



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Get Involved

The work of the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Balmoral Show

The Assembly headed off to the Balmoral Show in May. Building on the success of the Assembly's presence at the 2010 show, this year we headed for the King's Hall itself and displayed next to a number of local businesses.

The Balmoral show is a major event that attracts a wide cross section of visitors from across Northern Ireland. We set out to meet new people who had never been involved with the Assembly as well as provide information for all of those who wanted to have their voice heard. .

More than 81% of people felt that their time at the Northern Ireland Assembly stand improved their knowledge and understanding of the Assembly, with 72% stating they are more likely to engage with the Assembly or its MLAs in future.

MLA Contact Details

Also with this edition is a full list of contact details for all your MLAs.

Details are organised by constituency and can be downloaded by clicking here.

We welcome your feedback

We welcome your feedback on the Community Outreach programme and on this newsletter. Please let us know what you think by emailing outreach@niassembly.gov.uk or by calling 028 9052 1785

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The Rural White Paper

The Research and Information Service was at Balmoral to get input on 'The Rural White Paper Action Plan' which was out for consultation. The paper maps out a cross departmental approach and commitment to the sustainable development of rural communities. The

outcomes of this process will undoubtedly influence the next Programme for Government and the future work of both the new Agriculture and Rural Development committee and other committees.

The Balmoral Show provided a real opportunity

for MLAs and Research staff to hear at first hand the views of rural citizens and stakeholders on the issues that are important to them, while also exploring how the Rural White Paper and the Assembly can and might help to address these issues.



Family Fun Day

Once again, thousands of people flocked to the Family Fun Day in the Stormont Estate on the Bank Holiday at the end of May. The free yearly extravaganza featured lots of family friendly events in the Stormont grounds. Parliament Buildings played its part by having a huge variety of activities including tours as well as children's activities such as badge-making and computer gaming. It is a yearly event so watch out for it next year and get involved. It is a great way of finding out about the Assembly and is fun for all the family.

Jimmy Spratt MLA encourages Balmoral attendees to have their voice heard in the Assembly.



Gregory Campbell MP MLA discusses some of the issues raised by constituents on rural issues with the Research team

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The Moira Country and Game Fair

The Assembly also had a stand at the Moira Country and Game fair in May. The Research and Information Service once again took the opportunity to get input on the Rural White Paper and the External Liaison staff, with the support of Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee staff talked to attendees about getting involved in the Assembly.



Tom Elliott MLA, Chair of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister spends time at the Moira Show with Agriculture and Rural Development Committee member Jo-Anne Dobson MLA.



Chair of the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee Michelle McIlveen MLA is joined by fellow Committee member William Irwin MLA at the Moira Show.

Coming up...

We will be holding two educational events in Cookstown and Newry in early October aimed at increasing awareness of how the Assembly works and the best way to have your voice heard. The events are organised in partnership with the Confederation of Community Groups in Newry and the Rural Community Network in Cookstown.

There is also the Poc Ar An Chnoic (the Long Puck) in the Stormont grounds on August 6. To find out more visit www.feilebelfast.com

In September, we will be hosting the Positive Relations programme. The programme is aimed at women with an interest in Reconciliation and Politics. Organised by representatives in Ballynafeigh Community group, it will bring women from across Northern Ireland to participate in sessions to learn more about the Assembly, question female MLAs about experiences and get pointers on engaging in public and political life.

The next session for Vital Links is scheduled for August 25 here in Parliament Buildings. Run by NICVA, this free course equips participants to increase the level of understanding of the roles of key institutions. For more information contact Colm Burns at NICVA on 028 9087 7777.

Last, but not least, the Assembly will be at the Mela on the August Bank Holiday. Mela is a Sanskrit word meaning 'to meet' and the Belfast Mela is the region's flagship multi-cultural festival that welcomes all cultures to come together in a fun, friendly and relaxed setting. It is an invaluable platform for encouraging mutual respect and diversity. For more information visit www.belfastmela.org.uk

For more information on any of these events email outreach@niassembly.gov.uk

Some of the events are available to all comers and you may be able to join in. Alternatively, talk to us about your own ideas for an event – let's start the conversation that assists your group in getting its voice heard.

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Female politicians have the final word!

Some of our female MLAs took time last month to talk about the challenges and triumphs on the road to becoming a politician with the Leading Ladies group. The group, many of whom had never been to Parliament Buildings nor visited an MLA in a constituency office before, wanted to learn more about finding their voice and being represented.

