

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 21 September 2012

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

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

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 21 September 2012

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Ministerial Drivers

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) to detail the arrangements relating to the recruitment, status and payment of their ministerial drivers; (ii) whether the arrangements differ from those that were in place prior to 1 April 2011; and (iii) if so, how the arrangements differ.

(AQW 827/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): OFMDFM does not employ drivers for the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Ministerial Special Adviser

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in the case of each Special Adviser within their Department, (i) how many candidates were considered for the posts of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which they selected the Special Advisers; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did they ensure that it was 'broadly based' as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Advisers were appointed.

(AQW 1550/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: All Ministerial advisers were appointed in line with the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers.

Deputy First Minister's Driver: Traffic Accidents

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) how many traffic accidents the deputy First Minister's driver has been involved in since May 2007; (ii) how many of these were his responsibility; (iii) how many resulted in prosecution; and (iv) how much has been paid in compensation to third parties.

(AQW 1609/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The deputy First Minister's drivers are not employed by OFMDFM.

Salary Scale for Special Advisers

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether they were consulted on, and consented to, the decision taken by the Department of Finance and Personnel on 18 July 2011 to increase the upper limit of the Band B salary scale for Special Advisers to £90,000; (ii) when they became aware of the planned increase; and (iii) what input they had to the decision.

(AQW 2314/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department was not consulted. The then Head of the Civil Service was informed via memo from DFP on 18 July 2011.

Appointment of Special Advisers

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline the status within their Department of the Department of Finance and Personnel's review of the appointment of Special Advisers.

(AQW 3474/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department of Finance and Personnel's review of the appointment of Special Advisers was part of their process to consider changes to the appointment of Special Advisers.

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

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the results of the market research that was carried out by Colliers International on the proposed Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre at the Maze/Long Kesh site.

(AQW 3781/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The market research conducted by Colliers International confirmed that the overall concept of the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre is clearly very strong and has significant international, political and cross-community support across a broad cross-section of residents here.

Salary Scale for Special Advisers

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they were consulted about, and consented to, the decision that was taken by the Department of Finance and Personnel on 18 July 2011, to increase the upper limit of the Band B salary scale for Special Advisers to £90,000, and how many of their special advisers have benefited from any resulting increase in salary.

(AQO 942/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department was not consulted. The then Head of the Civil Service was informed via memo from DFP on 18 July 2011. All advisers are paid within the Band B salary scale. It is our policy not to comment on specific salaries within the scale.

Child Poverty

Mr A Maginness asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how many children have been living in poverty in the last three years; and (ii) for their assessment of the potential impact of the Welfare Reform Bill on the target of eradicating child poverty by 2020.

(AQW 7528/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Results for the relative income poverty line can be found in the Family Resources Survey, Household Below Average Income (HBAI) datasets.

Relative income poverty is defined as the proportion of children living in a household whose income is less than 60% of UK median household income, before or after housing costs are deducted from net household income.

It is too early to accurately assess the impact of the Welfare Reform Act on the target for eliminating child poverty by 2020. However we are aware of the potential impact and will keep the issue under careful consideration.

Meetings with Elected US Representatives

Mr Rogers asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to any meetings they had with elected US representatives on the issue of the 'undocumented' Irish during their march visit to the USA, to detail the (i) names of those who attended; (ii) dates; and (iii) venues.

(AQW 10906/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The issue of ‘undocumented’ Irish citizens, who are currently living in the United States without having legal status, was raised in the margins of meetings with the US elected representatives during our visit to Washington, DC in March.

Misuse of Flags

Mr Dickson asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the misuse of flags, what plans the Executive has to introduce legislation to regulate the flying of flags on public property.

(AQW 11698/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The display of flags and emblems is a matter for continued consideration by the Cross-Party Working Group on Cohesion, Sharing and Integration. Discussions at the Cross-Party Working Group continue to be held on a confidential basis and any future action on flags and emblems will be dependent on the outcome of the group’s consideration.

However, in parallel, the Flags Protocol Working Group continues to develop recommendations for a flags framework. The Working Group was reconvened in December 2011 at our request and that of the cross party working group on CSI. The Working Group has now met on three occasions. A draft discussion paper has been produced to inform the ongoing considerations of the Working Group before recommendations on a revised framework are brought forward.

Following agreement of a revised framework it is the intention that this document would form one aspect of the monitoring and implementation arrangements of the CSI Strategy.

Action Taken to Prosecute the Rt Hon Peter Hain MP

Mr Givan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an estimate of the cost to the taxpayer of the action taken to prosecute the Rt Hon Peter Hain MP by the Northern Ireland Attorney General.

(AQW 11720/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The estimated cost incurred by the Office of the Attorney General is £7,700.

Historical Institutional Child Abuse Inquiry Panel

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will introduce legislation to give the power of compellability to the Historical Institutional Child Abuse Inquiry panel.

(AQO 2100/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Inquiry into Institutional Abuse Bill was introduced in the Assembly on 12 June. It includes powers by which the Chairman of the Inquiry may compel witnesses and evidence.

Atlantic Philanthropies

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the aims, objectives and projects delivered by the Atlantic Philanthropies match funded Contested Space Programme.

(AQW 12608/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Interface/Contested Space Programme 2011-14 was launched in March 2011 and is jointly funded by OFMDFM and the Atlantic Philanthropies. The three-year programme represents a total investment of £4m comprising equal contributions from both funders.

The key aim of the programme is to promote and improve the relations between and across disadvantaged interface/contested space areas within our community that fall into the 20% most deprived wards as measured by the Noble Indices.

The programme offers these areas opportunities to shape and influence how children and youth services are provided in a way that encourages reconciliation and contributes to better outcomes for

children, young people and families. The programme focuses on four areas of support: early years and parenting programmes; shared space targeted and delivered through schools; interface youth engagement programmes aimed at young adults; and shared neighbourhood programmes targeted at families.

The five projects supported thus far through the Programme are:

- 1 **Aspire:** a partnership between Currie Primary School and Holy Family Primary School (inner North Belfast)
- 1 **APP (Achieving Personal Potential):** 2 led by Shankill Women's Centre with partner organisations which work in Shankill/Carrickhill, Ballysillan/Ligoneil, Skegoneill/Glandore; and Whitewell/Whitecity.
- 3 **Foyle Contested Space:** a partnership of 3 post primary and 5 primary schools in Derry/Londonderry to widen the scope of shared education.
- 4 **ARC (Active Respectful Community):** Led by the voluntary organisation Community Relations in Schools (CRIS), the project works with children and parents from 4 schools in Ardoyne and Shankill (Holy Cross Nursery School, Edenderry Nursery School, Glenwood Primary School and Holy Cross Boys Primary School).
- 5 **Faces and Spaces:** Early Years approach to good relations which builds community-led shared partnerships in five interface areas (Falls Road/Shankill Road; Castlederg/Newtownstewart; Waterside/Cityside; Taghnevan/Mourneview Estate; Short Strand/East Belfast).

These projects represent an overall funding commitment of £2.6m and we expect the remaining £1.4m to be allocated to projects that are successful under the second call for applications, which closed on 17th July 2012.

Contested Space Programme

Mrs D Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) whether the Contested Space Programme was subject to rural proofing; (ii) to outline the criteria for applications to the Programme; and (iii) for their assessment of these criteria.

(AQW 12623/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: At the outset, the Contested Spaces Programme was subject to an equality screening exercise which ruled out the need for further impact assessment.

It is recognised that interfaces do not solely exist within the urban areas of our community and the title of the programme seeks to reflect the wider concept of contested space. However, it is the case that fewer applications from rural areas were received during the first round of funding than we may have expected. In response to this, potential applicants to the second round of funding have been made aware that applications covering projects from rural areas will be particularly welcome.

All applications to the programme will be asked to demonstrate that the project is tailored to the needs of a community with a physical interface or where there is a contested space. Applications will then be scored on the following criteria:

- Cost;
- Clear inter community sharing / good relations outcomes;
- Clear evidence of need for activity; and
- Demonstration of a high level of collaboration.

It is our assessment that these criteria are fair and balanced – seeking to achieve maximum impact on the key issue of promoting relationship building across divided areas of our community, whilst at the same time achieving best value for the expenditure of public money.

Internship Scheme

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many internships are available in their Department; and if none, what plans they have to introduce an internship scheme.

(AQW 12708/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department participates in an internship scheme with the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and we have been successful in attracting two internships to be filled during the 2012/2013 academic year.

Our Arms Length Bodies are also working to promote internships. The Strategic Investment Board arranges an annual internship scheme for Research Assistants. Two interns are in post from a previous recruitment exercise and six more are currently being finalised. Ilex Urban Regeneration Company has been proactively involved in creating internships for local graduates since 2009, and is committed to continuing this practice subject to internal business needs going forward.

We also intend to develop and introduce an internship scheme to provide opportunities to work directly with Ministers and their Private Offices across departments.

Inquiry into Historical Institutional Child Abuse

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Inquiry into Historical Institutional Child Abuse.

(AQW 12769/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 31 May 2012 we announced via a written Assembly Statement the Inquiry's Terms of Reference; that Sir Anthony Hart would be the Chairman of the Inquiry; and that Beverley Clarke, Norah Gibbons, Tom Marshall and Tom Shaw would be inquiry panel members.

The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill was introduced to the Assembly on 12 June 2012.

North South Ministerial Council

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the North South Ministerial Council has, or intends to, acquire the use of further property in Armagh City; and to include detail of the purpose and cost.

(AQW 12777/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The North South Ministerial Council has no plans to acquire the use of any further property in Armagh.

Sustainable Development Strategy

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what duty is placed on local authorities to report on the progress of the promotion of the Sustainable Development Strategy,

(AQW 12822/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Statutory Duty in the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires public authorities, including District Councils, to exercise their functions in ways best considered to contribute to sustainable development.

The local government sector has, through active participation, helped to shape the Executive's Sustainable Development Implementation Plan, and it continues to take an active role in the delivery of our sustainability priorities. OFMDFM officials have been working with counterparts from the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) to encourage implementation of a range of actions emanating from the Implementation Plan. Officials from OFMDFM met representatives from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) at the end of June to discuss a number of issues to further encourage progress of our sustainability objectives.

Relocation of the Balmoral Show to the Maze/Long Kesh Site

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the total value of the financial commitment, across all Departments, to facilitate the relocation of the Balmoral Show to the Maze/Long Kesh site.

(AQW 12885/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The financial commitment for the relocation of the Balmoral Show is a matter for the RUAS.

Arms Trade Treaty

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in relation to the unanimous support for an Arms Trade Treaty expressed in the Assembly, whether he can offer an assurance that, during trade missions, no support will be given to companies engaged in the arms trade to sell to countries where there are significant concerns about human rights.

(AQW 13104/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: UK foreign policy commitments and the implementation of European Union (EU) and United Nations (UN) sanctions and embargoes prevents companies in the UK from selling arms to a number of countries where, for example, the supply of equipment could be used for human rights abuses. Northern Ireland companies active in the defence sector are therefore subject to these restrictions.

Licences are required from the Export Control Organisation for companies engaged in the Arms Trade and there are restrictions on selling goods for military use, or selling goods that could be used for both civilian and military use to countries where there are concerns over human rights. Such restrictions may be placed by a range of international or national organisations.

Fair Employment Tribunal in Lennon-v-the Department for Regional Development

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the findings by the Fair Employment Tribunal in Lennon-v-the Department for Regional Development, what steps will be taken against the Head of the Civil Service, given that whilst he was Permanent Secretary of that Department there was a material bias against the appointment of applicants from a Protestant background.

(AQW 13168/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The judgement of the Fair Employment Tribunal in Lennon -v- DRD made no finding that the Head of the Civil Service, who was Permanent Secretary of DRD from August 2010 to October 2011, demonstrated or acquiesced in any bias against applicants for public appointments from any community background. The implications of the Tribunal's decision will be fully considered.

Industrial Tribunal in Lennon-v-the Department for Regional Development

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the findings by the Industrial Tribunal in Lennon-v-the Department for Regional Development, what action they intend to take to address religious discrimination and material bias against the appointment of applicants from a Protestant background.

(AQW 13172/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Public appointment policy and practice, as set out in the Code of Practice published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, is governed by the overarching principle of selection on merit. This should be the determining factor when departments are making public appointments. We are considering fully the implications of the Tribunal decision.

Independent Analysis of Public Appointments by Departments

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they will ensure that an independent analysis of public appointments by Departments, since May 2007, is carried out as a matter of urgency, and that it includes a comparison of people (i) applying; (ii) deemed appointable; and (iii) appointed, broken down by community background and gender.

(AQW 13199/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our Department co-ordinates and publishes the Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report. The Annual Report contains a detailed breakdown of applications received and public appointments made by each department broken down by gender, age, community background, disability and minority ethnic background. The Report also contains an analysis of political activity undertaken by appointees to public bodies broken down by political party.

The most recent Report covers the 2010/11 financial year and is available from the OFMDFM website at www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-appointments-annual-report-2010-2011.pdf or from the Assembly Library (reference number R351.41609 NOR). Annual Reports for previous years going back as far as the 1996/97 financial year are also available on our Department's website.

The information presented does not include a comparison of people deemed appointable however we will give due consideration to this aspect as part of our ongoing responsibility for public appointments policy.

Corporation Tax Levels

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they are abroad on trade missions, whether they convey the message that Corporation Tax levels may be reduced in the near future as a means of promoting Northern Ireland as a great place to do business.

(AQO 2297/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We emphasise all the positive constituent parts of our economy when on trade and investment missions. This includes the skills and attitudes of our workforce, services from Invest NI, the role of our education system and support from government and politicians.

Securing a reduction in the corporation tax rate remains integral to our inward investment package and we will continue to press the UK Treasury and the Prime Minister on this very important matter.

Corporation Tax, along with labour costs, market size and the previous track record of inward investment, have been identified as the four variables consistently identified in explaining the location decisions of inward investment projects.

We have done very well on the other three factors identified as important for attracting investment and, undoubtedly, the ability to set out our own rate of Corporation Tax would be beneficial and we continue to convey this message.

Special Adviser to Junior Minister Anderson

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the total cost of employing the Special Adviser to Junior Minister Anderson.

(AQW 13638/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Special Adviser to Junior Minister Anderson was paid on Salary Band B. It is not our policy to disclose salary details beyond the band in which they fall.

Former Ballykelly Army Base

Mr McClarty asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans they have for the use of the land at the former Ballykelly Army Base that will not be used by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

(AQW 13855/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our officials are currently working with officials from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to identify what parts of the site it will require for its headquarters and therefore what parts will still be available for other purposes.

In the meantime, we will continue to consider options for the future of the wider site. We will also continue to give consideration to appropriate interim and short-term uses which provide benefit to the local community, such as the recent rally event organised by the Maiden City Motor Club.

Guidance on the Implementation of the Statutory Duty on Sustainable Development

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what guidance has been provided to departments on the implementation of the Statutory Duty on Sustainable Development, contained within section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006.

(AQW 13943/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Government departments are required, in implementing their statutory duty to support the achievement of sustainable development, to have regard to the Sustainable Development Strategy, which provides strategic direction and guidance.

In addition, our Department has recently undertaken a project to develop guidance for departments and District Councils on the practical aspects of implementing the duty at an organisational level. This guidance has been developed in consultation with departments and District Councils, and we intend to bring a paper to the Executive on the subject in the near future.

Travel and Subsistence Costs

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the travel and subsistence costs incurred by their Department on trips outside Northern Ireland in each year of the 2007-11 mandate, broken down by the costs incurred by (i) the First Minister; (ii) the deputy First Minister; (iii) special advisers; and (iv) support staff.

(AQW 116/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Information is not held on the departmental accounting system at the level of detail requested and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Victims and Survivors Service

Mr Cree asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline why the business case for the new Victims and Survivors Service was not released.

(AQO 2420/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The business case for the Victims and Survivors Service was produced by officials as an internal document to secure required financial approvals to support policy objectives. Business cases are not routinely published and as such we cannot see any rationale for releasing this particular document.

Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation

Mr Craig asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation.

(AQO 2422/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We announced details of the Chair and 10 Board Members of the Maze/Long Kesh Development Corporation on 10 September 2012 and are pleased to confirm that the Development Corporation is now operational and will take forward the regeneration of the Maze/Long Kesh site.

The aim of the Development Corporation is to maximise the economic, historical and reconciliation potential of the site. The Corporation's initial objectives will be to ensure the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society annual agricultural show takes place on the site in 2013 and to progress plans to build the Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre on the site by 2015.

Disability Strategy

Mr Storey asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the public consultation on the draft disability strategy.

(AQO 2423/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Public consultation on the draft strategy began on Wednesday 25 April 2012 and ended formally on Wednesday 15 August 2012.

Five public consultation events took place during April and June in Newry, Derry/Londonderry, Enniskillen, Belfast and Ballymena. Fifteen events were also held specifically with disability groups and organisations. In addition, a questionnaire was available alongside the consultation document on the OFMDFM website for either download or completion directly. So far, over 60 responses have been submitted in the questionnaire format.

Officials are currently undertaking an analysis of the responses with a view to producing a report and finalising the strategy for approval by the Executive and agreement to publish before the end of this year.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Schmallenberg Virus in Livestock

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the actions that her Department is taking in regard to combating the progression of the Schmallenberg virus in livestock.

(AQW 13766/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): Schmallenberg Virus has not been detected in livestock here. The Agri-Food and Bio-Sciences Institute (AFBI) has been testing any deformed offspring that match the clinical case definition since early this year. To date 24 animals have been tested and all have been negative.

We will continue to test deformed offspring that meet the clinical case definition. AFBI issued a press release in August similar to the one they issued in March encouraging farmers to report signs of congenital deformity in newborn animals to their PVP. We are also encouraging farmers who are importing cattle and sheep to source stock responsibly.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Britain where there is evidence that midges infected with SBV have over-wintered, potentially leading to the spread of cases of the virus outside those areas in the south and west of England that were already infected.

Department's Headquarters: Staff

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of staff employed at her Department's Headquarters who are aged between (i) 18 - 33; (ii) 34 - 49; and (iii) 50 - 65.
(AQW 13773/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The breakdown of staff in the 3 age categories is as follows:

Age Group	Headcount
18-33	146
34-49	404
50-65	287
Total	837

Additionally I can confirm that there are a further 3 staff in the 66+ age group, making a total of 840 staff currently based at DARD's headquarters in Dundonald House.

Relocating 800 Posts from Belfast to Ballykelly

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether she consulted her departmental staff before deciding to relocate 800 posts from Belfast to Ballykelly.

(AQW 13823/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Staff in my Department have received regular updates in respect of the relocation project. Consultation with Trade Union Side has been on-going through the usual industrial relations mechanisms and the Ad Hoc Whitley Committee which has been established to deal specifically with HQ relocation issues.

I and my Department are committed to ensuring that staff and their representatives continue to be fully consulted and informed of progress throughout this process.

Schmallenberg Virus in Livestock

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many cases of the Schmallenberg Virus in livestock there has been to date.

(AQW 13835/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: No cases of Schmallenberg Virus (SBV) have been detected in livestock here. The Agri-Food and Bio-Sciences Institute (AFBI) has been testing any deformed offspring that match the clinical case definition since early this year. To date 24 animals have been tested and all have been negative.

Since SBV was first reported in England in January 2012, there have been cases reported on 276 farms, mostly in the south and east of England. Enhanced surveillance of adult cattle with acute clinical signs has started in Britain and samples to date have confirmed that the disease is circulating in counties which were affected last year.

Switzerland is now reporting disease in adult cattle, sheep and goats on 77 premises in 18 cantons. Only one deformed calf has been reported, while the other cases were confirmed on testing, following reports of diarrhoea and fever. In addition, there have been unconfirmed reports of disease in cattle in Ukraine and a report in cattle in Israel.

The table below shows positive SBV tested cases across the EU according to Ministerial or Agency websites, official statistics or the recent EFSA report.

Country	Species	Positive farms
Netherlands	Cattle	237
	Sheep	107
	Goat	6

Country	Species	Positive farms
Belgium	Cattle	407
	Sheep	167
	Goat	2
Germany	Cattle	866
	Sheep	865
	Goat	48
France	Cattle	1505
	Sheep	1128
	Goat	17
Italy	Cattle	2
	Sheep	0
	Goats	1
Spain	Cattle	0
	Sheep	5
	Goat	0
Luxembourg	Cattle	11
	Sheep	6
	Sheep/Goats	1
Denmark	Cattle	2(1*)
Switzerland	Cattle	2*
UK (England & Channel Islands)	Cattle	53
	Sheep	220
	Cattle/Sheep	3

* Positive Adults = samples were submitted based on clinical

Applicants to Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what training is required for applicants to the Countryside Management Scheme.

(AQW 13839/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farmers who join the Countryside Management Scheme have an obligation to attend environmental training workshops on each of the following topics: Cross-Compliance, Field Boundary Management and Farm Nutrient and Waste Management.

Funding under the Countryside Management Scheme

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what agency or body is responsible for the delivery of training to farmers who have received funding under the Countryside Management Scheme.

(AQW 13842/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farmers who join the Countryside Management Scheme have an obligation to attend environmental training workshops on Cross-Compliance, Field Boundary Management and Farm Nutrient and Waste Management.

CAFRE and Countryside Management Unit are responsible for developing the content of the training courses and training the trainers with CAFRE also assuming responsibility for quality assurance of training delivery.

Since 2009 AI Services have responsibility for administering the training which includes recruitment of trainers and organising the workshops. AI Services is an integral part of the Countryside Agri-Rural Partnership and funded under the Focus Farm Measure of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (Axis One).

Phytophthora Ramorum in North Antrim

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what actions her Department has taken to halt the spread of Phytophthora Ramorum in North Antrim.

(AQW 13844/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Phytophthora ramorum is a fungus-like pathogen which causes a serious plant disease which has the potential to attack a wide range of woody plants including rhododendron, viburnum and certain species of tree. It was first diagnosed in larch on the Antrim Plateau in 2010.

My Department has committed significant resources to control ramorum disease in that area. Felling of over 350 hectares of larch trees at seven public forest sites and 14 private sites has been undertaken to contain the spread of the disease, along with comprehensive programmes of ongoing surveillance including aerial and on ground inspections of both public and private woodland. Bio-security measures have been implemented at affected sites and arrangements put in place that have facilitated the movement and processing of over 40,000 cubic metres of affected wood. My Department remains committed to managing ramorum disease in trees, woodland and on other plants and is funding research, carried out by the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), into the host/pathogen interactions.

Single Farm Payments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) whether farmers who have received late single farm payments are entitled to interest on their payments; and (ii) the total interest paid to applicants in each of the last three years.

(AQW 13890/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: (i) In my Press Release of 3 July 2012, I made a commitment to pay interest to farmers who received their 2011 Single Farm Payment (SFP) after 1 July 2012 and where the delay was caused solely by my Department.

