the event of the catering services not being viable.

Of the eight Social Security Agency canteens that will be closing, two are in Belfast.

## Northern Ireland Assembly Commission

### **Cost of Answering AQW 20416/11-15**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Assembly Commission for an approximate cost of answering AQW 20416/11-15. **(AQW 21467/11-15)**

**Mr P Ramsey (The Representative of the Assembly Commission):** The approximate cost of answering AQW 20416/11-15 is £60.00. This takes into account salary costs of staff tasked with the gathering of information, collation and presentation of the information in the appropriate format and approval by line management.

# Written Answers Index

<b>Department for Regional Development</b>	WA 50	Welfare Reform Bill: Clause 69	WA 53
Cost of Clearing Roads	WA 51		
Door-2-Door Transport	WA 50	<b>Department of Agriculture and Rural Development</b>	WA 3
Door-2-Door Transport	WA 50	Agrienvironmental Scheme	WA 10
Door-2-Door Transport	WA 52	Agrifood Strategy	WA 10
Door-2-Door Transport: Disability Action	WA 51	Animal Welfare Officers	WA 7
Door-2-Door Transport Scheme	WA 51	Ash Dieback: Carrickfergus	WA 11
Effect of Recent Heavy Snowfall on Rural Communities	WA 52	Ash Dieback Disease	WA 6
Larne Railway Line	WA 51	Ash Dieback Disease	WA 8
Northern Ireland Water: Sewage Odour in Holywood	WA 51	Bovine Viral Diarrhoea	WA 11
		Craigantlet Hills Area of North Down	WA 8
<b>Department for Employment and Learning</b>	WA 23	Culvert Drainage	WA 9
Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board	WA 25	Dogs	WA 9
Education and Employment 14 to 19 Year Olds	WA 28	Extreme Weather Conditions	WA 5
Further and Higher Education Colleges	WA 24	Extreme Weather Conditions	WA 6
Further and Higher Education Regional Colleges: Courses	WA 25	Farmers' Loss of Livestock	WA 5
Manufacturing and Food Processing: Skills Requirements	WA 27	Financial Assistance to Farmers	WA 6
Southern Regional College	WA 23	Horse Microchips and Passports	WA 7
Southern Regional College	WA 24	Rural Development Programme	WA 8
Southern Regional College: Courses	WA 24	Rural Schools	WA 5
South West College	WA 26	Rural Schools	WA 5
South West College, Enniskillen	WA 29	Single Farm Payments	WA 4
Stranmillis University College and Queens University, Belfast: Merger	WA 29	Single Farm Payments: Trees and Hedgerows	WA 9
Training for Success: Northern Regional College	WA 28	Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework	WA 11
Unemployment: Literacy and Numeracy	WA 29	TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns	WA 3
Visually Impaired Employees	WA 25	Use of Helicopters: Drop Supplies	WA 5
Welfare Reform: Benefits Offices	WA 27	Visit to the Sperrins	WA 7
Youth Employment Scheme: South Belfast	WA 26		
<b>Department for Social Development</b>	WA 52	<b>Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure</b>	WA 12
Alcohol: Minimum Unit Price	WA 55	First World War Commemorations	WA 14
Disability Living Allowance	WA 53	Gaelsceal	WA 14
Discretionary Housing Budget	WA 54	Liofa: Unionist Communities	WA 13
Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations and the Chartered Institute of Housing	WA 54	Sports Clubs: South Antrim	WA 13
Social Security Agency Buildings: Canteen Closures	WA 55	Stadia Development Project: Legal Challenge	WA 12
St Patrick's Barracks Site, Ballymena	WA 54	St Patricks Day Spring Carnival	WA 14
TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns	WA 52	Strabane Canal	WA 13
Under-Occupancy	WA 53	World Police and Fire Games: Local Participation	WA 12
Welfare Reform	WA 54	World Police and Fire Games: Sponsorship	WA 12
		<b>Department of Education</b>	WA 15
		Area Education Planning	WA 19
		Belmont House School and Foyleview School in Derry	WA 20
		Colleges and Higher Education Establishments	WA 17
		Curriculum Reserve Fund	WA 17