Jo-Anne Dobson MLA, Dolores Kelly MLA, Anna Lo MLA and Sue Ramsey MLA talked of their motivation in becoming involved in politics, many at a time when being in politics at council level was a dangerous pursuit. Some MLAs referred to striking a healthy balance between work and home life while others spoke of personal experiences that led them to being passionate about specific issues.

All of the MLAs spent time talking with groups of women and answering questions.

The “final word” on the Leading Ladies event at Stormont on 6th June was a reflective summary of the issues and themes that challenge women in their everyday lives that many of the participants had discussed throughout the programme. This was an opportunity to put those issues to elected representatives and find out about the challenges that they address in political life.



Jo-Anne Dobson MLA



Anna Lo MLA



Sue Ramsey MLA



Dolores Kelly MLA

Leading ladies, a programme organised by the Irish Peace Centres, marked the end of a year-long series of creative events at Parliament Buildings. The programme engaged leading female role models in business, politics and education to come together with women from interface areas to explore some of the biggest challenges facing women around leadership.

Leading Ladies will roll out again in early 2012 in a wider geographical area, with special focus on the border areas of Donegal/Derry and Armagh/Louth. It will continue to draw on creative and innovative approaches to exploring peace-building with women at a local level.

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Earth Hour 2011

World Wildlife Fund Northern Ireland celebrated Earth Hour at Parliament Buildings on 26 March 2011 with a successful event for 200 guests. WWF's Earth Hour is a moment in time when people around the globe switch off their lights for one hour to send a message to world leaders that they care about tackling climate change and protecting the natural world. Stormont Estate was the perfect backdrop to show the rest of the world that Northern Ireland wants to help create a world with a better future.



The event was a magical spectacle in the Great Hall, with a cabaret show from local singer and songwriter, Ursula Burns and world class touring theatre company, Cahoots NI. This was followed by a performance from Sky 1's Got To Dance finalists, Razzle Dazzle as they hit the switch and left the crowds in darkness. Then, when the lights went out, the guests were taken on a panda torch lit tour of Parliament Buildings from the Senate and

Chamber to the library and Committee room.

Christine Crawford, Communications Manager for WWF Northern Ireland said, "This was our biggest and best Earth Hour to date! I could not have hoped for a better venue to celebrate this symbol of hope for our planet. The event ran very smoothly and I am very grateful to the NI Assembly team for all their support."

To watch the Earth Hour film of the event at Parliament Buildings go to the WWF Northern Ireland website at ni.wwf.org.uk.



Above - Razzle Dazzle bring sparkle to Earth Hour.

Top right - Kids enjoy the tour in the dark

Bottom right - Countdown to Earth Hour



WWF Northern Ireland, 2nd Floor, 7 Exchange Place, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT1 2NA

tel: 028 9335 5166 **fax:** 028 9336 4448

web: northernireland@wwf.org.uk — wwf.org.uk/northernireland

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Royal National Institute for the Deaf

The Speaker received the RNID 'Louder than Words' charter on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly at a ceremony in Parliament Buildings on 24 May 2011. The charter mark is in recognition of the Assembly's work to improve access to Parliament Buildings. To gain the charter, the Assembly provided awareness training to

security staff and ushers, information documents to customer facing staff and improvements to the loop hearing aid system. The Assembly is the first UK parliament to receive the charter and it is a key milestone in encouraging and enabling everyone to visit Parliament Buildings.

Work is now also complete on the Changing Places room. This project,

developed in partnership with MENCAP, provides facilities for visitors with profound and multiple learning disabilities. The Speaker opened the space on the 31 May 2011, as pictured below. Both these projects help the Northern Ireland Assembly meet and exceed its statutory obligations under equality and disability legislation.



Pictured left to right - James Gilsenan - Acting Equality Manager (NIA), Sharon Redmond - Policy and Research Officer (RNID), Christine Watts - Facilities Manager (NIA), Claire Lavery - Communication and Campaigns Manager (RNID), The Speaker, William Hay MLA, Jane Cordell - Head of Access, Training and Consultancy (RNID), David Sloan - Business Development Manager (RNID)

Summer tours

The Northern Ireland Assembly is offering free guided tours of Parliament Buildings throughout the summer. Tours are available on the hour between 10am and 3pm. Just come along – it would be great to see you!

If you have any questions do not hesitate to give us a call on 028 9050 0381 and our events team will be happy to help.

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Northern Ireland Assembly Committees – Who's who.