While the EU rules governing SFP require us to make payments in full by 30 June each year, there is no obligation within these rules to pay interest. However, as payments made after the 30 June are in breach of our statutory duty, we have a principled basis to on which to pay interest.

Interest payments are calculated on a daily basis at the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) +1% and are subject to a minimum interest payment level of £50 per producer.

(ii) The total interest paid in the last 3 financial years is as follows:

- 2009/2010 - £3,701.91 (covering SFP scheme years 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008)
- 2010/2011 - £561.15 (covering SFP scheme years 2007, 2008)
- 2011/2012 - £Nil

No interest has yet been paid for the 2011 scheme year. The focus has been on processing the remaining 2011 cases to avoid any further delays in their payment.

Single Farm Payments

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the arrangements for the payment of interest on late Single Farm Payments as provided for within EU legislation,
(AQW 13894/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In my Press Release of 3 July 2012, I made a commitment to pay interest to farmers who received their 2011 Single Farm Payment (SFP) after 1 July 2012 and where the delay was caused solely by my Department.

My officials are currently assessing a number of cases and payments of interest for any that exceed the £50 de minimis value will begin from late September 2012.

Beef Producers

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps she has taken, or will be taking, to enable beef producers to receive fair and equitable farm gate prices for their produce compared with other regions within the United Kingdom.

(AQW 13908/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: At the outset I should point out that the price paid to producers and the establishment of a pricing structure is a commercial matter and outside the remit of DARD.

However, I do share your concerns about the differential between the price of beef here and that in Britain. We would all desire to see fair and equitable prices and a fair distribution of profits throughout the beef supply chain.

My Department is involved in a range of initiatives to help farmers produce and market high quality produce, including the Supply Chain Development Programme, benchmarking, knowledge and technology transfer, and research and innovation, through CAFRE and AFBI.

In light of recent concerns, the Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) have commissioned an independent evaluation of the disparity between beef prices here and in Britain. The LMC also carries out a valuable role in the dissemination of market information, which helps producers to make informed decisions about when and where to market their livestock to achieve the best return.

You will appreciate that the price of beef can fluctuate throughout the year for a number of reasons. Nevertheless I understand that farmers, like everyone else, are operating in difficult times and I would hope that prices will recover in the coming months.

My Department will continue to do what it can to support producers and I am pleased that a red meat sub group, comprising processor and producer representatives has been established under the Agri-Food Strategy Board, with the task of developing a strategic plan for the sector which will produce a profitable and sustainable red meat industry.

Cases of Cruelty to Animals

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many cases of cruelty to animals have been reported to councils over the last two years.
(AQW 13920/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Welfare of Animals Act 2011 replaces the Welfare of Animals Act 1972 and is a major step forward in terms of protecting the welfare of both farmed and other animals. Under the 2011 Act, DARD continues to have responsibility for the enforcement of welfare of farmed animals; the PSNI continues to have responsibility for wild animals, animal fighting and welfare issues where other criminal activities are involved; and from 2 April 2012 Councils, for the first time, have responsibility for other animals, such as domestic pets and horses.

Based on information provided by the Councils to DARD, the total number of animal welfare complaints made to Councils between 2 April 2012 (when their new enforcement role began) and 31 August 2012 was 1,802.

Following investigation by the Councils' Animal Welfare Officers, some of these complaints proved to be unfounded and others resulted in verbal advice being given to the animals' owner. A total of 85 formal improvement notices were issued, 24 animals were seized and prosecution action will be pursued in a number of cases.

Dangerous Dogs

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dangerous dogs have been put down by councils over the last two years.

(AQW 13921/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog control is legislated for here by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. Councils enforce this legislation and are required to provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation.

The term 'dangerous dog' is not defined in the dog control legislation here and could mean two things, either;

- 1) a dog of a banned type, for example a pitbull; or
- 2) a dog of any kind that has attacked a person.

The statistics that the Councils provide cover only the number of destruction orders issued by a Court following the prosecution of a dog owner whose dog has attacked a person. In 2010 the Courts issued 8 destruction orders following prosecutions involving dog attacks on people. In 2011 5 destruction orders were issued.

The statistics my Department receives have recently been reviewed and Councils will in future include details of the number of dogs of a banned type which have been humanely destroyed. The first version of the revised annual statistics from Councils, which will include this information will be available after the end of April 2013.

Water Levels on the River Bann

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how water levels on the River Bann are managed to ensure that the interests of the fishing and other waterway industries, landowners and farming are looked after.

(AQW 13931/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Water Levels in Lough Neagh are governed by Statute, Upper and Lower level limits are within a specified range, which is 12.45 meters to 12.6 meters, above ordnance datum as defined in the Lough Neagh Levels Scheme (1955). The Agency manages the water level of Lough Neagh within statutory limits as far as climatic conditions permit, whilst taking into account the needs and interest of the relevant stakeholders. Sluice gates at Toome are opened when the upper water level is likely to exceed the statutory limit. This then has an impact on water levels along the Lower Bann which are controlled by gates at Portna near Kilrea and the Cutts at Coleraine. The current operating regime for these gates has been agreed with all stakeholders on the Lower Bann. However, stakeholders are currently considering if this requires review, and may submit a revised operating regime for Rivers Agency consideration in the near future.

Executive Papers

Mr Allister asked Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many papers, which have been approved by the Minister, have yet to be placed on the agenda for an Executive meeting, including (i) the date on which the papers were circulated to ministerial colleagues; (ii) the subject matter of each paper; and (iii) the consequences of a delay in securing Executive approval.

(AQW 13966/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Animal Cruelty Offences

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has to implement greater sanctions against people convicted of animal cruelty offences.

(AQW 14002/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Welfare of Animals Act 2011 replaces the Welfare of Animals Act 1972 and is a major step forward in terms of protecting the welfare of both farmed and other animals. The 2011 Act recognises that animal cruelty and causing unnecessary suffering to any animal are very serious offences and the penalties reflect this. In the 1972 Act, the maximum penalties were 3 months imprisonment and/or a £5000 fine on summary conviction. From 2 April 2012, the 2011 Act has significantly increased the penalties for animal welfare offences to a maximum of 6 months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of £5,000 on summary conviction; and on conviction by indictment to a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

These new penalties allow for a range of sentencing options depending on the severity of the offence. Sentencing within the legislative framework is a matter for the Judiciary.

I can assure you that I take the welfare of animals very seriously and I am committed to fully implementing the new legislation.

Sentencing Tariffs for Animal Cruelty

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans there are to increase sentencing tariffs for animal cruelty.

(AQW 14003/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Welfare of Animals Act 2011 replaces the Welfare of Animals Act 1972 and is a major step forward in terms of protecting the welfare of both farmed and other animals. The 2011 Act recognises that animal cruelty and causing unnecessary suffering to any animal are very serious offences and the penalties reflect this. In the 1972 Act, the maximum penalties were 3 months imprisonment and/or a £5000 fine on summary conviction. From 2 April 2012, the 2011 Act has significantly increased the penalties for animal welfare offences to a maximum of 6 months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of £5,000 on summary conviction and on conviction by indictment to a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

I can assure you that I take the welfare of animals very seriously and I am committed to fully implementing the new legislation. I believe that the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 is fit for purpose and that the tough penalties that have been introduced in this new legislation will provide a strong deterrent, thus protecting animals from unnecessary suffering and cruelty.

Animal Cruelty Offences

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what is the maximum sentence available for animal cruelty offences.

(AQW 14004/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: From 2 April 2012, the Welfare of Animals Act 2011 has significantly increased the penalties for animal welfare offences to a maximum of 6 months imprisonment and/or a maximum fine of £5,000 on summary conviction; and on conviction by indictment to a maximum of 2 years imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

Beef and Pork Producers

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are any proposals to address the money losing situation currently being experienced by beef and pork producers.

(AQW 14062/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I share your concerns about current market conditions being experienced by beef and pork producers. We all want to see a profitable local livestock sector as part of a thriving and sustainable rural economy. However, I wish to clarify that the prices paid to producers and the cost of inputs are commercial matters and outside the remit of my Department.

My Department is involved in a range of initiatives to help farmers produce and market high quality produce, including the Supply Chain Development Programme, benchmarking, knowledge and technology transfer, and research and innovation, through CAFRE and AFBI.

The Agri-Food strategy Board has been commissioned to develop a strategic plan for the future growth and development of a sustainable Agri-Food industry. This will include how best to explore new and expanding markets for all of our local produce, including beef and pigmeat.

You will appreciate that the local beef and pigmeat sectors are highly dependent upon exports to Britain and further afield and that prices fluctuate depending on market conditions. Our distance from export markets and the associated transport cost is also a significant factor. Nevertheless I understand that farmers, like everyone else, are operating in difficult times and I would hope that prices will recover in the coming months.

My Department will continue to do what it can to support producers and I am pleased that the Agri-Food Strategy Board is engaging with stakeholders, as it considers its longer-term strategy and the potential for further export-led growth.

Areas for Designation as National Parks

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what advice she has given to farmers and residents in the Mourne and other areas that are being considered as areas for designation as National Parks.

(AQW 14064/11-15)

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

My Department has consistently put forward this view to the Department of Environment, which leads on this issue.

I recognise that farmers and rural dwellers have a wide range of concerns; including access to land, liability, governance, bureaucracy, additional restrictions, and the potential impact on rural communities.

Should any proposal come before the Executive, I will seek to ensure that these concerns are at the forefront of considerations. I believe that a national park could only proceed with the agreement of the people in that area.

Beef Producers

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department intends to address the issue of low prices that the rest of the UK and European beef markets are offering beef producers in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 14075/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: At the outset I should point out that the price paid to producers and the establishment of a pricing structure is a commercial matter and outside the remit of DARD.

However, I do share your concerns about the current prices which local beef producers are receiving from Britain and European markets. We all want to see a profitable and sustainable local beef industry.

My Department is involved in a range of initiatives to help farmers produce and market high quality produce, including the Supply Chain Development Programme, benchmarking, knowledge and technology transfer, and research and innovation, through CAFRE and AFBI.

The Livestock and Meat Commission (LMC) have recently commissioned an independent evaluation of the disparity between beef prices here and in Britain. The LMC also carries out a valuable role in the dissemination of market information, which helps producers to make informed decisions about when and where to market their livestock to achieve the best return.

You will appreciate that the local beef industry is highly dependent upon exports to Britain and further afield and that prices fluctuate depending on market conditions. Our distance from Britain and mainland European markets and the associated transport cost is also a significant factor. Nevertheless I understand that farmers, like everyone else, are operating in difficult times and I would hope that prices will recover in the coming months.

My Department will continue to do what it can to support producers and I am pleased to report that a Red Meat Sub-Group, comprising processor and producer representatives, has been established under the Agri-Food Strategy Board. The aim of the sub-group is to develop a strategic plan for the red meat sector which will produce a profitable and sustainable local red meat industry.

Vaccination for Blackleg

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how her Department aims to promote the use of the vaccination for blackleg by cattle and sheep farmers, given the increase in cattle deaths caused by blackleg in Scotland this year.

(AQW 14077/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Blackleg is a common and rapidly fatal disease in cattle and sheep, and my Department and AFBI fully support and encourage the use of vaccination. Blackleg is not a notifiable disease and my Department has no statutory responsibility for its control. To date in 2012, there have been 30 cases confirmed by AFBI and this is comparable to recent years. AFBI promote the use of vaccination through press releases, the most recent on 30 August 2012, and at farmer and veterinary association meetings. In confirmed cases, there is direct contact between the laboratory and the farmer's veterinary practitioners.

Muntjac Deer

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether the Forest Service is aware of who introduced muntjac deer into Northern Ireland.

(AQW 14101/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Forest Service is unaware of who introduced Muntjac deer into the north of Ireland.

Muntjac Deer

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of muntjac deer located in each forest.

(AQW 14103/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: A sighting of a single Muntjac deer was confirmed at Mount Stewart forest on the Ards peninsula in 2011. This animal was subsequently shot later that year. No Muntjac deer have been observed in other Forest Service woodlands.

Muntjac Deer

Mr McMullan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the current annual cost of the introduction and forest management of muntjac deer.

(AQW 14104/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Forest Service employs three wildlife wardens, who as part of their duties monitor deer populations on Forest Service land. This monitoring includes an awareness of the potential for the introduction of invasive non-native species such as Muntjac deer.

The only confirmed sighting of a Muntjac deer within Forest Service managed land was in 2011. This animal was subsequently shot and the direct cost of Forest Service input to this process, including surveillance, was £1,120.

Dangerous Dogs

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dogs have been seized after being classed as dangerous in each of the last five years, broken down by council area.

(AQW 14123/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog control is legislated for here by the Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011. Local Councils enforce this legislation and are required to provide statistics to my Department regarding its operation.

The term 'dangerous dog' is not defined in the Dogs Order and so could apply to 2 different categories of dog:

- 1) a dog of a banned type, for example a pitbull; or
- 2) a dog of any kind that has attacked a person.

The statistics that my Department receives from Councils currently do not cover the number of dogs seized in either of these categories.

However, following the changes made to the Dogs Order by the introduction of the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011 my officials have undertaken a review of the information provided by Councils. As a result of this review, Councils will be required to provide the number of dogs of a banned type that are seized, along with other statistics which they currently provide such as the number of prosecutions following dog attacks on people. The first version of the revised annual statistics from Councils, which will include the number of seizures of dogs of banned types, will be available after the end of April 2013. I will ensure that you receive this information at that time.

Areas for Designation as National Parks

Mr Rogers asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what consultation she has had with farmers and residents that reside within the Mourne, and other areas, that are being considered as potential areas for designation as National Parks.

(AQW 14133/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I am aware of significant opposition to national park proposals among farmers and residents in areas that are being considered as potential areas for designation.

I recognise that farmers and rural dwellers have a wide range of concerns; including access to land, liability, governance, bureaucracy, additional restrictions, and the potential impact on rural communities.

While I have had no formal consultation on the designation issue, I regularly meet with farming and rural community representatives. I recently met with the Environment Minister and the UFU to discuss proposals for national parks.

Should any proposal come before the Executive, I will seek to ensure that the wide range of concerns of farmers and rural dwellers are at the forefront of considerations. I believe that a national park could only proceed with the agreement of the people in that area.

Dogs: Spaying/Neutering Operation

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many dogs have died while undergoing the spaying/neutering operation in each of the last three years, broken down by the age of the dogs.

(AQW 14144/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not hold information on the number of dogs that are neutered or that die as a result of this procedure.

There are inherent risks with any surgical procedure or anaesthesia and neutering is no different. However, I am advised that this surgery is routinely performed and very safe and the risks are relatively low. A study of small animals anaesthetised and sedated during a range of operations, published in *Veterinary Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, was carried out in one hundred and seventeen veterinary practices from across Britain between June 2002 and June 2004. There were 98,036 dogs involved in the study. The study found that the overall risks of anaesthetic and sedation-related death in healthy dogs were estimated to be 0.05% (1 in 1849). (David C Brodbelt et al, 2008).

The British Veterinary Association strongly supports the practice of neutering of dogs believing that the welfare implications are outweighed by the benefits.

Licensed Dog Breeders

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the number of licensed dog breeders; and (ii) the average number of dogs that they hold at any one time.

(AQW 14146/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Dog breeding establishments are regulated here by the Dogs (Breeding Establishments and Guard Dog Kennels) Regulations 1983 which are made under the Dogs Order 1983. Under this legislation any person with 3 or more unsterilised bitches, any of which are used for breeding must, register with their local Council.

According to the figures provided by the Councils to DARD there were 240 registered breeding establishments here in 2011. Based on the information provided, the average number of bitches kept in registered breeding establishments here is approximately 10. Of the 240 establishments, 192 keep 10 or fewer breeding bitches; 43 keep between 11 and 50 bitches and 5 keep between 50 and 350 bitches.

I am currently in the process of making new subordinate legislation regulating breeding establishments here under the Welfare of Animals Act 2011. The draft Welfare of Animals (Dog Breeding Establishments) Regulations 2012 is currently being considered by the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee and, subject to their agreement, I expect the Assembly to consider the new Regulations later this year.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Funding for Boxing Clubs

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what assessment criteria will be used when allocating funding for boxing clubs.

(AQW 13807/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): The Boxing Investment Programme is still at a developmental stage; however, I can confirm that decisions on the distribution of funding will be taken on the basis of identified needs. It is anticipated that eligibility and assessment criteria will be consistent with other Sport NI programmes.

Illegal Nets Removed from Lough Neagh

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many illegal nets have been removed from Lough Neagh since January 2012.

(AQW 13816/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

Time Period	Nets seized (number and length)
January – 11th September 2012	42 nets = 30,700 Meters mix of nylon and monofilament

Fish Population in Lough Neagh

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the process for developing a baseline of fish population in Lough Neagh.

(AQW 13820/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department has commissioned the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) to produce a trout stock status report for the DCAL area, including Lough Neagh and its catchment. This is currently in draft form and will be published in due course.

AFBI has also engaged a PhD student to carry out other research on Lough Neagh that, when completed, will provide information on the location and population levels of fish species in the Lough. The results of this will be published in due course.

Honouring the Efforts of Olympic Competitors from Northern Ireland

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans her Department has to honour the efforts of olympic competitors from Northern Ireland.

(AQW 13870/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In recognition of the magnificent achievements of athletes from the north of Ireland at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, I hosted a reception in Parliament Buildings on 13 September 2012.

Invited guests include all athletes, coaches, specialist performance managers, governing bodies of sport and past Olympic and Paralympic medallists.

Legacy of the Olympic Games

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department intends to take forward the legacy of the Olympic Games.

(AQW 13872/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Three high level strategic legacy benefits were identified as part of the overall North of Ireland 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Strategy, under the headings of Community Engagement, Economy and Sport.

Under these headings the objectives were to increase participation in sporting and cultural activities particularly by young people; improve access in sports and the arts for people with disabilities; encourage healthy lifestyles; facilitate skills development; exploit economic opportunities; promote volunteering and create good relations and community cohesion.

DCAL lead and coordinated the delivery of the North's 2012 Strategy for the Games, with key partner organisations driving their respective areas of responsibility. DCAL will continue to build on these partnerships to ensure that local projects and initiatives inspired by the 2012 Games to enhance future events.

Partner organisations will take forward their element of the Games legacy as follows:-

Community Engagement

Arts Council NI's partnership with London 2012 Festival has offered Derry City of Culture 2013 an opportunity to deliver work and promotional value on a global platform and to continue working with the clients and partners involved on future local opportunities.

Volunteer Now having witnessed the impact that the 2012 volunteers had on the success of the Olympic Games in London, it is hoped that this will inspire both existing and new volunteers to help deliver the 'friendliest Games ever' in 2013 and ultimately increase the capacity and capability of volunteers in the North of Ireland.

Economy

Invest NI is building on the experience gained from London 2012 by assisting companies to bid for contracts at other Global Games such as Brazil 2014 and 2016. In August 2012 Invest NI launched a guide entitled Global Supply Opportunities to International Sporting Events – 2012-22 aimed at helping businesses identify and understand how they can access sport event related business abroad. The guide outlines opportunities arising from major events such as: Commonwealth Games in Glasgow 2013, FIFA World Cup, Brazil 2014, FIFA Qatar 2022. The CompeteFor web portal which was used to highlight London 2012 contracts is now promoting other GB based opportunities such as the major London Crossrail project and Metropolitan Police tenders.

Sport

Sport NI are the lead on the Sporting Legacy, the implementation of DCAL's strategy for sport 'Sport Matters' is central to realising a relevant, vibrant and sustainable legacy. This will result in increased rates of participation, better access to high quality sports facilities and places for people to play sport and be physically active, improved pathways for the best sporting talent, all of which are elements of a world class sporting system.

Financial Support for Rowing

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the proposed level of financial support for rowing in each of the next three years.

(AQW 13874/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, is responsible for the distribution of funding for sport in the north of Ireland. It is too early to say whether, and how much, funding will be available for rowing over the next three years. However, Sport NI and Rowing Ulster, the governing body for rowing, are in ongoing discussions over the level of investment which will help to support the future development of rowing in the north. As part of those discussions Rowing Ulster has submitted proposals under Sport NI's PerformanceFocus investment programme for the period April 2013 to March 2017.

TV Drama Productions Produced in Northern Ireland

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) what work is being done to increase the amount of tv drama productions produced in Northern Ireland; (ii) what percentage of spending on public service broadcasting has been allocated to tv productions in each of the last three years; (iii) what work is being done to increase this spending; and (iv) what engagement she has had with her counterpart in Westminster in relation to bringing tax incentives for tv productions in line with those in the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 13882/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín:

- (i) NI Screen continues to attract major TV drama productions in the form of 'Games of Thrones', and other productions for BBC to the north of Ireland. Games of Thrones, the largest TV drama

production in Europe, is now filming its third series in locations around the north of Ireland. This continuity of production is a strong indication that the north of Ireland is recognised as a competitive location for TV drama production.

- (ii) Public Service Broadcast Network programme spend on TV Drama productions was £642m in 2011, £721m in 2010 and £806m in 2009.
- (iii) NI Screen has been successful in achieving a significant realignment in favour of TV (drama) production in the north of Ireland, and this remains NI Screen's primary priority over the period of its current strategy. This strategy aims to deliver a balanced portfolio of investments across large and small productions and across a range of activities including film, television, digital content, product development and skills development. Developing a significant crew base through skills development and training is key to developing the industry along side the financial incentives offered to companies to encourage production.
- (iv) My Department co-funded, through NI Screen, the consultation work carried out by the British Film Commission in 2011-12 and in March I wrote to Ed Vaisey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries requesting he encourage and support the introduction of a proposed tax incentive. The formal development of tax breaks for animation, video games and certain 'high end' television productions has since been announced in the budget subject to a consultation and obtaining state-aid approval from the European Commission.

Executive Papers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many papers, which have been approved by the Minister, have yet to be placed on the agenda for an Executive meeting, including (i) the date on which the papers were circulated to ministerial colleagues; (ii) the subject matter of each paper; and (iii) the consequences of a delay in securing Executive approval.

(AQW 13965/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Participation in Sport of People with Disabilities

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what additional resources will be made available to increase the participation in sport of people with disabilities.

(AQW 14001/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department's strategy for sport, Sport Matters, commits Government to taking action that will increase participation in sport and physical recreation across the north of Ireland including amongst people with a disability. To assist in achieving this, Sport NI provides funding support to Disability Sports NI (DSNI), the main disability sports organisation in the north of Ireland. For the period 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2015, Sport NI has awarded £497,500 to DSNI to help the organisation increase opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in sport and physical recreation. In addition to this, my Department through Sport NI is also investing £459,000, over a 4-year period to March 2015, in Special Olympics Ulster with a focus on increasing participation rates in sport among people with a learning disability.

£3 Million Investment Programme for Boxing

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what measures are being taken to ensure that the £3 million investment programme for boxing will be applied equitably to boxing clubs across all areas and sections of the community.