Delivering Social Change: New Teachers	WA 22	Community Resuscitation Strategy Steering Group	WA 41
Dromore Central Primary School	WA 21	GP Contracts	WA 45
Early Years Capital Funding Scheme	WA 16	GP Practices: Minimum Practice Income Guarantee	WA 42
Education and Library Boards: Redundancy Proposals	WA 18	GP Practices: Minimum Practice Income Guarantee	WA 43
Education and Library Boards: Redundancy Proposals	WA 19	Health and Care Centre in Derry	WA 47
Education and Skills Authority: Careers Advice	WA 19	Health and Social Care Campus in Derry	WA 41
Education and Skills Authority Headquarters	WA 15	Hip Replacement Surgeries	WA 46
Education Bill: Inspections	WA 23	Indemnity for First Responder Volunteers	WA 41
First Preference Nursery School Places	WA 20	Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccine	WA 43
Maghera High School	WA 21	New Build for Oakridge Social Education Centre, Dungannon	WA 40
Nurture Units	WA 18	New Hospital in Omagh	WA 46
Primary Schools: Area Plans	WA 22	Northern Ireland Community Resuscitation Strategy	WA 42
Primary Schools in the Southern Education and Library Board Area	WA 15	Organ Donor Register	WA 44
Primary Schools: Nurturing Projects	WA 19	Positron Emission Tomography Scans	WA 46
Schools: Board of Governors	WA 21	Samaritans Funding	WA 46
Schools: Emotional Health and Well-being	WA 22	Specialist Cancer Treatment	WA 45
Southern Education and Library Board: Long-Term Absence	WA 15	Stillbirths	WA 45
Translation Services	WA 18	Transforming Your Care	WA 42
Voluntary Grammar Schools: Sectoral Body	WA 21	<b>Department of Justice</b>	WA 47
<b>Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment</b>	WA 30	Chairperson of the Police Rehabilitation and Retraining Trust	WA 49
Creative Industries Report	WA 31	Death of Baroness Thatcher	WA 50
Economic Advisory Group	WA 30	HMP Magilligan	WA 49
G8 Summit	WA 32	Newtownards Courthouse	WA 47
Northern Ireland Tourist Board	WA 30	Newtownards Courthouse	WA 48
North West 200	WA 31	Newtownards Courthouse	WA 48
Rapid Deployment of Broadband Networks	WA 31	Non-payment of Fines	WA 49
Security of Power Supply	WA 31	Policing and Community Safety Partnerships	WA 50
TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns	WA 30	Protection of Workers Bill at Westminster	WA 49
Unconventional Oil or Gas Resources	WA 32	Secure College at Hydebank Wood	WA 48
<b>Department of Finance and Personnel</b>	WA 39	Strip Searching: Roe House	WA 50
2009 Civil Service Equal Pay Settlement	WA 40	<b>Department of the Environment</b>	WA 32
Civil Service Staff Officer Vacancies	WA 40	Councils: Power to Rename Streets	WA 39
TV, Radio and Newspaper Advertising Campaigns	WA 39	Legal Challenges Against Planning Decisions	WA 38
<b>Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety</b>	WA 40	Lough Foyle: Transboundary Ramsar Site	WA 39
Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board	WA 43	Planning Applications	WA 32
Ban on Smoking in Cars	WA 41	Professional Planners	WA 38
Cancer Treatment	WA 45	Professional Planners	WA 39
		<b>Northern Ireland Assembly Commission</b>	WA 56
		Cost of Answering AQW 20416/11-15	WA 56

**Office of the First Minister and  
deputy First Minister**

	WA 1
Asset Management Unit of the Strategic Investment Board	WA 2
Delivering Social Change	WA 1
Gender Equality Strategy	WA 1
Historical Institutional Abuse	WA 3
Report to the Committee of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child	WA 2
Social Investment Fund	WA 2
Translation Services	WA 3

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