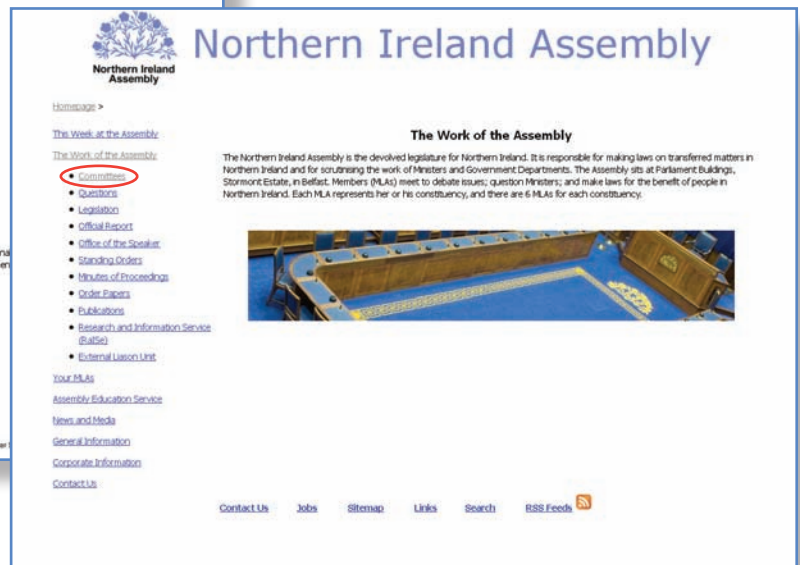
With the election over and the Assembly back in session – confirmation of the new membership and structure of Assembly Committees was announced during plenary on Monday 23 May 2011.

A large part of the work undertaken by the Northern Ireland Assembly takes place in Committees, where Members carry out a number of important functions such as the consideration of policy issues; examination of departmental proposals for primary and secondary legislation and the overall scrutiny of the work and expenditure of government departments. Committees can also put bills before the Assembly.

Assembly Committees fall within two distinct categories. Statutory Committees have a particular scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to a particular Department. Standing Committees are primarily concerned with the workings of the Assembly, for ensuring that proper procedures are followed and that good governance is maintained. The Public Accounts Committee, which is also one of the Standing Committees, is responsible for overseeing government expenditure and for making sure all financial operations are both effective and transparent.

We have developed a handy guide to the Assembly Committee's new membership on the next two pages which we thought you might find useful.

For more information on what committees are considering visit www.niassembly.gov.uk



Find 'the work of the Assembly' on the homepage and click. Then go to 'Committees' for further info.

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Statutory Committees

Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Committee Members:

Thomas Buchanan
Trevor Clarke
Willie Clarke
Jo-Anne Dobson
William Irwin
Kieran McCarthy
Conor Murphy
Oliver McMullan
Robin Swann



Mr Paul Frew
(Chairperson)



Mrs Dolores Kelly
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure

Committee Members:

Dominic Bradley
Brenda Hale
David Hilditch
Gerry Kelly
Michael McGimpsey
Karen McKeivitt
Cathal Ó hÓisín
Pat Sheehan
Robin Swann



Miss Michelle McIlveen
(Chairperson)



Mr William Irwin
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Education

Committee Members:

Michaela Boyle
Jonathan Craig
Jo-Anne Dobson
Phil Flanagan
Brenda Hale
Trevor Lunn
Conall McDevitt
Michelle McIlveen
Daithí McKay



Mr Mervyn Storey
(Chairperson)



Mr David McNarry
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Employment and Learning

Committee Members:

Jim Allister
Sammy Douglas
Michelle Gildernew
Chris Lyttle
Barry McElduff
David McIlveen
Sandra Overend
Pat Ramsey
Alastair Ross



Mr Basil McCrea
(Chairperson)



Mr Thomas Buchanan
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Committee Members:

Steven Agnew
Gordon Dunne
Phil Flanagan
David McIlveen
Alasdair McDonnell
Stephen Moutray
Mike Nesbitt
Robin Newton
Sue Ramsey



Mr Alban Maginness
(Chairperson)



Mr Daithí McKay
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for the Environment

Committee Members:

Cathal Boylan
Paula Bradley
Willie Clarke
John Dallat
Danny Kinahan
Patsy McGlone
Francie Molloy
Maurice Morrow
Peter Weir



Ms Anna Lo
(Chairperson)



Mr Simon Hamilton
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Finance and Personnel

Committee Members:

Judith Cochrane
Leslie Cree
Paul Girvan
David Hilditch
William Humphrey
Ross Hussey
Mitchel McLaughlin
Adrian McQuillan
Caitríona Ruane