(AQW 14013/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The Boxing Investment Programme will be managed and administered by Sport NI and I can confirm that decisions on the distribution of this funding will be made on the basis of identified boxing needs.

Sport NI is currently carrying out an exercise to establish the needs of boxing clubs across all areas and sections of the community.

£3 Million Investment Programme for Boxing

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether boxercise fitness training clubs can avail of funding through the £3 million investment programme for boxing.

(AQW 14014/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The main aim of the Sport NI boxing investment programme is to help the sport of boxing address the strategic facility and equipment needs of boxing clubs in the north of Ireland. As such, the programme is not open to fitness training clubs. However, boxing clubs that offer boxercise training may be able to avail of the funding.

Sale of Tickets and Promotion of Events at Main Ticketing Venues

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has any plans to invest in the sale of tickets and promotion of events at main ticketing venues, given that last year 45 percent of seats were left empty at venues last year.

(AQW 14027/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: My Department through the Arts Council is the principal funder of Audiences NI which is a dedicated audience development agency providing a package of services to its 100 member organisations. The annual funding of Audiences NI is £246,600 (2012/13) with a further £19,358 pledged this year for the Test Drive Arts Project which has brought 12,000 new attenders to the arts since it was established in February 2010.

This investment supports a year-round programme of training covering issues such as pricing, digital engagement, web analytics and social media to enable funded organisations to develop their audiences.

The Department is currently considering a proposal from Audiences NI and the Arts Council for a shared ticketing system which could be used by arts organisations to provide an improved consumer experience and enhanced marketing data.

Anglers who Use the River Bush

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the number of anglers who used the River Bush; and (ii) the revenue generated as a result, between March and August, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14032/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The table below details the numbers of day tickets sold for the special stretches of the River Bush between March and August in each of the last five years and the income generated:

Year	Number of day tickets sold	Income generated
2007	1249	£24,725.00
2008	1106	£27,485.00
2009	1026	£23,023.50
2010	1177	£25,886.00
2011	1410	£29,303.50

It is not possible to confirm the numbers of anglers using the unrestricted stretches of the River Bush as these are covered by general angling licences and permits, which allow anglers to fish a range of waters.

Libraries Earmarked for Closure

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the action plan for each of the libraries that were previously earmarked for closure in the last round of rationalisation by LibrariesNI.

(AQW 14037/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Libraries NI developed an action plan following the second stage of the Review of the library estate (libraries outside Greater Belfast). The plan is currently being implemented.

A detailed report of progress will be made to Libraries NI's Services Committee in October 2012 and its full Board in November 2012. Libraries NI have reported the following progress:

Opening Hours

After consultation with each local community around the most appropriate pattern of opening hours, revised

Opening Hours were introduced on 6 June 2012.

Level of Use

There have been regular meetings in all locations between Libraries NI and the local action groups resulting in promotional activities and support for each of their libraries. All communication issues outlined in the plan have been addressed.

Money more, Moy and Gilford

The Money more library closed on 30 November 2011, Moy Library closed on 31 March 2012 and the Gilford Library closed on 21 April 2012. Mobile provision is in place in Money more and Moy. In Gilford the mobile calls at the newly opened Community Centre, where services are also provided in the centre as part of an innovative partnership with Banbridge District Council

Buildings

Progress has been made in all the libraries where accommodation issues were a factor:

- Draperstown: substantial progress towards relocating the library with local community organisation.
- Carnlough: Plans for redevelopment have been drawn up with Larne Council (securing funding these is the responsibility of the Council).
- Fintona: submission from Fintona Forum regarding alternative premises is due by 22 September 2012.
- Killyleagh: substantial discussions have taken place regarding alternative premises. In the meantime an internal upgrade of the existing building, including wall painting and floor covering, was completed in September 2012.

Sectarianism in Boxing

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what action she intends to take to deal with sectarianism in boxing, in light of the report from the Sandy Row Boxing Club.

(AQW 14080/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Responsibility for taking action to deal with reports from any organisation, including Sandy Row Amateur Boxing Club (SRABC), alleging sectarianism in boxing rests with the sport's governing body, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) and its local provincial branch, the Ulster Provincial Boxing Council (UPBC).

My officials have already met with SRABC and the IABA to discuss the club's concerns which are now reflected in its recently published report. As a result of these discussions and further dialogue between Sport NI, SRABC, the IABA and UPBC, the UPBC agreed to implement, as far as practicable, the club's 8 point strategy for reform of the sport mentioned in the report. Sport NI is also currently in discussion with the UPBC about the adoption of the new Equality Standard for Sport, which is aimed at assisting governing bodies to achieve equality in sport. Furthermore, since the SRABC report was published, my Department has written to the UPBC seeking an update on progress and details of how the Council intends to respond to the report.

Former Public Record Office Property at Balmoral Avenue, Belfast

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the sale of the former Public Record Office property at Balmoral Avenue, Belfast.

(AQW 14175/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The former Public Record Office site at Balmoral Avenue remains on the market. PRONI continues to work with the Estate Agent, Land and Property Services and Central Procurement Directorate to promote the sale of the site.

£3 Million for Local Amateur Boxing

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what measures will be put in place to ensure that the £3 million for local amateur boxing is not just concentrated on Belfast clubs.

(AQW 14216/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI is currently carrying out an exercise to establish the needs of boxing clubs right across the north of Ireland. This information will be used by Sport NI, in conjunction with the governing body of boxing, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, to consider how funds could best be used to maximise benefits for the sport as a whole. Decisions on the distribution of funding will be made on the basis of identified boxing needs rather than the location of clubs.

£3 Million Investment in Local Boxing

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the timescale for the £3 million investment in local boxing.

(AQW 14218/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The boxing investment programme will be rolled out over the period 2012-2015. The first stage of the programme is already underway with Sport NI carrying out an exercise to establish the equipment and facility needs of boxing clubs across the north of Ireland. It is currently anticipated that the first tranche of funds to help meet the equipment needs of clubs will be available for disbursement before the end of 2012. The capital development strand of the programme, which is still at a developmental stage, will involve a full and independent assessment of the capital needs of clubs. This is due to commence at the start of 2013.

£3 Million Investment in Local Amateur Boxing

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the £3 million investment in local amateur boxing will be rolled-out to boxing clubs.

(AQW 14219/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI has recently issued a questionnaire, through the governing body of boxing, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association (IABA), to all affiliated boxing clubs and those that were affiliated in the last three years. This will provide each club with the opportunity to give an indication of their equipment needs and potential capital projects. These returns will be used by Sport NI, in conjunction with the IABA, to consider how funds could best be used to maximise benefits for the sport as a whole. Decisions on the distribution of the funding will be made on the basis of identified boxing needs.

Banbridge Boxing Club

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure (i) whether she is aware of the situation at Banbridge Boxing Club, following damage to the premises caused by recent weather conditions, which has necessitated its relocation to alternative premises within the next two weeks; and (ii) what financial support her Department can provide to the club and its members to alleviate the situation.

(AQW 14297/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I am aware of the situation at Banbridge Boxing Club and the damage to their premises by recent weather conditions. Sport NI, which is responsible for the distribution of funding to sport in the north of Ireland, is currently carrying out an exercise to identify the equipment and facility needs of boxing clubs across the north. This information will assist Sport NI and the governing body for boxing, the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, to consider how funds can best be used to maximise benefits for the sport as a whole. In the meantime, I have asked Sport NI to liaise with Banbridge Boxing Club directly to ensure that the Club is aware of all the funding opportunities currently available to them.

Department of Education

Savings Delivery Plan: DE

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education why his Department did not produce a report on its performance on the implementation of its Savings Delivery Plan for 2011/12, as part of the monitoring exercise undertaken by the Department of Finance and Personnel.

(AQW 13298/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): In agreeing Budget 2011-15, the Executive did not define savings targets for each Department (as was the case with Budget 2008-11) but rather established current and capital allocations, leaving it up to each Departmental Minister to decide on how they will deliver their priorities from the resources allocated to them. In view of this I consider it my responsibility as Minister for Education, and not DFP's, to take appropriate action to ensure that my Department remains within budget. In view of this, I did not participate in the recent Savings Delivery Plan monitoring exercise commissioned by DFP.

Year 8 Places at Post-Primary Schools

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education how many children in the (i) Ballymena; (ii) Ballymoney; and (iii) Moyle areas have not yet received a Year 8 place at a post-primary school for the 2012/13 year.

(AQW 13799/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There are currently 2 children in the Ballymena area who remain unplaced. No children in Ballymoney or Moyle are unplaced.

There are still places available in Cullybackey High School and Ballee Community High School. The NEELB have asked parents to nominate further school preferences as a matter of urgency, otherwise the non-attendance of their child at school becomes a school attendance issue. One parent has not nominated a further preference as yet and the other parent is awaiting the outcome of an appeal to the Exceptional Circumstances Body before considering whether to nominate a further preference school.

Year 1 School Places

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education how many children in the (i) Ballymena; (ii) Ballymoney; and (iii) Moyle areas have not yet received a Year 1 place at a primary school for the 2012/13 year.

(AQW 13800/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: All children in these areas were placed.

Schools Sports Grounds

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education which schools have had their sports grounds sold by their Education and Library Board in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 13866/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No schools had their sports grounds sold by their Education and Library Board in the last ten years.

Improved Road Access to Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether he has any plans to seek improved road access to Kilcooley Primary School, Bangor.

(AQW 13951/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Kilcooley Primary School is a controlled school in the South Eastern Education and Library (SEELB) area. Any issues at the school are a matter for the SEELB to address in the first instance. The SEELB has advised that it currently has no plans to seek improved road access at the school.

After School Supervision of Children

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education whether primary schools have a statutory responsibility to provide cost-free, stimulating supervision for primary 1 and primary 2 children between 2.15pm and the arrival of the school transport provision to which they are entitled.

(AQW 14028/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The setting of the daily operational hours of schools is a matter for school Principals and Boards of Governors, subject to prescribed minimum levels (3 hours for pupils in a class of pupils most of whom were under the age of 8 at the start of the school year and 4.5 hours for other pupils) and the arrangements for transporting pupils to and from school. Boards of Governors are allowed flexibility in setting their school's starting and finishing times, as long as they comply with the regulations.

The Board of Governors of a grant-aided school has a statutory duty under Article 17 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 to safeguard and promote the welfare of registered pupils of the school at all times when the pupils are on the premises of the school. It would therefore be the responsibility of Boards of Governors to determine the arrangements for meeting this requirement for pupils living more than the statutory walking distance from the school until the normal departure time for school transport services, however, this would not necessarily mean teacher supervision.

Parents/guardians of pupils residing under the two mile statutory walking distance from school would normally be expected to make arrangements to have their P1/P2 children collected at the end of the school day. Arrangements will vary from school to school, depending on the number of children involved.

Waiting times for Educational Psychologists

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what is the average waiting time between a pupil being referred to an educational psychologist and having their first appointment, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 14045/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The latest figures available from the education and library boards regarding the average waiting time between a pupil being referred to an educational psychologist and having their first appointment, for the period 1 September 2011 to 30 April 2012, are as follows:-

BELB	30 days
NEELB	108 days
SEELB	309 days

SELB	45 days
WELB	50 days

These figures refer to Stage 3 (non-statutory assessments) as outlined in the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP).

With regard to the waiting time for an assessment in terms of statutory requirements, at Stage 4 of the COP, the ELBs consider the need for a statutory assessment of special educational needs which will include an assessment by an educational psychologist. ELBs have 16 weeks from the date that the ELB notifies the parents that it is considering making an assessment or from the date that the request to carry out an assessment is received by the ELB from the parent or the school to complete the assessment.

Settling-in Period of Nursery and Primary School Children

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the settling-in period of nursery and primary school children; and whether there is any feedback available from schools to suggest it is advantageous to pupils.

(AQW 14086/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Primary schools may admit pupils on a phased basis as part of their induction process in the first few weeks of the new school year. Also, nursery schools may phase entry for the pre-school year, in response to the needs of individual children and to allow time for them to settle and become accustomed to their new routines.

Evidence gathered through school inspections has found that a well planned and well delivered phased entry is helpful to children. However, the Department would not expect these arrangements to continue for a prolonged period.

Parents should be informed of the pre-school/primary school's policy on the settling in process to allow them time to make suitable arrangements. Some younger children and those with special needs may need longer to settle and allowance should be made with the agreement of parents.

Dealing with his Type 1 Diabetes During School Hours

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Education what action he is taking to ensure that a four-year-old boy, who is being excluded from school because the school cannot provide the support necessary to deal with his Type 1 Diabetes during school hours, can attend school.

(AQW 14090/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am not aware of any valid reason as to why a child would be excluded from school for this reason. In keeping with the joint Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and Department of Education policy "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs", until appropriate training is delivered to school staff volunteering to provide support with the administration of a pupil's medication, a school would require parents to continue to deliver necessary medication. The policy recommends that such training should be arranged with the School Health Service.

I understand that discussions have recently taken place at a senior level between the relevant health trust and education and library board to ensure that appropriate training is made available as soon as possible in the case to which the member alludes.

School Children with Type 1 Diabetes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to ensure that no child is denied access to a school because they have type one diabetes.

(AQW 14093/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In keeping with the joint Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and Department of Education policy "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs", until appropriate training is delivered to school staff volunteering to provide support with the administration of a pupil's medication, a school may require parents to continue to deliver necessary medication.

My officials have held recent discussions with officials from DHSSPS with regard to training for school staff volunteering to support pupils with medication needs. Further discussions have also recently taken place at a senior level between the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the South Eastern Education and Library Board to ensure the prioritisation of appropriate training to schools in this area where the need is most urgent.

The joint policy details that training for the administration of medicines in schools will depend upon the identified needs of each individual pupil. School staff in discussion with the School Health Service team will be able to identify the level of training required.

Pupils who have Type 1 Diabetes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what engagement his Department has had with the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that schools can get quick access to the necessary training to enable them to support incoming pupils who have type one diabetes.

(AQW 14094/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In keeping with the joint Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and Department of Education policy "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs", until appropriate training is delivered to school staff volunteering to provide support with the administration of a pupil's medication, a school may require parents to continue to deliver necessary medication.

My officials have held recent discussions with officials from DHSSPS with regard to training for school staff volunteering to support pupils with medication needs. Further discussions have also recently taken place at a senior level between the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the South Eastern Education and Library Board to ensure the prioritisation of appropriate training to schools in this area where the need is most urgent.

The joint policy details that training for the administration of medicines in schools will depend upon the identified needs of each individual pupil. School staff in discussion with the School Health Service team will be able to identify the level of training required.

School Children with Type 1 Diabetes

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what is the minimum level of training that a teacher should have to enable them to support a child with type one diabetes; and how quickly can this training be accessed.

(AQW 14099/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In keeping with the joint Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and Department of Education policy "Supporting Pupils with Medication Needs", until appropriate training is delivered to school staff volunteering to provide support with the administration of a pupil's medication, a school may require parents to continue to deliver necessary medication.

My officials have held recent discussions with officials from DHSSPS with regard to training for school staff volunteering to support pupils with medication needs. Further discussions have also recently taken place at a senior level between the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the South Eastern Education and Library Board to ensure the prioritisation of appropriate training to schools in this area where the need is most urgent.

The joint policy details that training for the administration of medicines in schools will depend upon the identified needs of each individual pupil. School staff in discussion with the School Health Service team will be able to identify the level of training required.

Post-Primary Schools in the South Down Area

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education, for each post-primary school in the South Down area, to detail (i) the number of pupils enrolled; (ii) the enrolment capacity of the school; (iii) the current financial standing of the school; (iv) the percentage of pupils who gained five or more GCSEs at grade A* to C in the 2011/12 academic year; and (v) the percentage of pupils (a) with special educational needs; and (b) in receipt of free school meals.

(AQW 14127/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) and (ii) Information on numbers of pupils enrolled and the enrolment capacity of the school, as listed at points (i) and (ii) of the question, is detailed in the table below. The latest validated enrolment information held by the Department relates to the 2011/12 school year.

PUPILS ENROLLED AND APPROVED ENROLMENT FOR POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY 2011/12

School name	Total enrolment	Enrolment Capacity ¹
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	894	850
Blackwater Integrated College	310	400
De La Salle High School	358	430
Down High School	950	934
Kilkeel High School	696	830
Rathfriland High School	296	330
Sacred Heart Grammar School	845	875
Shimna Integrated College	532	480
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	396	450
St Columban's College, Kilkeel	230	550
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	585	570
St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan	1037	950
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	897	850
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	425	600
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	689	665

Source: School census 2011/12 and DE School Approved Enrolments 2011/12

Note:

- 1 Enrolment Capacity has been interpreted to be the approved enrolment number for the 2011/12 school year and does not include any temporary variation to that number which may have been granted by the Department.
- (iii) The latest Financial Year for which financial data are available is 2010/11. Information relating to this year is provided in the tables below. The reported financial position of VG/GMI schools includes an element of non-public funds, which means that these schools cannot be compared on the same basis with each other or with ELB schools.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION - EDUCATION AND LIBRARY BOARD POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY

School name	Cumulative surplus/deficit at March 2011(1) £	Cumulative surplus/deficit as a % of available Delegated Budget
De la Salle High School	273,052	14.12%
Down High School	178,647	4.50%
Kilkeel High School	-114,208	-3.83%
Rathfriland High School	169,308	11.38%
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	-63,668	-3.26%
St Columban's College, Kilkeel	-36,375	-3.14%
St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan	244,598	5.22%
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	-157,499	-4.40%
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	90,981	4.12%

FINANCIAL DATA - VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR/GRANT-MAINTAINED INTEGRATED POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS(2) & (3) IN THE SOUTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY

School name	Comment on Financial Position(1)
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	The reported financial position of these schools includes an element of non-public funds, which means that these schools cannot be compared on the same basis with each other or with ELB schools. The Department of Education can confirm that there are no VG/GMI schools with a deficit of public funds at March 2011.
Blackwater Integrated College	
Sacred Heart Grammar School	
Shimna Integrated College	
St Louis' Grammar School, Kilkeel	
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	

Note:

- 1 2010/11 is the latest Financial Year for which financial data are available;
 - 2 DE is Funding Authority for these sectors;
 - 3 These schools are not reported on in the same way as schools for which ELBs are Funding Authority.
- (iv) The most recent validated information held by the Department on the percentage of pupils who gained five or more GCSEs at Grades A* - C relates to 2010/11. This has been provided in the table below.

PERCENTAGE OF YEAR 12 PUPILS AT POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY, WHO GAINED FIVE OR MORE GCSEs AT GRADE A* TO C IN 2010/11

School name	% of Year 12 pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs grades A*-C (including equivalents), 2010/11
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	100
Blackwater Integrated College	52.5
De La Salle High School	71.1
Down High School	97.1

School name	% of Year 12 pupils achieving 5+ GCSEs grades A*-C (including equivalents), 2010/11
Kilkeel High School	76.6
Rathfriland High School	76.1
Sacred Heart Grammar School	98.4
Shimna Integrated College	70.4
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	68.8
St Columban's College, Kilkeel	43.8
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	100
St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan	59.2
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	74.4
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	67.2
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	97.9

Source: Summary of Annual Examination Results 2010/11.

- (v) The most recent information held by the Department in relation to the percentage of pupils (a) with special educational needs; and (b) in receipt of free school meals relates to 2011/12. This has been provided in the table below.

PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS AND PERCENTAGE OF PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH DOWN CONSTITUENCY 2011/12

School name	% Free School Meal Entitlement	% Pupils with Special Educational Needs
Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar School	9.5	4.3
Blackwater Integrated College	19.4	51.3
De La Salle High School	33.5	20.7
Down High School	3.7	3.4
Kilkeel High School	10.8	12.9
Rathfriland High School	16.6	16.6
Sacred Heart Grammar School	9.3	0.9
Shimna Integrated College	16.0	23.5
St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar	19.2	25.0
St Columban's College, Kilkeel	29.6	21.3
St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel	12.1	3.6
St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan	29.3	16.3
St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint	27.5	32.1
St Mary's High School, Downpatrick	29.9	20.5
St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick	6.2	10.6

Source: School census 2011/12.

Note:

- 1 Figures for pupils with Special Educational Needs relate to pupils at Stages 1 – 5 on the SEN Code of Practice.

Students Leaving School Without Qualifications

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education whether he plans to develop a strategy to combat the increase in the number of students leaving school without qualifications.

(AQW 14148/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The table below sets out the percentage and number of pupils leaving school with no formal qualifications and with no GCSEs over the past five years (2006/07 to 2010/11 inclusive).

Year	Percentage (and number) of pupils leaving school with No Formal Qualifications * ¹	Percentage (and number) of pupils leaving school with No GCSEs * ²
2006/07	3.0% (744 pupils)	3.9% (973 pupils)
2007/08	2.8% (671 pupils)	3.6% (877 pupils)
2008/09	2.3% (544 pupils)	2.9% (673 pupils)
2009/10	1.7% (383 pupils)	2.1% (476 pupils)
2010/11	1.9% (438 pupils)	2.2% (521 pupils)

Source: School Leavers Survey

*1 Includes only those without qualifications of any kind.

*2 Includes those who undertook no GCSE examinations or obtained no graded results but who obtained other qualifications.

Between 2006/07 and 2009/10 the proportion of pupils leaving school with no formal qualifications or no GCSEs decreased year on year. However, the proportion of pupils leaving school with no formal qualifications increased from 1.7% (383) in 2009/10 to 1.9% (438) in 2010/11 and the proportion of pupils leaving school with no GCSEs increased from 2.1% (476) in 2009/10 to 2.2% (521) in 2010/11.

I find it very concerning that any pupil should leave school after 12 years of education without qualifications of any kind.

As I said in my Autumn (2011) statement to the Assembly, I am satisfied that once the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion and the Early Years' strategies are finalised, we will have the right policies in place to improve educational outcomes for our young people. The key now is to step up the pace of implementation and delivery of these policies and to maintain the focus on raising standards to ensure that every pupil is able to achieve to their full potential.

Surplus Places in Primary Schools

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education to detail the current number of surplus places in primary schools, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 14162/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The number of vacant (unfilled) places in primary schools in the 2011/12 school year – the most recent academic year for which figures are available – was 62,867. This is broken down by Education and Library Board area as follows:-

Belfast ELB	11,066
Western ELB	14,611
North-Eastern ELB	13,196
South-Eastern ELB	11,784
Southern ELB	12,210
Total	62,867

The figures are derived from the difference between the totals of the approved enrolment numbers for schools and the number of pupils enrolled. They exclude the enrolment of 4,400 pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs and 9 pupils admitted on appeal by the Independent Appeals Tribunals as these are admitted over and above a schools' approved enrolment number.

Educational Psychologists

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education to detail the (i) maximum waiting time between a pupil being referred to an educational psychologist and having the first appointment; (ii) maximum waiting time between the completion of an assessment by an educational psychologist and the issuing of a statement of special needs for pupils; and (iii) average waiting time between the completion of an assessment by an educational psychologist and the issuing of a statement of special needs for pupils, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 14183/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The initial referral of a child to an educational psychologist will, in almost all cases, take place at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs (COP). There is no statutory timescale for the provision of support and therefore no maximum waiting time.

At Stage 4 of the COP the maximum waiting time between the completion of a statutory assessment of a child's special educational needs (SEN) and a final statement of SEN being issued is 10 weeks.

The Chief Executives of the education and library boards have advised that the average waiting time between the completion of a statutory assessment of SEN and a final statement of SEN being issued is as follows:-

BELB	7 weeks
NEELB	6 weeks
SEELB	5 weeks
SELB	8 weeks
WELB	6 weeks

These figures relate to statutory assessments completed on or after 1 September 2011 which had statements issued on or before 30 April 2012 and exclude statutory exceptions.

Statement of Special Educational Needs

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Education to detail the average length of time required to carry out a statutory assessment for a statement of special educational needs for a child, broken down by Education and Library Board area.

(AQW 14197/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Chief Executives of the education and library boards have advised that the average length of time required to carry out a statutory assessment of special educational needs is as follows:-

BELB	10 weeks
NEELB	10 weeks
SEELB	10 weeks
SELB	7 weeks
WELB	6 weeks

These figures relate to statutory assessments carried out during the period 1 September 2011 to 30 April 2012 and exclude statutory exceptions.

Transport to School for Pupils

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Education how his Department aims to provide reliable transport to school for pupils who live in rural areas of the North Antrim constituency.

(AQW 14239/11-15)

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

Due to the distribution of schools, the majority of pupils in rural areas are eligible for transport assistance, particularly at post-primary level. Such assistance takes the form of a seat on a Translink, Board or private operator bus, a taxi (primarily children with special educational needs) or a parental allowance in lieu of transport. Boards are not obliged to provide a "door-to-door" service.

Education and Library Boards are responsible for the operational arrangements of the home to school transport scheme. Once a pupil is eligible for transport assistance, Boards then decide what assistance will be provided by considering a number of factors such as: - the number and distribution of eligible pupils in the area; the opening and closing times of schools, the length of journey etc whilst also taking account of its duty under Article 44 of the 1986 Order not to incur unreasonable public expenditure.

The initial choice of assistance is to provide a Translink sessional bus pass but, particularly in rural areas, where there is often a lack of suitable public bus services, Boards then have to consider providing more expensive modes of transport such as a Board or private operator bus or taxi. To provide an efficient and economic service, Boards may design bus routes with a series of pick-up points. In such instances parents are responsible for the first 2 miles (primary) or 3 miles (post-primary) of the journey and may be required to take a child to a pick-up point to meet a bus.

Where no such suitable alternative exists, parents will be provided with a parental allowance in lieu of transport, and it is for them to decide how best to get their child to school.

Single Education System

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to outline the legislation that would need to be (i) introduced; or (ii) amended or repealed to allow for a single education system.

(AQW 14254/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Bill to establish the Education and Skills Authority will introduce a single system of administration for all grant-aided schools. The Bill will include significant repeals of, and amendments to, 11 existing pieces of primary legislation in education, as well as changes to a range of other legislation.

Judicial Ruling on Coláiste Feirste

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Education what action his Department has taken, and will take, in response to the judicial ruling on Coláiste Feirste.

(AQW 14301/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: As indicated in my reply to AQW 10105/11-15, published in the Official Report on 13 April 2012, this is a significant and important judgment which requires careful and detailed consideration before I can be in a position to provide an overall assessment on the outcome.

In line with the court judgment, Department officials have re-examined the transport arrangements for all pupils travelling to Coláiste Feirste, a process which has involved consultative discussions with the school. This re-examination process has been completed and I am currently considering how best to move forward on the issue.

Asbestos Contamination in Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 13918/11-15 and AQW 13919/11-15, what level of asbestos must be present in a school before his Department will intervene to remove it.

(AQW 14303/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The 'level of asbestos' present in a school is not the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by any asbestos containing materials in a school. As a result of the introduction of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003 (recently replaced by the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2012) and the Control of Asbestos (NI) Order 2007, the Education and Library Boards arranged for surveys to be carried out of the schools' estate to ascertain the extent of asbestos containing materials. Any asbestos containing materials deemed to pose a high risk were removed following this assessment. The Health and Safety Executive advises that asbestos containing materials in good condition do not represent a significant risk unless they are damaged or abraded, and should be left undisturbed.

The education sectors are responsible for managing any remaining asbestos containing materials and each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos present. This register is available for inspection by any personnel wishing to carry out works at the school or for information purposes. Managing the risk means making sure that as far as reasonably practicable no one can come to harm from asbestos on the premises.

If any upgrading or refurbishment works at a school are likely to disturb asbestos containing materials, these materials are removed prior to the works being carried out. The asbestos removal work is carried out by a licensed asbestos removal company.

- (ii) As stated above, it is not the level of asbestos present that is the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by the asbestos containing materials. There should be no asbestos containing materials remaining in the schools' estate that pose a high risk as these were removed following the asbestos surveys. Each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos containing materials still present.
- (iii) Asbestos was used extensively as a building material from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s, hence there are asbestos containing materials present in many of the schools in the estate (as is the case in many other domestic and non-domestic premises constructed during this period). The Education and Library Boards have records of the types of asbestos present (chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite) in the schools that they are responsible for. In addition each school has an asbestos register detailing where any asbestos containing materials are present.

As detailed in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice and Guidance for The management of asbestos in non domestic premises (under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006), should deterioration of asbestos containing materials occur, or if they are likely to be disturbed due to works being carried out at the premises, then they should be removed, repaired or encapsulated by a licensed asbestos company. If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and are unlikely to be damaged or disturbed then it is recommended to leave them in place and to introduce a system of management. The school sectors follow these recommendations and manage the asbestos in the estate rather than remove it unless deemed necessary.

Asbestos Contamination in Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 13918/11-15 and AQW 13919/11-15, what level of asbestos is present in each of the schools.

(AQW 14304/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The 'level of asbestos' present in a school is not the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by any asbestos containing materials in a school. As a result of the introduction of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003 (recently replaced by the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2012) and the Control of Asbestos (NI) Order 2007, the Education and Library Boards arranged for surveys to be carried out of the schools' estate to ascertain the extent of

asbestos containing materials. Any asbestos containing materials deemed to pose a high risk were removed following this assessment. The Health and Safety Executive advises that asbestos containing materials in good condition do not represent a significant risk unless they are damaged or abraded, and should be left undisturbed.

The education sectors are responsible for managing any remaining asbestos containing materials and each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos present. This register is available for inspection by any personnel wishing to carry out works at the school or for information purposes. Managing the risk means making sure that as far as reasonably practicable no one can come to harm from asbestos on the premises.

If any upgrading or refurbishment works at a school are likely to disturb asbestos containing materials, these materials are removed prior to the works being carried out. The asbestos removal work is carried out by a licensed asbestos removal company.

- (ii) As stated above, it is not the level of asbestos present that is the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by the asbestos containing materials. There should be no asbestos containing materials remaining in the schools' estate that pose a high risk as these were removed following the asbestos surveys. Each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos containing materials still present.
- (iii) Asbestos was used extensively as a building material from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s, hence there are asbestos containing materials present in many of the schools in the estate (as is the case in many other domestic and non-domestic premises constructed during this period). The Education and Library Boards have records of the types of asbestos present (chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite) in the schools that they are responsible for. In addition each school has an asbestos register detailing where any asbestos containing materials are present.

As detailed in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice and Guidance for The management of asbestos in non domestic premises (under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006), should deterioration of asbestos containing materials occur, or if they are likely to be disturbed due to works being carried out at the premises, then they should be removed, repaired or encapsulated by a licensed asbestos company. If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and are unlikely to be damaged or disturbed then it is recommended to leave them in place and to introduce a system of management. The school sectors follow these recommendations and manage the asbestos in the estate rather than remove it unless deemed necessary.

Asbestos Contamination in Schools

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 13918/11-15 and AQW 13919/11-15, what impact the presence of (i) chrysotile; and (ii) amosite has on a school; and whether there are plans to remove them from the schools.

(AQW 14305/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The 'level of asbestos' present in a school is not the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by any asbestos containing materials in a school. As a result of the introduction of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2003 (recently replaced by the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations (NI) 2012) and the Control of Asbestos (NI) Order 2007, the Education and Library Boards arranged for surveys to be carried out of the schools' estate to ascertain the extent of asbestos containing materials. Any asbestos containing materials deemed to pose a high risk were removed following this assessment. The Health and Safety Executive advises that asbestos containing materials in good condition do not represent a significant risk unless they are damaged or abraded, and should be left undisturbed.

The education sectors are responsible for managing any remaining asbestos containing materials and each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos present. This register is available for inspection by any personnel wishing to carry out works at the school or for information purposes. Managing the risk means making sure that as far as reasonably practicable no one can come to harm from asbestos on the premises.

If any upgrading or refurbishment works at a school are likely to disturb asbestos containing materials, these materials are removed prior to the works being carried out. The asbestos removal work is carried out by a licensed asbestos removal company.

- (ii) As stated above, it is not the level of asbestos present that is the key issue, but rather the 'level of risk' posed by the asbestos containing materials. There should be no asbestos containing materials remaining in the schools' estate that pose a high risk as these were removed following the asbestos surveys. Each school has an asbestos register that details the existence of any asbestos containing materials still present.
- (iii) Asbestos was used extensively as a building material from the 1950s through to the mid-1980s, hence there are asbestos containing materials present in many of the schools in the estate (as is the case in many other domestic and non-domestic premises constructed during this period). The Education and Library Boards have records of the types of asbestos present (chrysotile, amosite and crocidolite) in the schools that they are responsible for. In addition each school has an asbestos register detailing where any asbestos containing materials are present.

As detailed in the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice and Guidance for The management of asbestos in non domestic premises (under Regulation 4 of the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006), should deterioration of asbestos containing materials occur, or if they are likely to be disturbed due to works being carried out at the premises, then they should be removed, repaired or encapsulated by a licensed asbestos company. If asbestos containing materials are in good condition and are unlikely to be damaged or disturbed then it is recommended to leave them in place and to introduce a system of management. The school sectors follow these recommendations and manage the asbestos in the estate rather than remove it unless deemed necessary.

School Inspections

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education what departmental targets must be reached before a school is inspected.

(AQW 14341/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A school is inspected at the discretion of the Chief Inspector, in consultation with her Assistant Chief Inspectors and Managing Inspectors. In deciding which schools should be inspected in a particular business year, a number of factors are considered. There is no requirement for a school to achieve any specific departmental target before it is inspected.

Department for Employment and Learning

Papers Approved by the Minister

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many papers, which have been approved by the Minister, have yet to be placed on the agenda for an Executive meeting, including (i) the date on which the papers were circulated to ministerial colleagues; (ii) the subject matter of each paper; and (iii) the consequences of a delay in securing Executive approval.

(AQW 13720/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The information requested is confidential.

Training Skills Courses in Metal Craft and Welding

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will review training skills courses for local people interested in metal craft and welding to allow them to compete with incoming trainees for employment opportunities.

(AQW 13776/11-15)

Dr Farry: I can advise you that I have identified 'Advanced Manufacturing' and 'Advanced Engineering' as two of the priority sectors on which to focus the Department's employment and skills provision. I

asked the Adviser on Employment and Skills, Bill McGinnis, to carry out some research into the skills requirements of employers within these sectors. Discussion with employers on current and future skills gaps and shortages in their sectors highlighted a requirement for experienced welders in the engineering sector. I can further advise that a working group has been established to consider ways to address the various issues raised by employers in this sector, and this will meet for the first time on 19 September.

In terms of delivery, these types of courses are provided primarily through further education colleges (courses are available from Level 1 to Level 3), and through the apprenticeship programme. Provision is based on courses that lead to qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which have been designed specifically to meet the needs of employers.

While course availability is a matter for colleges, based on identified need in their areas, I can confirm that in 2010/11 there were 509 college enrolments on Professional & Technical Courses relevant to metal craft and welding. I can also advise that there are currently 231 participants undertaking training through the ApprenticeshipsNI and Programme Led Apprenticeship programmes in welding and related trades.

Finally, it is worth noting that the Department's Employment Service has advised that there is no evidence of these types of jobs being difficult to fill, and that there is substantial interest in such vacancies.

Funding for Private Recruitment and Training Agencies

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) how much funding private recruitment and training agencies received, per trainee, in each of the last three years; and (ii) what input his Department has into the courses offered.

(AQW 13848/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department currently has contracts with 49 training providers who deliver its ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success programmes. This includes a number of private training providers. The funding available per trainee is dependent on the programme of training being followed. The funding made available over the last three years is as follows:

ApprenticeshipsNI

Funding is provided over the duration of the apprenticeship and is based on the level of apprenticeship being undertaken. The range in funding is:

Level 2 Frameworks	£2,600 min	£5,050 max
Level 3 Frameworks	£3,500 min	£10,800 max

For adult apprentices aged 25 and over the Department pays 50% funding in respect of frameworks being followed in economically important sectors needed to rebalance the economy.

Training for Success

The funding provided is based on the duration and level of training being undertaken. The funding offered across its three strands is:

Skills for your Life	£5,660
Skills for Work	£5,660
Programme-Led Apprenticeships	£8,320 min to £10,770 max

Programme-Led Apprenticeships were introduced in September 2009 and the amount of funding offered is based on the level of apprenticeship being undertaken.

Additional funds are available to a training provider against both programmes in support of those with a disability. There is also extended training time of up to 156 weeks offered on the Skills for Work strand for those with a disability.

The Department's Operational Guidelines outline the funding models against each programme. These can be viewed at www.nidirect.gov.uk/apprenticeshipsni and www.nidirect.gov.uk/trainingforsuccess.

These Guidelines also specify the content of the courses being delivered by training providers. The apprenticeship frameworks being followed are designed by the relevant Sector Skills Councils or Industry-led representative bodies.

Private Recruitment and Training Agencies: Publicly Funded Courses

Mr Boylan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the publicly funded courses offered by private recruitment and training agencies are monitored to ensure that they are fit for purpose and tailored to individual trainee's needs.

(AQW 13850/11-15)

Dr Farry: The Department carries out monitoring reviews of every organisation contracted to provide training under the Training for Success / ApprenticeshipsNI programmes. These reviews include detailed checks against the operational guidelines and interviews with a wide selection of trainees and employers to ensure that all training and support meets an individual's needs. In addition, the Department requests the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) to evaluate the quality of training provided by each contracted organisation under the terms of the Department's Quality Improvement Strategy, Success through Excellence.

Further Education Colleges: Staff

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the current number of staff at each Further Education College, including details of numbers employed (i) at Deputy Director/Vice Principal level; (ii) at Head of Department level; (iii) at Principal Lecturer level; (iv) as senior Lecturers with protected salaries; (v) at Lecturer level; and (vi) at Associate lecturer, broken down by gender.

(AQW 14029/11-15)

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 by the member. I have therefore referred the questions to the Chairs of the Governing Bodies of the six further education colleges, who will respond directly to the Member.

Further Education Colleges: Lecturers

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of lecturers employed at Further Education Colleges who receive (i) four; (ii) three; (iii) two; and (iv) one (a) permanent responsibility allowances; and (b) temporary responsibility allowances, broken down by gender.

(AQW 14030/11-15)

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 by the member. I have therefore referred the questions to the Chairs of the Governing Bodies of the six further education colleges, who will respond directly to the Member.

Further Education Colleges: Lecturing Staff

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail (i) number of lecturing staff employed at Further Education Colleges who receive a L2 allowance, broken down by gender; and (ii) the number of lecturing staff employed at Further Education Colleges who have been paid hourly, as of 1 June 2012.

(AQW 14031/11-15)

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 by the member. I have therefore referred the questions to the Chairs of the Governing Bodies of the six further education colleges, who will respond directly to the Member.

Education Maintenance Allowance

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on any changes to the Education Maintenance Allowance.

(AQW 14159/11-15)

Dr Farry: I can advise the member that following a review of the effectiveness of the means tested Education Maintenance Allowance scheme in Northern Ireland a public consultation on its future is currently being undertaken and this will finish on 2 November 2012. My Department and the Department of Education will then consider amending the scheme.

Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training in the Dungannon Area

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many young people are not in Employment, Education or Training in the Dungannon area; and what initiatives his Department is undertaking to address this issue.

(AQW 14229/11-15)

Dr Farry: In estimating the number of young people not in Employment, full-time Education or Training (NEET), my Department uses the Labour Force Survey (LFS). LFS estimates are derived from a sample survey for Northern Ireland overall and it is not possible to disaggregate the figures further. The LFS data estimate published in the "Pathways to Success" Strategy document in June showed that there were an estimated 14,000 young people aged 16 to 19 and 46,000 aged 16 to 24 not in employment, full-time education or training in Northern Ireland. A further source of information is claimant count figures, that is those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). Figures for the Dungannon District Council area for August 2012 show that there are 500 claimants aged 24 and under. The overall figure for Northern Ireland is 19,090. There are 50 claimants in the Dungannon area who are long-term unemployed aged 24 and under (those unemployed and claiming JSA for 12 months or more).

In terms of initiatives that my Department is undertaking, on 31 May 2012, I secured Executive endorsement of "Pathways to Success", the cross-departmental strategy to tackle the issue of those young people who are not in education, employment or training. I launched the strategy with an oral statement to the Assembly on 11 June.

I also secured substantial additional funding to implement the strategy and made an oral statement to the Assembly on 2 July announcing £5.8m for this financial year and proposals for future years of £15.6 million in 2013/14 and £19.6 million in 2014/15.

"Pathways to Success" contains:-

- measures to improve leadership and co-ordination;
- the introduction of a NEET advisory group;
- preventative measures being taken across Departments;
- measures to re-engage 16–18 year olds;
- measures to re-engage 18-24 year olds; and
- further supporting measures being taken across Departments.

The strategy also contains an Action Plan with 56 action points across Departments. Work is well under way on the implementation of the strategy.

In more detail, I am introducing new initiatives specifically for 16 to 18 year olds to include:

- Case management by the Careers Service of young people aged 16 and 17 who drop out of provision or do not have a positive destination when they leave school;
- A new training allowance for 16 and 17 year olds participating on existing programmes funded by the European Social Fund;
- A community based access programme to engage and mentor young people using community and voluntary sector organisations. The organisations will provide continuity of support for young people to engage or re-engage with learning and to progress through mainstream training provision into employment. Individual action plans will be introduced for 16-18 year olds participating in the community based access programme; and
- An innovation fund to test new approaches based on sound evidence aimed at piloting a range of other approaches to re-engaging those young people in the NEET category.

A new Community Family Support Programme pilot is also being introduced which will focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged families, to enable young people to re-engage with education, training or employment. Such a programme will require involvement from a range of Departments.

Additional provision for 18 -24 year olds to tackle the wider issue of youth unemployment is also being introduced through the Youth Employment Scheme which is being launched on 26 September 2012 and includes:-

- A new range of support to help young unemployed people find work.
- Short work experience opportunities of between 2 and 8 weeks which will allow young people to try out particular types of work to help them decide if they wish to pursue permanent employment in that area of work.
- Longer 6 to 9 month skills development opportunities in sectors with the potential for future jobs growth will be available. Young people will receive a training allowance of £100 a week while in training.
- Employers in sectors with potential for future jobs growth can receive a subsidy of up to £5,000 for employing an unemployed 18 to 24 year old provided they offer skills development. Financial support of up to £750 is available to help pay for that skills development.

As you can see, there is a very substantial range of support that is being put in place and you will see the introduction of the initiatives in the coming weeks and months.

FG Wilson

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the (i) training; and (ii) resource support that his Department has provided to FG Wilson over the last twelve months.
(AQW 14237/11-15)

Dr Farry: Officials from my Department's Employment Service have been providing advice to employees of FG Wilson since the company's previous announcement of redundancies and this will continue following last week's announcement. Employees will be provided with information and professional advice about the options and support available to them including employment, training and education opportunities, as well as careers, benefits and taxation advice.

There has been regular communication with the company in the past few years and the company is aware and has availed of DEL and FE sector training and advice. Currently, there are six apprentices employed by FG Wilson working towards their ApprenticeshipNI award. Funding available ranges from £3,100 to £6,500 depending on the apprenticeship framework

being followed and is paid directly to the training provider. A further 15 apprentices employed by the company have achieved their full award since 2008.

While my Department provided approximately £375,000 in financial support towards the cost of a large scale Further Education delivered customised training programme between 2008 and 2010, it has not provided any such support in the last twelve months.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Spatial Investment Plan

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what consideration her department has given to a Spatial Investment Plan.

(AQW 13725/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): It is important to note that Invest NI does not determine the location of an inward investment project. The investor will make the decision as to where they locate based on their specific business needs and having weighed up the options available to them.

Invest NI is also not in a position to sign up to sub-regional targets. Northern Ireland competes for FDI against some much larger nation states. In order to maximise our presence in overseas markets, Invest NI focuses on selling Northern Ireland as a whole.

As noted by the Independent Review of Economic Policy, it is important to allow companies the scope to locate where they can operate most profitably. To do otherwise would be detrimental to the chances of securing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for Northern Ireland.

The Independent Review of Economic Policy also acknowledged Invest NI's approach to Inward Investment as being the most appropriate, recognised the importance of FDI in building a more dynamic and innovative private sector and acknowledged that, per capita, Northern Ireland has been one of the most successful UK regions at attracting FDI.

However, Invest NI is keen to build on this success and actively works with local stakeholders to maximise investment and employment opportunities in all areas.

InvestNI

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the procedure used by InvestNI when consulting with potential investors about geographically suitable venues for their investments.

(AQW 13726/11-15)

Mrs Foster: When engaging with a company on a potential investment project, Invest NI first demonstrates how Northern Ireland can meet the needs of that particular project. The requirements will vary depending on the nature of the project. Invest NI encourages international investors to locate in any area in which their business will grow and thrive.

In determining the investor's needs and their specific preferences, Invest NI offers solutions to meet investor needs. Invariably these situations are not area based but rather driven by talent availability and cost competitiveness. Therefore, a company will be attracted to where they perceive most of the talent to be or where increased cost competitiveness exists.

Invest NI's overseas sales staff, investment managers and Property Solutions Unit work closely with potential investors to agree a visit programme that will highlight Northern Ireland's proposition given the time availability afforded by the potential investor.

In such cases, investors will typically look at an area in terms of existing investors in the same business sector, universities and colleges that offer courses relating to that sector; and suitable, available property. For example, Londonderry District Council Area (DCA) has been successful in attracting Business Process Outsourcing projects due to the existing cluster within the Londonderry DCA.

However, it is important to note that Invest NI does not determine the location of an inward investment project. Ultimately this is a decision taken by the investor.