Mr Conor Murphy
(Chairperson)



Mr Dominic Bradley
(Deputy Chairperson)



Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Committee Members:

Michaela Boyle
Paula Bradley
Mickey Brady
Gordon Dunne
Mark H Durkan
Sam Gardiner
Pam Lewis
John McCallister
Kieran McCarthy



Ms Michelle Gildernew
(Chairperson)



Mr Jim Wells
(Deputy Chairperson)



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Committee for Justice

Committee Members:

Sydney Anderson
Stewart Dickson
Colum Eastwood
Seán Lynch
Jennifer McCann
Basil McCrea
Alban Maginness
Peter Weir
Jim Wells



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Mr Paul Givan
(Chairperson)



Mr Raymond McCartney
(Deputy Chairperson)

Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Committee Members:

Trevor Clarke
Colum Eastwood
William Humphrey
Alex Maskey
Francie Molloy
Sandra Overend
George Robinson
Caitríona Ruane
Jimmy Spratt



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Mr Tom Elliott
(Chairperson)



Mr Chris Lyttle
(Deputy Chairperson)

Committee for Regional Development

Committee Members:

Roy Beggs
Joe Byrne
Dolores Kelly
Trevor Lunn
Seán Lynch
Ian McCrea
Stephen Moutray
Mike Nesbitt
Cathal Ó hÓisín



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Mr Jimmy Spratt
(Chairperson)



Mr Pat Doherty
(Deputy Chairperson)

Committee for Social Development

Committee Members:

Gregory Campbell
Judith Cochrane
Michael Copeland
Sammy Douglas
Mark H Durkan
Alex Easton
Pam Lewis
Fra McCann
David McClarty



Northern Ireland
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Mr Alex Maskey
(Chairperson)



Mr Mickey Brady
(Deputy Chairperson)

Standing Committees

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Committee Members:

Roy Beggs
Gregory Campbell
Stewart Dickson
Paul Givan
Simon Hamilton
Paul Maskey
Raymond McCartney
Conall McDevitt
Mike Nesbitt



Northern Ireland
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Mr Stephen Moutray
(Chairperson)



Mr Pat Sheehan
(Deputy Chairperson)

Public Accounts Committee

Committee Members:

Sydney Anderson
Michael Copeland
John Dallat
Alex Easton
Paul Frew
Paul Girvan
Ross Hussey
Mitchel McLaughlin
Jennifer McCann



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Mr Paul Maskey
(Chairperson)



Mr Joe Byrne
(Deputy Chairperson)

The other Northern Ireland Assembly Standing Committees are:

- Audit Committee
- Business Committee
- Committee on Procedures
- Committee on Standards and Privileges

Further information on the work of Northern Ireland Assembly Committee's including forward work programmes, latest news and press releases can be found on the Northern Ireland Assembly website at www.niassembly.gov.uk/io/Statutory.htm

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Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Radiotherapy Unit is one of the top priorities for new Health Committee

A new radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin Hospital, a more efficient health service, and local services in communities are some of the top priorities for the new Assembly Health Committee.

The Committee has begun to set its work programme and priorities for the new Assembly term. Finance is a major issue and in the coming months the Committee will look at where efficiencies can be made, including consultants' bonuses. The Committee will also focus on how to keep people well and the importance of treating people in primary care settings where possible.

Other topics to be tackled include care for the elderly, improving health staff morale and the Department's plans for new build facilities over the next 4 years.

Speaking on behalf of the Committee, Chairperson [Michelle Gildernew MP MLA](#) said:



"The direction of the health service and spending on health are two of the key issues for the Committee and they are issues that affect everyone. We want to work with the Department to deliver the best health service for all our people. As well as that, my Committee want to ensure that all possible efficiencies are investigated and all possible funding streams captured.

"But just as important an issue is preventative services. We want to see how people can be kept out of hospitals in the first instance through healthy living – there needs to be a focus on wellness and not just sickness.

"This Committee will be looking at health in its widest sense, and we want to look at innovative ways of providing services to people including helping those who care for relatives in the community. This domiciliary care is often unpaid and unrecognised and we need to get this higher up the agenda."



The Health Committee meet in the Senate Chamber.

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Committee for Justice

Protection of Children Paramount says Committee

The Minister for Justice, David Ford MLA, was before the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Justice in June to answer some difficult questions on sexual offences cases.



Committee Chairperson, [Paul Givan MLA](#) said:

“The Committee was deeply concerned about the findings of the Review of Court Orders made in sexual offences cases and wanted to question the Minister on it at the earliest opportunity.