The Independent Review of Economic Policy acknowledged Invest NI's approach to Inward Investment as being the most appropriate, recognised the importance of FDI in building a more dynamic and innovative private sector and acknowledged that, per capita, Northern Ireland has been one of the most successful UK regions at attracting FDI. Invest NI is keen to build on this success by working closely with local stakeholders to maximise investment and employment opportunities in all areas.

Credit Unions

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has had any negotiations with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) in relation to a share for Credit Unions in Northern Ireland of the £38m investment announced by the DWP

(AQW 13765/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I have not had any discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about its fund to help GB credit unions extend their services to one million new customers.

The DWP funding is being made available to address the particular needs and profile of the movement in GB, where only 1% of the population has accessed the services of a credit union. In contrast, in Northern Ireland, virtually all of the population has access to a credit union, and 40% of the working age population is a member of a Credit Union.

Draft Executive Papers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (i) how many draft Executive papers, for approval by the Minister, have not yet been approved; (ii) the date the Minister received each paper; and (iii) the subject matter of each paper.

(AQW 13792/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail, for each of the last three financial years, (i) the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by her Department; (ii) the number of FOI requests responded to within the 20 working day requirement; (iii) the number of FOI requests that have taken longer than 20 working days to complete; and (iv) the number of FOI requests which were refused, broken down by the reason for refusal.

(AQW 13837/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that statistics for 2011 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2011 FOI Annual Report.

Corporation Tax

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans she has to encourage the reduction in Corporation Tax following the reshuffle of the Cabinet at Westminster.

(AQW 13854/11-15)

Mrs Foster: On 10 September 2012 I put on record, within the Assembly, my thanks to the outgoing Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for his help in putting Corporation Tax devolution back on the agenda of the UK Government, and on working with us on the current proposals.

I also congratulated the incoming Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on her appointment and made it clear that I will want to engage with her on a range of issues of significance to the local economy, not only Corporation Tax, but also areas such as Regional Aid, Investment and Tourism.

I very much hope that the new Secretary of State will fully support us in our efforts to drive the local economy forward, using a lower rate of Corporation Tax to accelerate economic growth. In this regard the upcoming Joint Ministerial Working Group will be important and I hope this will be a productive meeting where we can make progress on the key outstanding issues around the devolution of this important economic lever.

Bioscience and Technology Institute

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what is the current position on the investigation by the Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board into the actions of Teresa and Michael Townsley, arising from the affairs of the Bioscience and Technology Institute; and what is the timescale for an outcome.

(AQW 13869/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The investigation by the Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board into the actions of Teresa and Michael Townsley, arising from the affairs of the Bioscience and Technology Institute has not yet been concluded. The Chartered Accountants Regulatory Board has deferred further investigation for six months in light of the current directors' disqualification proceedings against Teresa Townsley.

Bioscience and Technology Institute

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any directors of the Bioscience and Technology Institute have faced, or are to face, disqualification.

(AQW 13871/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I can confirm that disqualification proceedings were issued against Susan Teresa Townsley on 15 November 2011. As the matter is before the Court, it is not appropriate to comment further.

Extension of the Gas Network

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the business case for the extension of the gas network to the west and East Down has been completed and to provide details or to state when she expects it to be completed.

(AQW 13881/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Outline Business Case on gas network extension which my Department commissioned from external consultants earlier this year is nearing completion.

Tourist Sites

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the methods used by her Department to ensure that (i) all tourist sites are fairly publicised; and (ii) funds are distributed in an equitable and regionally fair manner.

(AQW 13889/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's (NITB) remit is to promote the whole of Northern Ireland to both the domestic and Republic of Ireland markets, with a view to increasing visitor numbers and spend. Each year NITB undertakes a series of seasonal marketing campaigns in both markets. The huge variety of products, regions and events featured from throughout Northern Ireland are based on what motivates our key customer segments which have been identified through substantial research.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board does not “distribute funds” on a regional basis, but rather promotes and markets Northern Ireland as a tourist destination in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Local Councils, Regional Tourism Partnerships and Visitor & Convention Bureaus all have a role to play in promotion & marketing of district council areas, regions and cities respectively.

In addition, NITB provides financial assistance for tourism capital projects through the Tourism Development Scheme and for tourism events through the Tourism Event Funding Programme both of which are open-call and criteria based. Funds are then offered to successful applicants following an assessment and scoring process.

InvestNI Business Planning Sessions in County Antrim

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many potential business owners have attended the InvestNI Business Planning sessions in County Antrim to date in 2012; and how many new businesses in the area have received assistance during this period.

(AQW 13911/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since 1 January 2012, 499 people have attended business planning sessions in Co. Antrim which includes figures for Belfast Council area. Excluding Belfast, 254 attended planning sessions in the rest of County Antrim.

Since 1st January 2012, Invest NI has provided financial support to 101 new businesses in County Antrim which includes figures for Belfast Council area. Excluding Belfast, 41 businesses received assistance. This figure ranges from global start to locally focused businesses receiving jobs funds business incentives start up support.

Businesses: Financial Support

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many businesses have received financial support to date in 2012; and how many jobs have been created during this period.

(AQW 13912/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Provisional results show that between 1st January and 31st August 2012, Invest NI offered support to 1,841 businesses. These included 651 employment-related projects which plan to create 3,519 jobs. Since these projects will take some time to fully implement, the jobs associated with them may take up to five years to be fully realised. It should be noted that grant payments are normally made in relation to the number of jobs created.

Although actual job creation figures for all these projects are not yet available, information available for the ‘Jobs Fund’ shows that this programme has created just over 1,000 jobs during January – August 2012. However, not all of these jobs relate to assistance offered during this period.

In addition, during this period Invest NI engaged with more than 1600 individuals who were interested in starting their own business, 852 of which completed business plans. These businesses are expected to create more than 360 new jobs.

Bed and Breakfasts in the Ballycastle Area

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how her Department is promoting Bed and Breakfasts in the Ballycastle area.

(AQW 13940/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) does not promote & market individual businesses as this could create commercial advantage in a competitive marketplace. NITB provides platforms for the tourism industry through its marketing campaigns whereby providers are able to promote special offers via the NITB consumer website discovernorthernireland.com.

There are currently 31 Bed & Breakfasts certified in the Ballycastle area all of which are advertised on the website discovernorthernireland.com. The site receives approximately 2.5 million visitors each year, with many of these visitors (375,000 approximately) enquiring or sourcing accommodation.

Three of the Bed & Breakfasts currently participate in the voluntary NITB quality star rating scheme which is a useful source of business and marketing advice. The scheme offers a 1–5 star rating which the Bed & Breakfasts can promote to potential guests.

Bookings for Bed and Breakfasts

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many bookings for Bed and Breakfasts were taken by tourist offices in each of the last five years, broken down by council area. **(AQW 13941/11-15)**

Mrs Foster: The number of tourist accommodation bookings made by networked Tourist Information Centres (TICs), in each of the last five years, broken down by council area is detailed in Table 1.

TABLE 1:

Council Area	TIC(s)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Antrim Borough Council	Antrim & Belfast International Airport	426	191	80	72	49
Armagh City And District Council	Armagh	119	130	43	42	17
Moyle District Council	Ballycastle & Causeway	450	458	362	161	186
Ballymena Borough Council	Ballymena	48	0	0	0	0
Ballymoney Borough Council	Ballymoney	19	30	26	19	32
Banbridge District Council	Banbridge	35	0	70	0	0
North Down Borough Council	Bangor	390	479	207	142	122
Belfast City Council	Belfast Welcome Centre & George Best Airport	2552	1783	1405	871	735
Carrickfergus Borough Council	Carrickfergus	85	80	27	22	15
Coleraine Borough Council	Coleraine & Portrush	798	812	524	435	389
Cookstown District Council	Cookstown	33	27	6	1	0
Derry City Council	Londonderry	932	802	562	382	467
Down District Council	Downpatrick & Newcastle	659	587	527	368	312
Fermanagh District Council	Enniskillen	472	385	293	219	168

Council Area	TIC(s)	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Lisburn City Council	Lisburn & Hillsborough	23	20	7	7	21
Newry & Mourne District Council	Kilkeel & Newry	27	8	15	12	10
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	Killymaddy	0	0	0	0	0
Larne Borough Council	Larne	168	141	72	65	49
Limavady Borough Council	Limavady	15	35	62	3	2
Magherafelt District Council	Magherafelt	43	21	11	15	13
Ards Brough Council	Newtownards & Portaferry	59	47	20	14	4
Omagh District Council	Omagh	33	0	0	0	0
Strabane District Council	Strabane	10	2	1	0	0
Total Bookings Annually		7396	6038	4320	2850	2591

Tourist Offices

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to list all the tourist offices.
(AQW 13942/11-15)

Mrs Foster: By “tourist offices” I am taking this question to mean networked Tourist Information Centres (TICs) in Northern Ireland. There are 31 networked Tourist Information Centres in Northern Ireland a list of which is published on the Northern Ireland Tourist Board’s consumer website as follows: <http://www.discovernorthernireland.com/Tourist-Information-Centres-TICs-A2216>

Introduction of Wind Farms

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has for the introduction of wind farms.
(AQW 13953/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Strategic Energy Framework for Northern Ireland includes a target of 40% electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2020. There are a number of renewable technologies, both on-shore and off-shore, which will contribute to the 40% renewable electricity target. However, it is a matter for the market, not government, to bring forward the range of renewable energy technologies.

There are currently 27 onshore wind farms already in operation in Northern Ireland and supported under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation. Their combined installed capacity is 396 MW.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the Programme for Government commitment to aid liquidity within small and medium-sized enterprises through a £50 million loan fund.
(AQW 13992/11-15)

Mrs Foster:

- 1 Invest NI has developed proposals for a £50 million Growth Loan Fund, which aims to generate £150 million sales growth per annum in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) safeguarding and creating over 2,000 jobs over a 10 year period. The Fund will provide loans, primarily unsecured in nature, of between £50,000 and £500,000 to viable businesses in the manufacturing or tradable services sectors only.
- 2 Whiterock Capital Partners - a consortium of partners including Braveheart Investment Group, NEL Fund Managers and Clarendon Fund Managers - have been awarded the contract to manage the Growth Loan Fund.
- 3 The Fund opened for business in early June 2012 and has completed its first phase of recruitment, with 6 full time employees now in place. The Manager has met with industry bodies (e.g. CBI, IOD) and other intermediaries and Banks to promote the Fund.
- 4 103 loan enquiries have been made from SMEs in Northern Ireland since the Fund was launched. Following these enquires 27 Business Plans have been received and are currently being analysed.
- 5 5 loans have been approved by the Fund's investment Committee.

Fracking Licence

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline what constitutes a fracking licence.

(AQW 14180/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department does not issue fracking licences.

FG Wilson

Mrs Overend asked Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the (i) training; and (ii) resource support that her Department has provided to FG Wilson over the last twelve months.

(AQW 14238/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I can confirm that over the past 12 months F G Wilson has received assistance from Invest NI totalling £115,007. This included £110,036 specifically related to training with the balance payable against a variety of trade activities. Invest NI has, and continues to work very closely with Caterpillar Senior Management, both here and in the US, to identify opportunities to win jobs for Northern Ireland. In recent years we have secured Financial and IT Shared-Service centres that today employ 200 people.

Foreign Direct Investment

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in light of the IDA Ireland's commitment to locate fifty per cent of all Foreign Direct Investment outside Dublin and Cork, for her assessment of whether adopting a similar model would help address the current local regional disparities.

(AQW 14250/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is aware of the challenges facing local communities in Northern Ireland and the part that Foreign Direct Investment can play in creating employment opportunities. Invest NI has a very successful track record in attracting high quality inward investment and I am firmly of the opinion that this investment provides benefits to the whole of Northern Ireland, not just to the area in which the investment is located.

It is important to understand the investment process and how this relates to what the various parts of Northern Ireland have to offer. A potential investor will make a decision about where to locate based on the specific requirements of the project. These requirements typically include the availability of a skilled workforce, cost competitiveness, the presence of existing sectoral clusters, availability of suitable property and other infrastructure related issues.

It is clear that some areas will have more of these features than others. Furthermore, the responsibility for the development of these features across Northern Ireland is shared between many Departments. This results in a perceived disparity in where investment is located.

Any attempt to assign FDI targets on a sub-regional basis will potentially result in Invest NI trying to direct investors to locations that do not meet their needs. However, as noted by the Independent Review of Economic Policy, it is crucial to allow companies the scope to locate where they can operate most profitably. To do otherwise would jeopardise the chances of securing the investment for Northern Ireland.

I welcome the opportunity to address this question as my Department, including Invest NI, is committed to working with local stakeholders to maximise investment and employment opportunities in all areas. However, I do not currently consider that setting FDI targets on a sub-regional basis is an effective way to achieve this objective.

Department of the Environment

Road Haulage Operators

Mr Allister asked the Minister of the Environment, if a road haulage operator is found with (i) illegal fuel in a vehicle; (ii) an anti-tachograph device fitted in a vehicle; or (iii) smuggled goods on board a vehicle, how this impacts on the operator's Road Haulage Operators licence and the requirement for holders of such to be 'of good repute'.

(AQW 12040/11-15)

Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment): Holders of a road freight operator's licence must be of 'good repute'.

An operator convicted of more than one serious offence or of road traffic offences or who has incurred a penalty for one of the most serious infringements of Community rules (which specifically includes the use of devices to produce false tachograph records) can be deemed to have failed the good repute test and have his licence revoked.

Repeated other offences (such as the use of illegal fuel) might also indicate either wilful non-compliance or an inability to manage the undertaking safely. Where such convictions occur during the lifetime of a licensed undertaking, proportionate and escalating regulatory action will be taken, determined by the number of convictions and the number of vehicles operated, culminating, where necessary, in the revocation of the operator's licence.

I have been meeting with officials on this issue of 'good repute', how that should be assessed, how to invoke it more widely as it is clearly a means to, where justified, better regulate the industry and penalise offenders.

Central Government: Job Evaluations

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment to detail (i) whether he has any plans to introduce legislation to regulate the ability of chief executives, directors and senior staff in local and central government to apply for job evaluations which would control or cap their salaries; and (ii) if not, how he intends to address this matter.

(AQW 13366/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Northern Ireland Civil Service utilises the Job Evaluation Senior Posts (JESP) system to evaluate posts within the Senior Civil Service (SCS). JESP is an analytical job evaluation process which is underpinned by a common pay system.

In respect of local government, the Job Evaluation Schemes used for Chief Executives and other staff in Local Government are developed by agreement through the regional negotiation machinery - the Northern Ireland Joint Council, for most officers, and a separate Joint Council for Chief Executives. The

application of such schemes, once agreed by the relevant negotiation committee, is entirely a matter for each local council and the relevant Trade Union.

Under the Local Government Act 1972, Part III, paragraph 40 (4) (f), the Local Government Staff Commission has a statutory power to promote procedures for negotiation on matters such as remuneration and to make recommendations to councils for adopting the agreements negotiated through these procedures. Under paragraph 40 (1), the Staff Commission also has a general oversight role on employment matters. There is however no statutory power for the Commission to regulate access to or the outcome of agreements reached between employers and officers, through the negotiation framework. I have no plans to further legislate in this area.

As you are aware, when I was Minister for Social Development, I took a keen interest in the salaries of senior posts in Housing Associations and raised the issue of salaries in our Universities with my colleague, the then Minister for Employment and Learning. In taking forward the Programme of Local Government Reform, I shall be considering what I can legitimately do in relation to this matter, which is one I would wish to address.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of the Environment to detail, for each of the last three financial years, (i) the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by his Department; (ii) the number of FOI requests responded to within the 20 working day requirement; (iii) the number of FOI requests that have taken longer than 20 working days to complete; and (iv) the number of FOI requests which were refused, broken down by the reason for refusal.

(AQW 13772/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that statistics for 2011 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2011 FOI Annual Report.

Testing for Vintage Vehicles

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment why vehicle testing for vintage vehicles continues to operate in Northern Ireland, given that it was abolished in the rest of the United Kingdom in 2011.

(AQW 13794/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have answered questions very similar to this on a number of occasions over recent months, most recently in August 2012 (AQW 12981/11-15), and the response remains the same, as detailed below.

The Department has consulted on possible exemption of certain categories of historic vehicles from MOT testing and the Environment Committee, at its meeting on 22 March 2012, considered the synopsis of responses to the Department's consultation. The responses indicated that there is broad support for exemption of pre-1960 vehicles from periodic testing.

The Committee was content with the Department's proposed way forward, which was to develop policy on the basis of the consultation responses that would make use of the exemption in Roadworthiness Directive 2009/40/EC concerning the periodic testing of pre-1960 vehicles. This would align with the British Government's current proposals which would, from November 2012, exempt pre-1960 vehicles from MOT testing (question 13794/11-15 incorrectly states that such an exemption already exists in Britain).

There have been significant European Commission (EC) policy developments since that time. On 13 July 2012, the EC published a 'Roadworthiness Package' that, amongst other things, addresses

periodic roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles, therein making changes to the rules that apply to historic vehicles. The proposals are expected to be introduced no earlier than August 2014.

If implemented as currently drafted, the proposals will narrow the parameters within which the Department can provide for exemptions to historic vehicles, as the definition of an historical vehicle is more prescriptively described.

The Department's policy intentions remain the same; that is to make exempt pre-1960 vehicles from the MOT regime, but we have to be mindful of the changing legislative context, to ensure that any changes we make are not made redundant by incoming EC Regulations.

I expect to be in a position to provide further clarification on the Department's position in the coming weeks.

Vehicle Testing for Vintage Vehicles

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to abolish vehicle testing for vintage vehicles.

(AQW 13795/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have answered questions very similar to this on a number of occasions over recent months, most recently in August 2012 (AQW 12981/11-15), and the response remains the same, as detailed below.

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I expect to be in a position to provide further clarification on the Department's position in the coming weeks.

Bat Surveys

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment how many bat surveys have been carried out by, or at the request of, the Environment Agency in each of the last five years; and what was the cost of each survey.

(AQW 13805/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) does not carry out bat surveys for planning applications; it is the responsibility of the applicant to provide supporting information for their application.

NIEA does not request bat surveys for all wind turbine applications. Instead it recommends two options:

Option 1: Amend the location of the turbine to achieve a sufficient distance from habitat features which will minimise the impact of the turbine on commuting and foraging bats in which case no survey is necessary.

Option 2: Provide bat survey information which will allow NIEA to assess the potential impact of the turbine on bats.

NIEA does not therefore know for certain how many applicants have been requested to carry out bat surveys. To collate this information retrospectively would require a substantial amount of work.

It is not possible to estimate the cost of bat surveys due to the variety of quotations available to applicants through many qualified bat surveyors currently offering their services as ecological consultants in Northern Ireland. Each quotation will vary according to the size of the site and complexity of survey methodology required and also the consultant's current fees. This is a private matter between the consultant and the applicant.

Bat Surveys

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment whether any bat surveys found significant activity; and whether these findings have been used to estimate the current bat population.

(AQW 13806/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) does not know for certain how many applicants carry out bat surveys. Officials have however reviewed ten randomly selected cases throughout Northern Ireland where a bat survey has been carried out. This has demonstrated that bats were present at all ten sites. NIEA uses bat survey information to recommend conditions to mitigate against negative impacts on approvals in the majority of cases.

NIEA provides core funding to the Northern Ireland Bat Group who record and collate bat records which are passed on to the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (CEDaR). The Department would require the permission of the applicant before sharing any survey information (provided at the applicant's expense) with CEDaR.

Planning Applications for Wind Turbines

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment what evidence exists to support the theory that bats follow linear features, such as hedgerows; and whether this is allowed for in planning applications for wind turbines that are within 50 metres of a hedgerow.

(AQW 13808/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Most bats use significant linear features such as hedgerows, tree lines, woodland edge and watercourses as flight lines for navigation and foraging. There is ample evidence available to support the use of hedgerows by bats for commuting purposes. This evidence is based upon readings taken from the ultrasonic sounds produced by bats when they are in flight. Many studies have taken place to determine associations between the movement of bats and the presence of landscape features such as hedgerows which have concluded there are strong relationships between the two. This has led to the production of the many guidelines, management practices and plans laid out to protect bats on a regional, national and European level.

Bats are susceptible to impacts caused by turbines. Recent research suggests that bats are particularly susceptible to collisions with turbine blades, barotraumas and damage, disturbance or destruction of foraging and roosting habitats and commuting corridors and disorientation when in

flight. These impacts will depend on the size and wattage of the turbine and become less likely as the distance between the turbine and the habitat features increase.

Advice from published guidelines (adopted UK wide) regarding bats and wind turbines is to maintain a 50m buffer between the tip of the turbine blade and existing habitat features on site.

NIEA does not request bat surveys for all wind turbine applications. Instead it recommends two options:

Option 1: Amend the location of the turbine to achieve a sufficient distance from habitat features which will minimise the impact of the turbine on commuting and foraging bats in which case no survey is necessary.

Option 2: Provide bat survey information which will allow NIEA to assess the potential impact of the turbine on bats.

Planning Applications from Applicants for EU Funding

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of the Environment what measures Planning Service has put in place to process planning applications from applicants for EU funding through the Rural Development Programme in a manner that recognises the time constraints on funding faced by the Programme applicants.

(AQW 13811/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Department normally processes planning applications in chronological order in line with agreed good practice. I accept that some applications need to be prioritised for a variety of reasons such as grant funding timescales.

As an acknowledgement of the need to prioritise certain applications, guidance was issued to staff last year setting out the circumstances under which planning applications should be prioritised. The guidance recognises that grant funded applications may have a tight timescale within which to apply for funding and in such cases it is imperative that the planning application is dealt with expeditiously.

In order for the Department to respond to the funding timeframes the applicant should engage with planners at an early stage and advise that grant funding applies and outline the timeframe for the funding process. I would also urge applicants to submit high quality applications accompanied by all of the information and surveys necessary to allow it to be determined as quickly as possible. I believe that working together the processing of all applications can be achieved in a timely fashion.

I know from cases referred to me that timing issues arise – around smaller and larger projects. My office is available and has been available to help manage these types of situations.

Staff Member Re-Employed in the Same Position

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of the Environment, pursuant to AQW11851/11-15, to detail on what date the officer's contract, after retirement, was agreed or the date of the commencement of their continued employment; and whether the job description is the same or similar to the original job description.

(AQW 13833/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The employment term of 51 part time weeks was agreed prior to the officer's date of retirement. The job description for the new post had no similarities to the previous post.

Clean Beaches

Mr Easton asked the Minister of the Environment what further action his Department can take to promote clean beaches in North Down.

(AQW 13851/11-15)

Mr Attwood: I have now hosted four Good Beach Summits and progress has been very encouraging. With good participation from government agencies, district councils, user groups, community groups, NGOs and other representative groups, there has been real progress in delivering the multi-strand Action Plan and exploring new issues.

At the next Good Beach Summit, scheduled for 3 October 2012, the agenda will include a stocktaking discussion to develop the future work of the Good Beach Summits as well as discussion on the Coastal Communities Fund, the Marine Bill and marine planning.

I wrote to all coastal councils on 15 November 2011 to promote participation in award schemes. There has been increased participation in the International Blue Flag, Seaside and Green Coast Award schemes in 2012. In part these awards reflect the excellent bathing water quality results in 2011, but award schemes are primarily recognition of the excellent management standards at our most popular bathing beaches and of generally improving standards. Crawfordsburn beach achieved its first International Blue Flag this year and Helen's Bay achieved the Green Coast Award.

To aid promotion of our beaches a new web site, www.beachni.com has been created. As well as giving a comprehensive description of each of our most popular bathing waters, this web site allows selected Local Government council staff and other partners to post information about beach and coastal events. The site also links to other Outdoor Recreation NI web sites to help promote other activity opportunities in the vicinity.

Caps on Expenditure

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment what caps on expenditure he is actioning with the existing local councils in preparation for the eleven council model becoming operational in 2015. **(AQW 13934/11-15)**

Mr Attwood: The underpinning rationale for the existing councils continuing to incur significant expenditure, in the period before the eleven council model becomes operational in 2015, is their need to continue to deliver services to ratepayers in accordance with their approved three year financial management plans. In so doing, however, the councils need to act responsibly and prudently in considering expenditure commitments, taking into account the best interests of ratepayers both in the run up to local government reform in 2015 and beyond .

The Department has issued guidance to the councils, encouraging them to do so and to liaise closely on this matter with the other councils with which they will be amalgamating in 2015. This inter-council liaison will be managed initially through the Voluntary Transition Committees, which I have reinstated, in order to promote a pragmatic and responsible approach to the future needs of the enlarged councils. Indeed, the importance of the collaborative working is an issue which I have highlighted in my meetings with the Voluntary Transition Committees over recent months and I will continue to do so.

Provision already exists, in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010, for the Department to issue directions to existing councils, which will enable Statutory Transition Committees to exercise control over capital expenditure contracts, non-capital contracts and the disposal or acquisition of land. The directions will require the existing councils to seek the written consent of the relevant Statutory Transition Committee before entering into contracts or disposing/acquiring land which exceed sums to be specified by the Department.

The sanctions are that land disposals/acquisitions made, in contravention of a direction, would be void and contracts entered into by an existing council, in contravention of a direction, would not be enforceable against a successor council.

The Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has tasked senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group, with reviewing these controls and guidance and considering the need for them to be extended to embrace the use of council reserves and loans in the period leading up to the formation of the new councils in 2015. I will consider if legislation is required and will closely monitor the situation.

Spending by Local Councils

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment what sanctions are in place to control spending by existing local councils preparing for the eleven council model in 2015.

(AQW 13935/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The underpinning rationale for the existing councils continuing to incur significant expenditure, in the period before the eleven council model becomes operational in 2015, is their need to continue to deliver services to ratepayers in accordance with their approved three year financial management plans. In so doing, however, the councils need to act responsibly and prudently in considering expenditure commitments, taking into account the best interests of ratepayers both in the run up to local government reform in 2015 and beyond .

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Expenditure by Local Councils

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment what departmental scrutiny measures are in place to oversee expenditure by local councils prior to the move to the eleven council model which is due to become operational in 2015.

(AQW 13936/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The underpinning rationale for the existing councils continuing to incur significant expenditure, in the period before the eleven council model becomes operational in 2015, is their need to continue to deliver services to ratepayers in accordance with their approved three year financial management plans. In so doing, however, the councils need to act responsibly and prudently in considering expenditure commitments, taking into account the best interests of ratepayers both in the run up to local government reform in 2015 and beyond .

The Department has issued guidance to the councils, encouraging them to do so and to liaise closely on this matter with the other councils with which they will be amalgamating in 2015. This inter-council liaison will be managed initially through the Voluntary Transition Committees, which I have reinstated, in order to promote a pragmatic and responsible approach to the future needs of the enlarged councils. Indeed, the importance of the collaborative working is an issue which I have highlighted in my meetings with the Voluntary Transition Committees over recent months and I will continue to do so.

Provision already exists, in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (Northern Ireland) 2010, for the Department to issue directions to existing councils, which will enable Statutory Transition Committees to exercise control over capital expenditure contracts, non-capital contracts and the disposal or acquisition of land. The directions will require the existing councils to seek the written consent of the relevant Statutory Transition Committee before entering into contracts or disposing/acquiring land which exceed sums to be specified by the Department.

The sanctions are that land disposals/acquisitions made, in contravention of a direction, would be void and contracts entered into by an existing council, in contravention of a direction, would not be enforceable against a successor council.

The Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has tasked senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group, with reviewing these controls and guidance and considering the need for them to be extended to embrace the use of council reserves and loans in the period leading up to the formation of the new councils in 2015. I will consider if legislation is required and will closely monitor the situation.

Expenditure by Local Councils

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the rationale for allowing the existing local councils to continue spending significant sums of money in the period before the eleven council model becomes operational in 2015.

(AQW 13937/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The underpinning rationale for the existing councils continuing to incur significant expenditure, in the period before the eleven council model becomes operational in 2015, is their need to continue to deliver services to ratepayers in accordance with their approved three year financial management plans. In so doing, however, the councils need to act responsibly and prudently in considering expenditure commitments, taking into account the best interests of ratepayers both in the run up to local government reform in 2015 and beyond .

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Local Government Reform

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of the Environment how much of the estimated bill of £118 million for the Local Government Reform will be apportioned to each of the eleven new councils.

(AQW 13938/11-15)

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

The Regional Transition Committee, which I chair, has commissioned the senior local and central government officers in the Finance Working Group, with re-examining the costs and benefits of reform taking account a range of key factors. These include the 2015 timescale for reform set out in the Programme for Government 2011-15, the sector's Improvement, Collaboration and Efficiency proposals and the changed economic climate in which reform is now being taken forward. The group will be working closely with the Transition Committees in developing the costs and benefits of reform in their constituent councils, and is due to present its findings and recommendations by March 2013.

In the interim, I made a bid in the June Monitoring Round for the provision of £2.3 million to support local government reform in the current financial year. Unfortunately, this bid was unsuccessful and I am disappointed with this outcome. Indeed, I have been actively pursuing this funding issue, over recent weeks, in discussions and correspondence with Executive colleagues. I have made it clear that I:-

- acknowledge that it is reasonable to expect local government to contribute to the cost of reform initiatives from which they will ultimately benefit;
- consider, however, that there are transition work streams, vital to the successful delivery of reform, which should be funded by the Executive – particularly those which are inescapable and have no cash releasing benefits for the sector;
- have identified associated transition costs, in the order of tens of millions, over the 2012-13 to 2014-15 period; and
- would be presenting a paper to the Executive on this issue.

An Executive paper has been prepared and is currently being considered by Ministers. It is anticipated that the paper will be tabled for discussion at an Executive meeting later this month. If this bid is successful, these transition costs will be met by the Executive and, therefore, will not be apportioned to individual councils or council clusters.

Marine Bill

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the Marine Bill will have on (i) hunting; (ii) shooting; and (iii) angling activities.

(AQW 13987/11-15)

Mr Attwood: The Marine Bill will provide the Department with the powers to designate and manage Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). Management measures include the introduction of new byelaws to manage activities which are not subject to regulation or control by other public bodies and are potentially damaging to the features of an MCZ. It is envisaged that most MCZs will be designated primarily for the protection of seabed features.

The implementation of the Marine Bill, specifically the designation of MCZs and any related byelaws, should have minimal impact on hunting, shooting and angling activities. In any case, it is intended that MCZs (and marine plans) would be developed through a process of inclusive engagement with stakeholders.

Hydraulic Fracturing

Mr Swann asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has carried out any research on the safety of hydraulic fracturing.

(AQO 2379/11-15)

Mr Attwood: Hydraulic fracturing has attracted much media attention and generated considerable debate and concern across Northern Ireland, but particularly in Fermanagh and is an issue that I am highly vigilant on.

My Department seeks to safeguard the quality of the environment through effective regulation of activities that have the potential to impact on the environment through the planning and environmental processes.

My Department is supplementing its knowledge of this process through reviewing and engaging with emerging research, case study analysis and liaising with counterparts in other Environment Agencies in Britain, Ireland and the United States.

My officials in NIEA and Planning are involved in working groups at Northern Ireland, UK and European levels dealing with the regulation of unconventional fossil fuels.

On a cross border level, officials from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency meet regularly with the Republic of Ireland's Environmental Protection Agency. My officials in NIEA are currently in discussions regarding cooperation and co-funding on a major research project on all of the potential environmental impacts of hydraulic fracturing.

Consequently, the evidence base around fracking is being developed in order to provide the intelligence and information to assess applications if they are submitted. I repeat that all standards – environmental and planning – will be upheld at all stages. That is not to prejudice the outcome, but to provide guarantees on the robust character of any assessments.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Multi-Unit Developments

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration is being given to protecting the interests of the current owners of property in multi-unit developments, who will not be included in the reform proposals consultation paper which is expected to be published in October 2012 by the Northern Ireland Law Commission.

(AQW 13790/11-15)

Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): It was agreed that the Northern Ireland Law Commission would review the law and practice relating to multi-unit developments, with a view to ensuring that the legitimate needs and interests of the various parties are fairly addressed.

The Commission has recently revised the review team and the revised team has been re-considering the handling of the review project. It would cause me real concern if the review did not assess and address the full range of difficulties which have arisen in this area, including, in particular, those experienced by existing owners. We are all well aware of those difficulties and the Commission itself has heard about some of them first hand. I have had a number of exchanges with the Commission in which I have emphasised the need for practical, effective relief for all. The Commission has now assured me that the pressing problems of existing owners will be dealt with in its report as a matter of priority and I have welcomed that assurance.

New Public Sector Buildings

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he will restrict the building of all new public sector buildings to town centres.

(AQW 13830/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The location of any new public sector property is driven by the business requirements of the Department involved and is subject to a suitable business case to determine best value for money.

Civil Servants Working in the Stormont Estate

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many civil servants working in the Stormont Estate reside in North Down.

(AQW 13832/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There are 347 Permanent NICS staff, for whom work location information is available, working in the Stormont Estate, who reside in the North Down District Parliamentary Constituency.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail, for each of the last three financial years, (i) the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by his Department; (ii) the number of FOI requests responded to within the 20 working day requirement; (iii) the number of FOI requests that have taken longer than 20 working days to complete; and (iv) the number of FOI requests which were refused, broken down by the reason for refusal.

(AQW 13840/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that statistics for 2011 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2011 FOI Annual Report.

VAT Exemption on Food for Guide Dogs

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel whether he has had any engagement with the UK Treasury regarding a VAT exemption on food for guide dogs.

(AQW 13878/11-15)

Mr Wilson: I have not had any engagement with Treasury regarding the VAT rate that is applied to food for guide dogs or the possibility of an exemption in this regard.

I understand this is an issue the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association has already raised with Treasury Ministers, including the Exchequer Secretary David Gauke MP who has responsibility for this Reserved Matter.

Small Business Rates Relief Scheme

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many businesses in Upper Bann currently contribute to the Small Business Rates Relief Scheme; and what is the annual revenue generated by these businesses through the scheme.

(AQW 13947/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The Small Business Rate Relief Scheme aims to support businesses by providing some small business owners with rate relief. The amount of rate relief provided was increased in April 2012

with funding provided through a Large Retail Levy and the shortfall paid out of regional rate revenue. The Large Retail Levy is used to support businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

Information is not collated at parliamentary constituency level by Land & Property Services but is available at district council level. Six businesses in the Craigavon and Banbridge District Council areas (covering the Upper Bann Parliamentary Constituency) have been levied a total of just over £350,000 in 2012/13 as a result of the Large Retail Levy.

Ulster Bank: Compensation

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what action he is taking to ensure that the Ulster Bank compensate its customers, and the customers of other banks, who were affected by the recent IT problems.

(AQW 13986/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Ensuring that the Ulster Bank redress scheme announced on 31st August 2012 satisfies the bank's statutory duties in terms of compensating customers is a matter for the regulator, the Financial Services Authority to determine. I have no formal responsibility in this regard. However, I will be monitoring this situation closely to ensure this scheme is implemented and customers are compensated as quickly as possible.

2012 Pay Settlement for the E02 Grade

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, using the figures and assimilation terms provided in the 2012 pay settlement for the E02 grade, how much it would cost to apply back pay to E02s (i) in total; and (ii) the average per individual for the period 2009-2012.

(AQW 14021/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The offer made to NIPSA as part of the pay and grading review proposals is with effect from 1 August 2012, so there is no element of backdating prior to that date. No estimates of the cost of back pay beyond that date were produced as part of the negotiation process and it would not be possible to provide the information without incurring disproportionate costs.

Vacant Commercial and Non-Commercial Properties

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what is the liability of banks and financial institutions, that hold the deeds of vacant commercial and non-commercial properties, for the payment of rates on those properties to Land and Property Services.

(AQW 14049/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Under Article 18 of the Rates (Northern Ireland) Order 1977, the occupier of any property which appears in the valuation list is liable to pay rates on that property. When a property is vacant that liability falls to the person entitled to possession of the property.

In cases where a bank or financial institution is merely holding the deeds to a vacant property on which a mortgage is being paid then the ratepayer would be the person paying that mortgage.

Since 1 April 2004, rates have been payable on vacant commercial property at 50% of full liability. In October 2011 the implementation of the rating of empty homes resulted in full rates being payable on all vacant domestic properties, subject to a number of exclusions. There is no exclusion from the rating of empty homes for banks and other financial institutions who are mortgagees in possession following the repossession of a property. Therefore, as in any other case the person entitled to possession of an unoccupied property will be the liable person.

Primary Legislation

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) to list the primary legislation his Department (a) has introduced; and (b) plans to introduce during this Assembly mandate; and (ii) to detail the (a) timescale; and (b) intention of each Bill.

(AQW 14053/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The following table details the requested information in respect of the legislation which I have introduced and which I intend to introduce during this Assembly mandate.

Primary Legislation	(ii)(a) Timescale	(ii)(b) Intention
(i)(a) Introduced		
Budget (No. 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011	Royal Assent 25 July 2011	To give effect to the 2011-12 Northern Ireland Main Estimates.
Rates (Amendment) Act (Northern Ireland) 2012	Royal Assent 28 February 2012	To expand the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme and introduce a Large Retail Levy.
Budget Act (Northern Ireland) 2012	Royal Assent 20 March 2012	To give effect to the 2011-12 Spring Supplementary Estimates and Vote on Account for 2012-13.
Budget (No 2) Act (Northern Ireland) 2012	Royal Assent 20 July 2012	To give effect to the 2012-13 Northern Ireland Main Estimates.
Superannuation Bill	Committee stage scheduled for completion 28 September 2012	To remove the requirement for trade unions consent to introduce detrimental changes to the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Northern Ireland) and to introduce requirements for the Department to report on the consultation with trade unions.
(i)(b) Plans to introduce		
Air Passenger Duty (Setting of Rate) Bill	Planned for introduction in 2012-13 subject to Executive agreement	To set the APD rate for direct long haul flights (Bands B, C and D).
Financial Provisions Bill	Planned for introduction in 2012-13 subject to Executive agreement	To adjust specific statutory limits and to handle other routine financial matters.
Budget Bill 2013	Planned for introduction in January 2013	To give effect to the 2012-13 Spring Supplementary Estimates and Vote on Account for 2013-14.

Primary Legislation	(ii)(a) Timescale	(ii)(b) Intention
Legal Complaints and Regulation Bill	Planned for introduction in 2012-13 subject to Executive agreement	To provide powers for a new legal services oversight commissioner and create new complaints handling committees for barristers and solicitors.
Budget (No 2) Bill 2013	Planned for introduction in June 2013	To give effect to the 2013-14 Northern Ireland Main Estimates.
Land Law Reform Bill	To be determined	To give effect to the recommendations of the Northern Ireland Law Commission for the reform of the general land law.
Land Registration Bill	To be determined	To replace the Land Registration Act (NI) 1970.
Rate Collection and Recovery Bill	To be determined	To enable more effective collection of rates.

PEACE III & INTERREG IV

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how much PEACE III and INTERREG IV money (i) has been allocated; and (ii) remains to be allocated, to projects.

(AQW 14054/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The PEACE III Programme has fully committed its funding allocation.

The INTERREG IVA Programme has committed approximately £188.6 million¹, eighty five per cent of the £222.6 million¹ Programme. An assessment and selection process is underway to allocate the remaining budget and it is anticipated this will be completed by the end of the year.

PEACE III or INTERREG IV Programmes

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in instances where letters of offer or funding have not been signed off in time, whether projects have been, or could be, invalidated by delays to the PEACE III or INTERREG IV programmes.

(AQW 14055/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Any serious delays in the commencement of projects at this stage of the PEACE III and INTERREG IVA Programmes, particularly in the case of capital build expenditure, may impact upon the capacity of the project to complete its activities by the end of the Programming period. SEUPB must ensure a project is in a position to fully spend its funding allocation to meet deadlines imposed by the European Commission. To date, no project has been unable to meet the timetable set.

Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what work the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit has carried out to identify inefficiencies in the Special EU Programmes Body administrative process.

(AQW 14056/11-15)

¹ An exchange rate of £1=€1.15 has been used

Mr Wilson: As a first step towards addressing issues around the efficiency of the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB), my department's Business Consultancy Service is currently undertaking a review of the staffing requirements of the body. The study aims to identify the number of staff required by the SEUPB during 2013 and 2014 to enable the body to deliver its business objectives.

Following the completion of the staffing review, we have an option to engage the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) to conduct an efficiency review of SEUPB in collaboration with officials from the Republic of Ireland's Department for Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER). However, before the efficiency study could commence we would need to agree the timing and Terms of Reference for the work with the DPER.

Special EU Programme Body: Staffing Levels

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the basis on which it is proposed that the staffing levels of Special EU Programme Body will be reduced by 2014.

(AQW 14057/11-15)

Mr Wilson: Following a review of SEUPB staffing in 2010, both Finance Ministers, North and South, agreed that SEUPB could proceed on the basis of 65 staff until 2012 but that this complement should fall to a number in the 50s in 2013 and the 40s in 2014. A staffing review of the SEUPB is currently being undertaken to assess staff numbers required in 2013 and 2014 and this will report at the end of October.

Empty Non-Commercial Properties

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel the number of empty non-commercial properties on which rates are not currently being paid.

(AQW 14087/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The reference to 'non-commercial properties' in the question has been interpreted to mean domestic properties. As at 16th September there were 25,455 empty domestic properties on which rates are not currently being paid. This includes 7,444 properties on which no payments are due as they are entitled to an exclusion.

Unpaid Rates

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what was the level of unpaid rates in the last financial year.

(AQW 14088/11-15)

Mr Wilson: The level of unpaid rates at the end of 2010/11 (the latest year for which published information is available) was £155.6 million.

Relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Headquarters to Ballykelly

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, in light of the recent announcement of the relocation of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Headquarters to Ballykelly, whether the Executive now has a policy of decentralisation.

(AQW 14125/11-15)

Mr Wilson: There is currently no Executive policy for the decentralisation of public sector or civil service jobs. Individual public bodies, departments and Ministers can of course consider the relocation of public sector facilities and jobs subject to the normal requirements of business need, value for money and affordability.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Family Nurse Partnership Programme

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the Family Nurse Partnership Programme will be extended to the Carrickfergus, Larne and Newtownabbey area.

(AQW 13775/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Public Health Agency established a test site for the Family Nurse Partnership Programme within Northern Ireland in the Western Trust in 2010. Following a selection procedure by the PHA further test sites have been agreed within the Belfast and Southern Trusts to be initiated during 2012/13. The Public Health Agency will consider the further extension of the programme in conjunction with Trusts, the UK Family Nurse Partnership Programme National Centre and the University of Colorado.

Ultra Violet Light Treatments for People with Skin Disorders

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many hospitals provide Ultra Violet Light Treatments for people with skin disorders; and how many patients have had appointments in each location in each of the last three years.

(AQW 13886/11-15)

Mr Poots: The HSC Trusts have informed me that Ultra Violet Light treatment for people with skin disorders is currently provided at the following hospitals: Belfast City and the Royal Victoria in the Belfast HSC Trust; Braid Valley, Causeway and Whiteabbey in the Northern HSC Trust; Downe and Lagan Valley in the South Eastern HSC Trust; Craigavon in the Southern HSC Trust; and Altnagelvin, Tyrone County Hospital, and South West Acute (formerly Erne) in the Western HSC Trust.

In addition, the Southern HSC Trust have advised me that the service for this treatment previously offered at Daisy Hill hospital, is currently in the process of being transferred from a physiotherapy managed service to a nursing dermatology team.

Information on how many patients have had appointments for Ultra Violet light treatment for skin disorders, at each of these locations, in each of the last three years, is not collected centrally by the Department and is not routinely collected by some of the Trusts.

Bangor Hospital

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what future plans the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has for Bangor Hospital.

(AQW 13924/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) is responsible for the provision of services at Bangor Hospital.

The SEHSCT has advised me that Bangor Hospital will continue to form an essential part of the Trust's estate for the foreseeable future with further phased development on site in the coming years. The future development of the hospital is an important component of the Trust's implementation plan developed in response to the regional review of health and social care – Transforming Your Care. The intention is that Bangor Hospital will continue to provide the local population with a wide range of safe, effective and accessible local services.

Oasis Dental Contract

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 10247/11-15, what steps he has taken to ensure value for money in the Oasis dental contract.

(AQW 13928/11-15)

Mr Poots: The contract between the Health and Social Care Board and Oasis Dental Care stipulates that Oasis must register a total of 57, 000 patients across Northern Ireland. Oasis have met the registration targets as set out in their contract. The HSC Board has regular monitoring meetings with Oasis and carries out post treatment checks to assess the quality of treatment carried out alongside patient satisfaction surveys. As part of its continuing effort to ensure value for money in this contract, the HSC Board has decided that in addition to providing care and treatment to its current patients, Oasis will:

- collect oral health data on 11-13 year olds who attend Oasis practices; and
- carry out a pilot of epidemiological work and collect data relating to the oral/dental health of 5 year old children randomly selected from schools across Northern Ireland.

Oasis Dental Care

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for his assessment of the value for money of the private dental care provided by Oasis dental care during 2011/12.

(AQW 13929/11-15)

Mr Poots: The contract between the Health and Social Care Board and Oasis Dental Care stipulates that up to 10% of the dentists' time may be spent carrying out private treatment within the contracted time. This clause was included in the contract to reflect the fact that certain treatments are not available under the health service and to allow patients to receive all their care in the one dental practice. The value of the contract awarded to Oasis relates only to the Health Service treatment provided to registered patients and this is the part of the contract monitored by the Health and Social Care Board.

My Department does not monitor the provision of private dental care and treatment. However, any practices which provide private treatment must register with RQIA and meet the Minimum Standards for Dental Care and Treatment published in March 2011.