“The Committee was particularly concerned at the findings in relation to Disqualification Orders which highlighted that in 57 per cent of cases, the Court did not make a Disqualification Order to stop sexual offenders working with children, and did not explain why an order had not been made. A Disqualification Order is designed to protect children, and should be awarded by the Court when it considers it likely that the offender would commit further crimes against children. Such an order prevents an offender from working with children, and from applying for jobs which involve working with children.

“While the Committee is aware the Court Service has referred these cases back to Judges for review, we are asking the Minister to ensure this happens immediately and that all necessary steps are taken to make sure no children are at risk while this review takes place. We also sought assurances that new procedures will be put in place to prevent this from happening again.

“The Committee will be keeping a close eye on the issue and will be looking to the Minister for regular updates on the position.

“The Committee also took the opportunity to receive an update on the legal aid dispute.”



The Committee for Justice is pictured with Minister Ford following its meeting.

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Committee for Social Development

Assembly Committee to work with Minister for the benefit of local communities

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Social Development has expressed its commitment to work closely with the new Minister for Social Development, Nelson McCausland. The Committee Chairperson, Alex Maskey MLA welcomed the Minister to his first formal engagement with the Committee, when the Minister outlined the key issues and challenges facing the Department of Social Development.

Committee Chairperson [Alex Maskey MLA](#) said:



“Social Development has a wide ranging remit in tackling disadvantage and building sustainable communities – this includes issues associated with welfare reform, social housing and housing support services, town centre regeneration and areas of social disadvantage. There are complex and important issues to be addressed and it is our hope that a close working relationship between the Committee and the Minister and his Department will help us to achieve positive results for the community over the next four years.

“The Committee has a statutory responsibility to advise, scrutinise and assist the Minister in his formulation and implementation of policy.

“We want to ensure that measures put forward by the Department are the best that they can be and will tackle and resolve many serious economic and social issues affecting our local communities.”



The Committee for Social Development is pictured with Minister McCausland following its meeting.

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Committee for Education

Assembly Committee asks stakeholders for views on biggest issues facing education

The Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Education organised a special event in June to discuss the issues facing the education sector. The Committee was keen to meet with stakeholders and hear their views on the biggest issues facing the sector.

Committee Chairperson, [Mervyn Storey MLA](#) said:



“Events like these are a great opportunity for Members to hear the views of people working at the heart of education.

“We have heard very clearly the issues people think are the most important to protecting, developing and improving education provision in Northern Ireland.

“Issues such as funding, Special Educational Needs and underachievement were repeatedly raised to us as high priority.

“The Committee will take time to consider what it has heard and use this information to inform its work for the next four years. This information will also be useful to the Committee as it carries out its important role of challenging and scrutinising the work of the Department for Education.

“We will continue to engage with the sector and look forward to working together on the many challenges facing education in Northern Ireland.”



The Committee for Education is pictured with Minister O'Dowd following a meeting in June.

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Advance Notice - October 2011 – Cookstown and Newry

The Northern Ireland Assembly is holding events in Newry and Cookstown in October.

Your MLAs make decisions every day in the Northern Ireland Assembly which affect you and your community. The Assembly and your representatives are very keen to ensure that your voice is heard.

We are currently planning two events in Mid Ulster and Newry. The Mid Ulster event is in partnership with the Rural Community Network and the Newry event with the Confederation of Community Groups. These events will provide practical guidance on how to have your opinions heard, how the Committee process works and what happens during an evidence session if you are asked to represent a community issue.

There is also an opportunity to input into the Assembly's plans for improving its work with the community and voluntary sector for better involvement in the future.

Invitations will be issued by our partners in September with priority given to local groups. If you know of anyone else who should receive this invitation, please contact outreach@niassembly.gov.uk giving name, organisation, email address, phone number and address.

The Northern Ireland Assembly: Get Involved

Useful Numbers and contact details

Service	Phone number	Email address	Details
General Information	028 9052 1137	info@niassembly.gov.uk	A good place to start for general information
Community Outreach	028 9052 1785	outreach@niassembly.gov.uk	This unit supports charities, community groups and individuals.
Events and tours	028 9052 1948	eventsoffice@niassembly.gov.uk	This staff team are on hand to discuss opportunities for tours and events
Education programme	028 9052 1833	education.service@niassembly.gov.uk	This unit offers an education programme to schools both in Parliament Buildings and in schools

Our textphone number is 028 9052 1209

You can get this newsletter in larger print or in Braille formats on request. Contact the Community Outreach unit for more details.