Primary Medical Care for Patients in Nursing Homes and Residential Homes

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety with whom does responsibility lie for primary medical care for patients in (i) nursing homes; and (ii) residential homes.

(AQW 13930/11-15)

Mr Poots: GP Practices and out of hours services are responsible for providing primary medical services to patients in nursing and residential homes that are within their catchment area.

Allied Health professional services are normally accessed through GP referrals and are provided by the local Health and Social Care Trust.

Amalgam Fillings

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the number of claims for amalgam fillings placed through the general dental services in the year 2011/12; (ii) the number of adult patients who received amalgam fillings through the general dental services during this period; and (iii) the number of child patients who received amalgam fillings through the general dental services during this period.

(AQW 13946/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is set out below:

Code	Description
1401	Amalgam fillings in permanent or retained deciduous teeth - 1 surface
1402	Amalgam fillings in permanent or retained deciduous teeth - 2+ surfaces

Code	Description
1403	2 or more surfaces where the mesio-occlusal or disto-occlusal surfaces are involved
1404	3 or more surfaces where the mesio-occlusal and disto-occlusal surfaces are involved
4405	In connection with treatment on referral - filling
5811	Permanent amalgam fillings - 1 surface
5812	Permanent amalgam fillings - 2+ surfaces
5813	2 or more surfaces where the mesio-occlusal or disto-occlusal surfaces are involve
5814	3 or more surfaces where the mesio-occlusal and disto-occlusal surfaces are involved

P7-Item	i) No of claims under codes in 2011/12	ii) No of adult patients who received amalgam fillings under GDS in 2011/12	iii) No of children patients who received amalgam fillings under GDS in 2011/12
1401	96,049	66,423	25,399
1402	24,922	19,746	4,607
1403	156,629	128,030	16,367
1404	58,721	52,514	3,293
4405	0	0	0
5811	20	15	5
5812	10	9	1
5813	86	76	8
5814	40	37	3
All	336,477	266,850	49,683

Figures for treatment codes 4401, 1411 and 6001 may also include amalgam fillings but as other materials are allowed it is not possible to sub-classify how many actually were amalgam. Therefore these have not been included in the analysis.

This information is based on data supplied by the BSO.

Ministerial Papers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many papers, which have been approved by the Minister, have yet to be placed on the agenda for an Executive meeting, including (i) the date on which the papers were circulated to ministerial colleagues; (ii) the subject matter of each paper; and (iii) the consequences of a delay in securing Executive approval.

(AQW 13968/11-15)

Mr Poots: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many older people live in (i) residential care homes; and (ii) nursing homes.

(AQW 13979/11-15)

Mr Poots: Information on the number of older people who live in residential care homes and nursing homes is not available centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Reclaiming Care Costs

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the media coverage in England of a deadline of 30 September 2012 for people who wish to reclaim care costs for payments which had been made over a period of up to 8 years, whether any such deadline exists in Northern Ireland; and whether any potential applicants have been notified that they may be eligible.

(AQW 13982/11-15)

Mr Poots: Within our integrated health and social care system, HSC Trusts are responsible for carrying out assessment of needs for individuals with continuing care needs. The outcome of the assessment could be an identified primary need for either health care or social care. The distinction between health and social care is complex and requires a careful appraisal of each individual case, and every case is considered on its own merits.

These differences are accentuated in England, where separate structures and legal responsibilities of local authorities (who provide social care) and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) (who provide health care) emphasise a dividing line between social care and health care. As our system is integrated such differences are minimised and we have not experienced the same difficulty as England.

There is no formal reimbursement scheme operating in Northern Ireland.

Dental Fluorosis

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the estimated incidence of dental fluorosis, for the latest available year; and how this figure compares with Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 14012/11-15)

Mr Poots: There is no available data on the incidence of dental fluorosis in Northern Ireland. However, data on the prevalence of dental fluorosis in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is available from the 'Children's oral health in Ireland 2002' report. The data from this report for, 8 year old, 12 year old and 15 year old children from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is reproduced in the tables below. There is no data on the incidence or prevalence of fluorosis available at a United Kingdom level:

8 YEAR OLDS

Dean's Index of fluorosis	Republic of Ireland Fully Fluoridated Areas	Republic of Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas	Northern Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas
Severe	0%	0%	0%
Moderate	0%	0%	0%
Mild	4%	0%	0%
Very mild	8%	2%	3%
Questionable	11%	7%	6%
Normal	76%	90%	90%

12 YEAR OLDS

Dean's Index of fluorosis	Republic of Ireland Fully Fluoridated Areas	Republic of Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas	Northern Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas
Severe	1%	0%	0%
Moderate	1%	0%	0%
Mild	5%	2%	2%
Very mild	9%	4%	7%
Questionable	14%	10%	12%
Normal	71%	82%	78%

15 YEAR OLDS

Dean's Index of fluorosis	Republic of Ireland Fully Fluoridated Areas	Republic of Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas	Northern Ireland Non Fluoridated Areas
Severe	1%	0%	0%
Moderate	1%	0%	0%
Mild	5%	3%	0%
Very mild	10%	4%	8%
Questionable	19%	10%	5%
Normal	61%	81%	83%

Senior 2 Podiatrists

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why Senior 2 Podiatrists in the Western Health and Social Care Trust were re-evaluated as grade 5, following the implementation of the Agenda For Change, when Senior 2 Podiatrists in the other Health and Social Care Trusts were re-evaluated as grade 6; and what action he will take to address this regional disparity.

(AQW 14036/11-15)

Mr Poots: It is not correct to say that all Senior II Podiatrists outside the Western Health and Social Care Trusts were re-evaluated as grade 6. The Agenda for Change process, which was implemented by HSC employers in partnership with Trade Unions, sought to measure the size of jobs on the basis of job content and not previous job titles or grades. As a result of this process, 100 Podiatrists in the HSC, who were previously graded as Senior II, were given a Band 5 grading; 79 of these staff were not satisfied with this grading and sought a review. Following the review process 51 staff from across the HSC were moved to Band 6 and the remaining 28 staff, again across the HSC, were confirmed as Band 5.

Dementia

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people in the Foyle constituency have been diagnosed with dementia in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14046/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of patients newly diagnosed with dementia each year is not available; however, under the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF) of the General Medical Services contract, the total number of GP registered patients with dementia is recorded.

The number of patients on the dementia register of practices located in Foyle constituency in each of the last five years is shown in table 1 below.

TABLE 1: QOF DEMENTIA REGISTER COUNTS, FOYLE CONSTITUENCY, 2008 – 2012

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number of GP registered patients with dementia in Foyle constituency	461	481	538	562	539

Data Source: Payment Calculation and Analysis System (PCAS) as at National Prevalence Day. National Prevalence Day was changed from 14 February to 31 March from 2009 onwards to bring it into line with National QOF Achievement Day.

The number of patients on the dementia register in Foyle constituency has been determined based on the location of the GP practices (GP postcodes) using Westminster Parliamentary Constituency 2008 boundaries. It should be noted that patients on the register may not reside in the constituency in which their practice is located.

Drug and Alcohol Misuse Among Young People

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) for their assessment of the current extent and type of drug and alcohol misuse among young people; (ii) what measures are being delivered in response; and (iii) what legislative measures are being proposed in the British and Irish administrations to address misuse.

(AQW 14050/11-15)

Mr Poots: Preventing and addressing the harm related to alcohol and drug misuse remains a key priority for my Department. Drug misuse appears to have leveled out, with the proportion of young people aged 15-34 currently taking drugs (in the previous month) dropping from 6.1% in 2002/03 to 5.7% in 2010/11. Cannabis remains the main drug of misuse for our young people, with very low numbers aged under 18 injecting any drugs. Alcohol misuse remains a much more prevalent issue amongst young people in Northern Ireland, with 23% of young people aged 11-16 reporting getting drunk in 2010.

A range of local counselling and mentoring services for children and young people is available across Northern Ireland, much of this in community settings and involving a wide range of service providers. A Regional Initial Assessment Tool has been developed allowing non-specialist workers to screen and assess a young person's alcohol and drug misuse, provide initial intervention, and signpost those who require additional support into the correct service. A "one-stop-shop" initiative to support young people around substance misuse has been successfully piloted and is now being rolled out across Northern Ireland.

The UK-wide Misuse of Drugs Act has been recently amended to enable temporary bans to be placed on emerging substances. My Department and the Department for Social Development (DSD) have been working together on liquor licensing and related issues for many years, and we recently supported DSD in bringing regulations through the Assembly that can be used to ban irresponsible promotions. Work is underway on a North/South basis on a range of alcohol misuse issues including pricing, promotions, advertising, etc. Both administrations are currently exploring the benefit of undertaking joint research on the impact of introducing a minimum unit pricing for alcohol in order to inform potential future legislation.

Guidelines for Prescribing Gluten-Free Foods

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether the guidelines for prescribing gluten-free foods are flexible; and whether a GP can prescribe more gluten-free products than suggested if requested by the patient.

(AQW 14052/11-15)

Mr Poots: Patients with confirmed gluten-sensitive medical conditions are able to obtain a range of foods on prescription. To ensure efficient use of resources the HSC Board has issued guidance to all prescribers recommending that only staple foods such as bread, pasta, crackers and flour be supplied on prescription to patients diagnosed with gluten-sensitive enteropathies. Items which are not staple foods, and which are not consistent with healthy eating advice such as biscuits, cakes, muffins, pasties and sausage rolls, should no longer be supplied on prescription. This guidance is in line with advice from Coeliac UK which is the leading charity working for people with coeliac disease and dermatitis herpetiformis.

The guidance does not override or replace the individual responsibility of health professionals to make appropriate decisions in the circumstances of their individual patients, but prescribers are encouraged to look at their prescribing of gluten-free foods to ensure that it falls within these recommendations.

Encouraging Men to Visit their GP

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department aims to encourage men to visit their GP when symptoms first appear so that illnesses can be treated before they become too serious.

(AQW 14058/11-15)

Mr Poots: I have issued a new draft cross departmental public health strategic framework, "Fit and Well" for public consultation. This takes a life course approach with one of the key stages being adults of working age and recognises that men often present later in the course of illness. They are also less likely to use traditional health services such as GPs. Therefore, a specific outcome has been proposed in the draft framework that more men present with early symptoms of health problems to their GPs. It is envisaged that actions will be developed as part of the implementation to help achieve this outcome.

My Department has a number of health promoting strategies in place including strategies to reduce smoking, suicide/self harm, skin cancer and obesity; and to improve mental health and sexual health. Whilst the health promoting strategies are not gender specific, they include actions targeting men where there is a difference in behaviours or outcomes. Men have higher death rates for most of the leading causes of death and are more likely to engage in risk-taking behaviours. Thus, the Public Health Agency (PHA), through its public information programmes, has tailored its awareness campaigns to male target audiences on topics such as alcohol consumption, sexual health, smoking cessation, promoting positive mental health and suicide prevention, healthy eating and improving levels of physical activity.

Another example, within the Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy, is that programmes are being developed to ensure that outdoor workers (mostly men) are aware of the need to seek early clinical advice on suspected moles and lesions.

There are also a wide range of programmes and initiatives which address specific lifestyle and health risks for men. These include: the Men's Health Forum Ireland, which seeks to identify the key concerns relating to men's health and to increase understanding of these issues; the "Man Van" which brings health checks and life-saving messages to men in rural areas; and local men's groups which address physical and mental health issues.

Ovarian Cancer

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many GPs have been refused tests that they have requested in connection with ovarian cancer in the last twelve months.

(AQW 14059/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available.

Specialised Services for Young People with Eating Disorders

Mr Durkan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 13815/11-15, whether patients at Beechcroft Inpatient Centre, Belfast, who are receiving treatment

related to an eating disorder, are cared for in a separate facility from patients with other mental illnesses.

(AQW 14113/11-15)

Mr Poots: Beechcroft provides a total of 18 adolescent in-patient beds including two intensive nursing beds. They are single rooms all with en suite shower W/C. There is no separate facility for the treatment of those patients admitted with an eating disorder.

Children in Care

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children (i) are currently in care; and (ii) have been in care in each of the last five years, in each Health and Social Care Trust area.

(AQW 14116/11-15)

Mr Poots: Table 1 details the numbers of children in care in each HSC Trust at 31 March each year from 2008 to 2012.

TABLE 1

CHILDREN IN CARE BY HSC TRUST AT 31 MARCH, 2008 TO 2012

HSC Trust	Year				
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012 ¹
Belfast	592	587	627	622	653
Northern	506	519	519	579	634
South Eastern	553	562	635	503	512
Southern	356	370	403	407	420
Western	426	425	422	400	425
All Trusts	2,433	2,463	2,606	2,511	2,644

Source: DHSSPS Children Order Return LA1 (2008 – 2010) including respite placements, Health and Social Care Board Delegated Statutory Functions Corporate Parenting Returns (2011 - 2012) excluding respite placements;

1 The figures for 2012 are provisional.

Foster Carers and Approved Kinship Carers

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what percentage of (i) foster carers; and (ii) approved kinship carers are from an ethnic minority background.

(AQW 14117/11-15)

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

Childcare Places

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many childcare places does each Health and Social Care Trust pay for in respect of children in care who are placed with foster and approved kinship carers.

(AQW 14118/11-15)

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

Registered Foster Carers

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many registered foster carers there are.

(AQW 14119/11-15)

Mr Poots: At 31 March 2012, there were 2,280 foster carers registered with Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland. This figure was provided by the Health and Social Care Board and has not been validated by the DHSSPS.

Children in Care

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children in care are currently in (i) foster placements; (ii) approved kinship; (iii) residential accommodation; and (iv) other placements.

(AQW 14120/11-15)

Mr Poots: At 31 March 2012, of the 2,644 children in care, 1,946 were in foster care placements, 781 in approved kinship care placements, a further 231 were placed in residential accommodation, and 467 children were in 'other' placement types.

Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy Treatment Equipment

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how much funding the Health and Social Care Board has allocated for the replacement of radiotherapy equipment for this financial year, and the subsequent financial years; and whether he has any plans to provide Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy Treatment for cancer patients in this region within the current Assembly mandate.

(AQW 14166/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Belfast Trust has secured a replacement linear accelerator in 2012/13 as part of the terms of the PFI agreement which the Trust has in place with HTI (Ireland). A further replacement linear accelerator is also expected to be secured in 2013/14 as part of the PFI agreement, subject to business case approval.

Stereotactic radiotherapy is a highly specialist service that is not currently provided in Northern Ireland. There are no plans for its introduction in the near future. However, Northern Ireland patients who are clinically suitable for this treatment are routinely referred to specialist centres in other parts of the UK.

Mercury in Dental Amalgam

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's position on the safety and continued use in the Health Service of mercury in dental amalgam; and what steps his Department takes to ensure that mercury from dental amalgam does not impact on the environment.

(AQW 14182/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am content that dental amalgam is a safe and effective material for dental restorations and for its continued use in the Health Service. All dentists who use dental amalgam are required to comply with the Hazardous Waste Regulations. These regulations require that dental amalgam waste is kept separate from other waste and consigned to an appropriate waste management facility.

Diabetic Training for Teaching Staff in Clondeboye Primary School

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust can provide full diabetic training for teaching staff in Clondeboye Primary School, Bangor, to allow a pupil requiring paediatric diabetic care to commence school.

(AQW 14199/11-15)

Mr Poots: Partnership between the Child, Family, Education and Health is critical for Children with diabetes.

The South Eastern HSC Trust (SEHSCT) delivered initial basic training to teaching staff at Clandeboye Primary School on 14th September 2012 following a request on 7th September that the school required this training. The Trust's Paediatric Diabetic Nurse Specialist (PDSN) has also met with the principal of Clandeboye Primary School to explore whether a member of staff within the school maybe willing to take on the role of administering insulin. Only once this has been established can plans be put in place for further specialist training.

The training is delivered on a one to one basis involving a Diabetes Specialist Nurse (DSN), the parents, the pupil and the volunteer teaching staff. Training can only be delivered in an established term as the teaching staff need to be there together with the nurse, the parents and the pupil. The training requires five sessions to ensure the necessary competencies are acquired by the staff being trained. This is important from a patient safety and clinical governance point of view as Insulin is a potentially dangerous medication which requires sufficient training before it can be administered safely, particularly to young children.

There is no legal duty that requires school staff to administer medication; this is a voluntary role.

Children Deemed to be on the Edge of Care

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children in each Health and Social Care Trust area are deemed to be on the edge of care.

(AQW 14205/11-15)

Mr Poots: The figures requested are not available.

Department of Justice

English Language Classes

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many foreign national (i) remand; and (ii) sentenced prisoners are currently taking part in English language classes.

(AQW 13721/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): On 4 September 2012, 68 foreign national prisoners in custody in Northern Ireland were enrolled in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes. Of these, 41 were on remand and 27 were sentenced prisoners.

NIPS: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13418/11-15, how this document constitutes approval by the Secretary of State, given that it states that he is content to approve the Code as drafted; and whether a document exists to show that the Code of Practice was formally signed by the then Secretary of State.

(AQW 13722/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no document formally signed by the Secretary of State; the letter issued by his Private Secretary on his behalf constituted approval of the current Code of Conduct and Discipline (COCD).

Edward Paul Murphy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail the circumstances in which Edward Paul Murphy was erroneously released, including why the Northern Ireland Prison Service failed to publicly announce

the matter; and whether he intends to launch an investigation into the matter, including all the agencies involved.

(AQW 13723/11-15)

Mr Ford: Edward Paul Murphy was erroneously released from Maghaberry Prison as the result of an administrative error by staff in the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service.

On 8 June 2012, Mr Murphy was remanded in custody to appear on 18 September 2012 at Craigavon Crown Court for sentencing on charges of fraud by false representation. On 22 June, his solicitor took the unusual step of asking the Court to make an order for compensation in advance of Mr Murphy's sentencing hearing. The Compensation Order was entered on the Court IT system, which had the effect of automatically cancelling the future hearing date. The Prison Service was advised, in error, that the case had been dealt with and Mr Murphy was released. When the error came to light, Mr Murphy was returned to custody on 11 August to await sentencing.

I did not consider it necessary to issue a public announcement about this incident due to the particular circumstances of the case. My officials have carried out a full investigation and have taken appropriate corrective action to prevent a recurrence.

Edward Connors

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice why the agencies monitoring Edward Connors, upon his release from custody, did not seek his return to custody following his first breach of a condition of his probation, rather than have him summonsed to appear in court.

(AQW 13727/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following the first breach, the Probation Board applied for a warrant for immediate arrest which was executed by the Police and Edward Connors was returned to custody.

NIPS: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 13418/11-15, on how many occasions the document has been (i) requested; and (ii) supplied during Northern Ireland Prison Service disciplinary procedures and court cases or tribunals.

(AQW 13781/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no record of the document being either requested or supplied during disciplinary proceedings.

Prisoner Assessment Unit Report

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the Prisoner Assessment Unit report (i) whether investigations into staff malpractice or similar offences are continuing with a view to disciplinary procedures; and (ii) how many staff are currently under investigation.

(AQW 13782/11-15)

Mr Ford: No Prison Service staff are currently under investigation resulting from the PAU report.

NIPS: Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 12644/11-15, whether he will provide a copy of the Northern Ireland Prison Service's submission of 22 November 1995.

(AQW 13783/11-15)

Mr Ford: In line with current guidance relating to the Disposal and Retention of Documents, a copy of the Northern Ireland Prison Service submission to the then Secretary of State in 1995 has not been retained.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail, for each of the last three financial years, (i) the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by his Department; (ii) the number of FOI requests responded to within the 20 working day requirement; (iii) the number of FOI requests that have taken longer than 20 working days to complete; and (iv) the number of FOI requests which were refused, broken down by the reason for refusal.

(AQW 13841/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that statistics for 2011 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2011 FOI Annual Report.

Separated Prisoner Compact

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether the non-signing of a separated prisoner compact has become an accepted practice.

(AQW 13846/11-15)

Mr Ford: All those prisoners who apply for separated conditions and meet the criteria set out in the compact are interviewed by a Governor. Although some prisoners refuse to sign the compact it is explained to them that they must adhere to the conditions within the compact. The Governor has determined that those prisoners who meet the criteria are held in separated conditions for reasons of health and safety and for control and discipline.

Convicted Rapist Edward Connors

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether convicted rapist Edward Connors participated in any sexual offenders treatment programme whilst in custody.

(AQW 13852/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS is unable to provide the information requested as it falls into the category of sensitive personal data as defined in the DPA 1998.

Maghaberry Prison

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Justice whether the £140 million, originally ring-fenced for the upgrade of Magilligan Prison, will be used to fund the proposed 240 cell block at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 13856/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) has produced an Outline Estate Strategy that is currently subject to a sixteen week period of public consultation.

Prior to the development of the Outline Estate Strategy, NIPS had considered the re-development of the Magilligan site at an estimated cost of £180m (rather than the £140m quoted in the above question). That figure was the total estimated funding requirement for the project, the majority of which was required beyond the current budget period (Budget 2011-15) and not, therefore, included in NIPS' capital budget allocation.

As part of the Budget 2011-15 period, NIPS was allocated a total of £54m for the redevelopment of the prison estate.

One of the proposals contained in the Outline Estate Strategy is the development of a 240 block project at Maghaberry. The Strategy proposes that £23.75m is spent on the 240 block during the

Budget 2011-15 period, although some further capital funding would be required to complete the project in the next Spending Review period.

Final capital plans are currently subject to review pending the outcome of the Outline Estate Strategy public consultation, including a final decision on the future of the Magilligan site.

Thomas Ward

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether Thomas Ward has indicated if he will appeal his conviction, his sentence or both.

(AQW 13898/11-15)

Mr Ford: Thomas Ward has lodged an application for leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal against his conviction and sentence.

Edward Connors

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice what agencies were responsible for monitoring Edward Connors following his release from custody.

(AQW 13903/11-15)

Mr Ford: Offenders subject to a custody probation order are released from prison at the end of the custodial part of their sentence. The Probation Board for Northern Ireland is then responsible for supervising the probation element of the sentence. Those who breach the conditions are returned to court.

Under the PPANI public protection arrangements, established by Articles 49 to 51 of the Criminal Justice (NI) Order 2008, agencies cooperate to manage the risk posed by certain offenders in the community. This multi agency approach allows for the sharing of information to better address risk and thereby reduce the possibility of reoffending.

Prisoner Assessment Unit Report

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice which bodies and people have had access to an unredacted copy of the Prisoner Assessment Unit report.

(AQW 13904/11-15)

Mr Ford: An unredacted copy of the Prisoner Assessment Unit report was considered and discussed by officials at an appropriate level within the Northern Ireland Prison Service and the Department of Justice. As Minister of Justice I also have had access to an unredacted copy of the report.

A copy of the Report of the Investigation into the Prisoner Assessment Unit was shared with Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland (CJINI) for information purposes in relation to the ongoing CJINI thematic inspection into the management of life sentence prisoners.

Foreign National Prisoners

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether foreign national prisoners who have taken part in, or completed, English language classes continue to have the use of interpreter services in prison or court.

(AQW 13905/11-15)

Mr Ford: All foreign national prisoners are offered the opportunity of interpretation services regardless of their attendance at English speaking classes. Because of the complexity of some of the issues being addressed, the Prison Service does not assume that an individual's competence with the English language will allow them to have a full understanding of the subject matter.

If a court is satisfied that a foreign national cannot speak or understand the language of the court well enough to take part in its hearing then he or she will be assigned an interpreter regardless of whether or not they have been taking English language classes.

Convicted Sex Offenders Living in the Limavady Borough Council Area

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister of Justice how many convicted sex offenders are currently living in the Limavady Borough Council area.

(AQW 13973/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department is not responsible for recording information on convicted sex offenders who are subject to notification requirements under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Information in relation to numbers of sex offenders subject to notification may be obtained by contacting the PSNI directly.

Tiger Kidnappings

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the number of tiger kidnappings that have taken place; and (ii) the amount of money/value of goods estimated to have been stolen through tiger kidnappings, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 13974/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information available in response to the request is set out in the table below:

Year	Tiger Kidnaps
2008	10
2009	16
2010	7
2011	7
2012 (to 12 / 9)	3
Total:	43

It is not PSNI practice to disclose details of the amount of money and value of goods stolen.

Victims of Tiger Kidnappings

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) what support is provided for victims of tiger kidnappings; and (ii) whether he has any plans to provide additional support for such victims.

(AQW 13977/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice provides funding of over £2.1million per annum to Victim Support NI to offer help and support to all victims and witnesses of crime. This includes victims of tiger kidnapping. Services provided included emotional support; criminal injuries compensation assistance; and referral to other agencies for counselling support.

I want to ensure that all those affected by crime, including tiger kidnappings, are supported by the criminal justice system. The new five year Victim and Witness Strategy, which is due to go out for consultation shortly, seeks to improve our understanding of gaps in support services for victims of serious crime and those who are vulnerable or intimidated.

In addition, I will be commissioning research on those who have been affected by serious crimes. The research will be used to identify any further issues that need to be addressed and inform future policy development.

Cost of Food per Prisoner

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Justice what is the cost of food, per prisoner, per day.

(AQW 13995/11-15)

Mr Ford: During the most recent full financial year where audited costs are available (ie 2011/12) the average daily cost of food per prisoner was £2.61.

Animal Cruelty Offences

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted of animal cruelty offences in each of the last five years.

(AQW 14005/11-15)

Mr Ford: Animal cruelty offences span a number of statutes. During the period in question offences were prosecuted under the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

The table below gives the number of convictions for animal cruelty for the calendar years 2005 to 2009 (the latest year for which figures are currently available).

Number of convictions for animal cruelty, 2005-2009

Year	Number of convictions
2005	24
2006	17
2007	21
2008	17
2009	11

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

Data for 2005-2006 should not be directly compared with data from 2007 to 2009 as the data sets are sourced from different systems.

Garden of Remembrance for Murdered Prison Officers

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice why there is no Garden of Remembrance for murdered prison officers; and whether there are plans for such a provision.

(AQW 14019/11-15)

Mr Ford: The prison establishments and the Prison Service College have small memorials which commemorate prison staff who were murdered.

I support, in principle, the creation of a memorial garden for prison staff. However, before I reach a conclusion in relation to this matter I want to await the outcome of the ongoing NIPS Estates Strategy.

Policing with the Community 2020 Strategy

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice whether there are plans to improve the sustainability of the Policing with the Community 2020 Strategy.

(AQW 14024/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Policing with the Community 2020 Strategy was developed and published by the Chief Constable with the support and agreement of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

I recognise that the Strategy is consistent with my own long-term policing objectives, but decisions regarding its prioritisation and the allocation of resources are matters for the Chief Constable and the Policing Board.

Body Scanner Equipment at Magilligan and Hydebank Wood Prisons

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Justice (i) for an update on his Department's trialling of the body scanner equipment at Magilligan and Hydebank Wood Prisons; and (ii) a timescale for its introduction at Maghaberry Prison.

(AQW 14026/11-15)

Mr Ford: Previously I made the commitment that the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) would pilot and evaluate the use of two types of full body imaging scanners - Millimetre Wave and Transmission X-Ray scanners.

NIPS officials have leased two Millimetre Wave Scanners, the first of which was delivered for installation at Magilligan Prison on 17 September. Following the delivery of staff training it is anticipated that the pilot will commence on 26 September.

A second Millimetre Wave Scanner is due to be delivered to Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre next month and a similar pilot will commence then.

NIPS has also commenced the process to seek approval for the use of Transmission X-ray Scanners in prisons in Northern Ireland under the Justification of Practices Involving Ionising Radiation Regulations 2004.

The safety of staff and prisoners is paramount and since the range of technologies under consideration have not been tested in the prison environment it is appropriate that we evaluate them in our lower security prisons rather than our highest.

Therefore, at this moment, it is not possible to provide an accurate timescale for the introduction of body scanning equipment at Maghaberry prison.

Dress Code for Northern Ireland Prison Service Officers

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Justice to detail the dress code for Northern Ireland Prison Service Officers when escorting prisoners who are attending the funeral of a family member.

(AQW 14082/11-15)

Mr Ford: Prison Service staff escorting a prisoner attending the funeral of a family member are expected to dress appropriately as befitting the occasion. This should be smart civilian dress.

Illicit Drugs Detected in Prisons

Mr Givan asked the Minister of Justice to detail the amount of illicit drugs detected in each prison, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14106/11-15)

Mr Ford: The total number of illicit drug finds in Northern Ireland prisons for each of the last three years are set out below.

	Maghaberry	Magilligan	Hydebank	Total
Aug-Dec 09	57	22	30	109
Jan-Dec 10	199	76	66	341
Jan-Dec 11	192	85	175	452
Jan-July 12	120	62	77	259
3 Year Total	568	245	348	1161

Headline Building in Belfast

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Justice to detail the (i) cost; and (ii) purpose of preparing the Headline Building in Belfast as part of the court architecture in the trial of Robert and Ian Stewart.
(AQW 14225/11-15)

Mr Ford: Robert and Ian Stewart were witnesses in the case of R v Haddock and others. The final estimated cost of providing the additional courtroom facility was £49,474. This comprises £32,435 for equipment and staffing and estimated additional policing costs of £17,039.

In his ruling of 6 September 2011, Mr Justice Hart referred to the considerable public interest that the trial could potentially generate and of the importance of ensuring that the public should be able to view the proceedings. The additional facility was therefore provided for members of the public who had an interest in the proceedings but could not be accommodated in the public gallery in Courtroom 12 at Laganside Courts.

Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice to outline the strategies proposed for his Department from the Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence.
(AQW 14232/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence (IMG), leads and co-ordinates efforts across Government to address domestic and sexual violence. Currently Government Departments, agencies and voluntary and community sector partners share responsibility for implementing the following strategies:

- Tackling Violence at Home – a strategy for addressing domestic violence and abuse in Northern Ireland; and
- Tackling Sexual Violence and Abuse.

In May 2012 the IMG endorsed a proposal to develop a new single strategy to tackle both domestic and sexual violence which it is proposed will take effect from September 2013.

Sentencing Guidelines Council

Mr Boylan asked the Minister of Justice whether he has any plans to establish a Sentencing Guidelines Council.
(AQO 2442/11-15)

Mr Ford: In June 2012, I announced proposals for ways in which greater transparency, consistency and community engagement in sentencing practice could be delivered in a way that promotes public confidence. One strand of these proposals is related to the Lord Chief Justice's Programme of Action on Sentencing, which contains a number of measures to ensure consistent and fair sentences. As part of this Programme, the Lord Chief Justice established a Sentencing Group with responsibility for overseeing the development and publication of guidelines. I asked the LCJ to include lay members on the Group, one of whom should represent the views of victims. I am pleased that the LCJ has announced his acceptance of my proposals and that advertisements seeking applications have appeared in the local press.

This is a significant step, and a new departure for the judiciary, opening up a process seen by many as something of a 'closed shop'. Sentencing benchmarks will be transparent to all, enabling informed debate on sentencing issues outside the context of an individual case.

The other strand to my reforms is the development of a community engagement strategy to ensure a two way flow of information on sentencing issues.

It is my view that these reforms will achieve the ends of a Sentencing Council without the need for a separate, and costly, body. The mechanisms will be reviewed within two years to assess their effectiveness in achieving objectives.

Criminal Justice: Case Management

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the progress made by criminal justice organisations in reforming case management processes.

(AQO 2450/11-15)

Mr Ford: While the key agencies, such as the police and the prosecution service, are independent of the Department, that is no barrier to us working together to achieve real and lasting change. This includes a range of procedural and legislative reforms to improve the management and progression of criminal cases.

Good progress is being made in implementing the programme, with some of the initiatives already brought forward, such as streamlined files, providing promising results. In addition, I will be proposing a number of legislative changes through the next Justice Bill, and the Department is developing a consultation paper for publication later this year on statutory case management, in line with the recent recommendation from the Justice Committee in the report of its Inquiry into services for victims and witnesses of crime.

I am in no doubt that there is an absolute commitment at the highest levels in the system to building a faster, fairer justice system for everyone.

Civil Disturbance: North Belfast

Mr McDevitt asked the Minister of Justice how many PSNI officers sustained injuries as a result of disturbances in North Belfast between 25 August 2012 and 5 September 2012.

(AQO 2451/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no justification for the scenes which we witnessed in North Belfast over recent months. The violence and disorder is inexcusable.

During the disturbances at Donegall Street on Sunday 25 August 9 police officers sustained injuries. Between 2 and 4 September a total of 80 police officers sustained injuries as they dealt with the disorder in the Clifton Street/ Carlisle Circus area.

Civil Disturbance: North Belfast

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the recent civil disturbances in North Belfast, including the number of arrests made.

(AQO 2453/11-15)

Mr Ford: There is no justification for the scenes which we witnessed in North Belfast over recent months. The violence and disorder is inexcusable.

During the disturbances at Donegall Street on Sunday 25 August 9 police officers' sustained injuries. Between 2 and 4 September a total of 80 police officers' sustained injuries as they dealt with the disorder at Clifton Street/ Carlisle Circus. I commend the professionalism, courage and bravery displayed by the officers as they carried out their duties to restore law and order in difficult and challenging circumstances.

Police investigations into the incidents are ongoing. I can advise that, as of 18 September, there have been 5 arrests and 3 charges following the disorder at Donegall Street. In relation to the disorder at Denmark Street/Carlisle Circus there have been 14 arrests and 7 charges.

The Executive agreed to initiate work to seek a successful resolution to both the parade in the area on 29 September and contentious parades in general. The signs from engagement to date have been

positive and I hope they lead to a positive outcome for the parade on 29 September and, importantly, set the tone for the longer term work on parading.

We must take responsibility for how we, in Northern Ireland, want to manage parades and protests in a way that recognises the rights and responsibilities of all those involved.

Office of the Police Ombudsman

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of whether the appointment of a new Police Ombudsman will help to restore public confidence in that office.

(AQO 2454/11-15)

Mr Ford: I welcome Michael Maguire's appointment and believe that the implementation of the findings of the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland report into the independence of the Ombudsman's office together with the renewal at senior levels of the Ombudsman's Office will help restore and secure public confidence and enable the public to have confidence in these matters for the future.

Department for Regional Development

Planning Permission for Road Infrastructure Projects

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development what level of public consultation is required by Roads Service prior to seeking planning permission for road infrastructure projects.

(AQW 13740/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): My Department's Roads Service has advised that it engages with landowners at an early stage in the development of major road improvement proposals so they are kept informed as the scheme develops and advised of likely impacts affecting their property.

Community information events are held during the development of each road improvement scheme. These will be arranged at locations convenient to the proposed scheme and are advertised in the local press.

Major road improvements generally do not require planning permission but are implemented by statute, under the various provisions contained in The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. Before construction of a major scheme on the trunk road network commences, Roads Service will make a Direction Order and Vesting Order and publish an Environmental Statement, along with the decision to proceed.

As required, the public are given the opportunity to formally comment on, or object to the proposals, which are published in draft statutory orders and normally augmented following community information events. If written objections are received, a public inquiry may be held, depending on the number and content of objections.

In general, minor road improvement schemes such as road widening, reshaping or realignment do not require planning permission based on a Service Level Agreement between the Department of the Environment's Planning Division and Roads Service. This type of road construction is deemed 'permitted development'.

When schemes of this nature are being progressed, i.e. from the initiation stage to implementation, Roads Service will consult with elected representatives and interested stakeholders, either on a scheme by scheme basis and/or through the twice yearly Council meetings.

Comber

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the maintenance work that has been completed, including the cost, since the opening of the Comber By-Pass.

(AQW 13777/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that no major maintenance work, such as resurfacing, has been carried out on the Comber Bypass, since it was opened to traffic. However, routine maintenance work, such as, gully cleaning, grass cutting and hedge trimming has been carried out in accordance with Roads Service's maintenance guidelines. The cost of these activities is recorded on a District Council basis, but is not broken down to individual roads.

Draft Executive Papers

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development (i) how many draft Executive papers, for approval by the Minister, have not yet been approved; (ii) the date the Minister received each paper; and (iii) the subject matter of each paper.

(AQW 13793/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Flooding in the Holywood Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures have been put in place to ensure that there will be no further flooding in the Holywood area.

(AQW 13821/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I sympathise with all those affected by flooding in the Holywood area, in particular the flooding experienced on the 27 June 2012. I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water and my Department's Roads Service that the flooding on that date was as a result of the intensity of rainfall, which was beyond that which the drainage infrastructure is designed to cope with.

Unfortunately, it is impossible to ensure that flooding will never occur, even if significant additional investment was available. However, Roads Service intends to install a number of grills on road culverts at key locations to help alleviate the potential for any future flooding, in advance of the winter season. Northern Ireland Water will continue to maintain the sewerage networks in order to prevent flooding resulting from defects or blockages, and will endeavour to have these cleared or repaired promptly should they occur.

I have been advised by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development that, following the flooding on 27 June 2012, Rivers Agency commenced a comprehensive inspection and investigation programme of all sites within the Greater Belfast, Holywood and Lisburn areas where flooding had occurred potentially as a result of a watercourse overflowing. The findings of this programme will be used to inform an ongoing maintenance programme, to ensure the free flow of watercourses, and identify where additional works might be required to alleviate the risk of further flooding.

In parallel to the inspection programme, Rivers Agency has already undertaken river maintenance where there are obvious blockages to the flow of watercourses causing an increase in the risk of further flooding. The Agency is also carrying out interim measures to increase the capacity of river channels where this is practicable.

Signal Related Failures on the Rail Network

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of signal related failures on the rail network which resulted in delays or cancellations, in the last three years, broken down by railway line.

(AQW 13827/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has reported that the number of signal related failures on the rail network which resulted in delays or cancellations, in the last three years, broken down by railway line is as set out in the tables below:

SEP 2009-AUG 2010

LINE	No. of Faults Causing Delays	No. of Services Delayed	Cancellations
Bangor	4	10	3
Border	51	91	19
Larne	29	60	0
Londonderry	50	84	2

SEP 2010 - AUG 2011

LINE	No. of Faults Causing Delays	No. of Services Delayed	Cancellations
Bangor	2	7	1
Border	62	91	15
Larne	18	35	2
Londonderry	69	109	5

SEP 2011 - AUG 2012

Line	No. of Faults Causing Delays	No. of Services Delayed	Cancellations
Bangor	2	2	1
Border	70	179	22
Larne	20	52	3
Londonderry	52	111	1

Sewerage System for the Helens Bay and Crawfordsburn Areas

Mr Dunne asked the Minister for Regional Development whether NI Water has any plans to upgrade the sewerage system for the Helens Bay and Crawfordsburn areas.

(AQW 13847/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the sewerage system serving the Helens Bay and Crawfordsburn areas was upgraded within the past ten years in order to address capacity and quality requirements in the area. NIW is satisfied that the sewerage system is operating effectively and has no plans for any major upgrade work at this time. However, it will continue to maintain the system and plans to replace a sewer on the Craigdarragh Road and the Seahill Road. This work is scheduled to commence in 2012.

Sewerage Infrastructure in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development when work on the sewerage infrastructure in Millisle will commence.

(AQW 13858/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that its Price Control 13 Business Plan includes a £2.2 million capital project to upgrade the sewerage system in Millisle to meet EU Bathing Water standards and reduce the risk of out-of-sewer flooding.

NIW has been consulting with local residents and has reached agreement on the site for a new pumping station at Millisle Presbyterian Church car park. The legal issues regarding the site acquisition could take up to one year to conclude. In the interim, NIW will be seeking planning permission for the pumping station and Northern Ireland Environment Agency consent for construction of a new sea outfall pipeline.

NIW will be seeking tenders in late 2013 with a view to commencing construction in Spring 2014, subject to the availability of funding, completion of lands acquisition and the satisfactory completion of all necessary statutory approvals. Work is expected to take approximately one year to complete.

Upgrade of the A2 Road at Greenisland

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what preparatory measures his Department is taking to minimise disruption during the upgrade of the A2 road at Greenisland.

(AQW 13862/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Implementation of a major project, such as the A2 Shore Road Greenisland, will inevitably cause significant disruption along the A2 and adjacent roads during the construction phase. There are significant challenges associated with carrying out these works within the space available on this very constrained urban corridor. These include laying new gas mains, sewers, water mains, electricity and telephone cables. All utilities to the adjoining properties must be maintained during construction of the new road, while at the same time accommodating the 35,000 vehicles that use the road every day.

In order to tackle these issues, my Department's Road Service has established a Temporary Traffic Management Strategy Group (TTMSG) which includes representatives from PSNI, Translink, Transportation Unit and officials from Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus Borough Councils.

The aims of this wide-ranging group will be to minimise disruption and keep all those affected by the works informed of developments throughout the contract. These will be delivered through three distinct strands:

- issues to be conditioned for delivery within the contract;
- works to be undertaken by Roads Service and other bodies in advance of, or during, the contract works; and
- development of a communication strategy to provide timely and relevant information to those who require it.

The TTMSG has, over the past 3 years, developed a range of proposals, which are progressing and are to be established in advance of the commencement of the construction stage of the scheme in early 2013.

The proposals include:-

- the deferment of planned public utility work in the run-up to and during the construction phase of the contract;
- the acceleration of resurfacing and utility work on the B90 Old Carrick Road in advance of the scheme;
- the acceleration of planned improvement works on alternative routes so that they are completed in advance of the main scheme;
- the extension and expansion of Park and Ride facilities and an increase in Translink facilities and services; and
- a communications strategy, which will involve the use of multi-media facilities, in order to keep stakeholders informed of scheme developments at all times.

Door-2-Door Transport Scheme

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the criteria used to decide the Door-2-Door Transport Scheme's operational area boundaries.

(AQW 13863/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: An independent review of the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities in 2003 recommended that door-to-door transport services should be introduced for people with disabilities living in urban areas throughout Northern Ireland. The services were to be used primarily by people who are unable to use conventional public transport and would fulfil the same function as conventional town bus services by enabling people to get to and from their home to local facilities and services.

Following consultation, the Department decided to introduce services in all urban areas with a population of 10,000 or more based on data obtained from the 2001 census.

Using the town/city boundary maps as a starting point, the Department consulted locally with people with disabilities, disability groups and other relevant bodies to agree the operational areas. To allow for possible future expansion of the town/cities and to address some local anomalies the operational boundaries were extended by a further mile.

RG6 Strengthen Community Cohesion

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development how the progress of RG6 Strengthen Community Cohesion, under the Regional Development Strategy, is monitored

(AQW 13864/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Regional Development Strategy (RDS) 2035 is a long term strategic document whose purpose is to deliver the spatial aspects of the Programme for Government. It complements the Sustainable Development Strategy and informs the spatial aspects of the strategies of all Government Departments. The Strategy is not limited to land use but recognises that policies for physical development have far reaching implications. The RDS therefore seeks to address economic, social and environmental issues aimed at achieving sustainable development and social cohesion.

The purpose of the RDS is to provide an overarching strategic planning framework to facilitate and guide the public and private sectors, it does not redefine other Departments' strategies but compliments them with a spatial perspective.

Many of the policies can only be implemented through individual departments and their strategies. Now that the RDS 2035 has been published my officials are working with a range of other bodies to develop appropriate indicators to monitor the strategy and ensure that government departments take account of the RDS 2035.

Due to the cross-cutting nature of the RDS 2035 a number of stakeholders will be involved in delivery. As a result measuring progress on the implementation of the strategy may therefore have to rely on monitoring carried out by individual departments.

Community cohesion within the RDS 2035 relates to three elements – (1) Developing integrated services and facilities, (2) fostering a stronger community spirit and sense of place, and (3) encouraging mixed housing development. Once appropriate indicators are agreed we will work with our partner departments and other stakeholders to assess the impact of the RDS 2035.

Two-Tier Parking Fine System

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his departmental officials have taken to assess the feasibility of a two-tier parking fine system.

(AQW 13865/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Assembly recently approved an increase to the amount of a parking Penalty Charge Notice from £60 to £90 for all contraventions.

I am aware that other parts of the United Kingdom do apply differential penalties for different contraventions, however, I felt it was necessary to increase the level of deterrent for all contraventions.

My Department is currently monitoring the impact of this fee increase on illegal parking, as well as the nature of the contraventions. It is anticipated that this monitoring exercise will run for approximately twelve months to enable a comprehensive assessment to be completed. My Department will then carry out a statistical analysis of the results found in Northern Ireland compared with those in England and Wales, where differential penalties are in place, and in Scotland, where differential penalties are not in use.

Disabled Parking Bays

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 13630/11-15, to detail the reasons for the rejection of applications for disabled parking bays.

(AQW 13875/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that the reasons for the rejection of the 20 applications between 2009/10 and 2011/12 were as follows:-

Reason for Rejection	Number
No parking problem identified at the location in question	7
Applicant not the driver of the vehicle and no parking problem identified at the location	10
Bay requested on land not adopted by Roads Service. (NIHE land)	1
Applicant not the driver of the vehicle and vehicle owner does not live at same address	1
Requested location conflicted with waiting restrictions.(no alternative available/ acceptable)	1

Public Transport Vehicles: Audio/Visual Information

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he intends to introduce legislation that would require all public transport vehicles to have audio/visual information; and what is the timescale for the introduction of such legislation.

(AQW 13879/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The legislative regulations for rail and bus are different.

The Department of the Environment is responsible, via the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (NI) 2003, for determining and setting the standards which buses should meet in terms of accessibility. At present there is no requirement for buses to be fitted with audio/visual information systems.

Passenger Information Systems on trains, including audio/visual systems, are covered by the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) Northern Ireland and the Passengers of Reduced Mobility Legislation Technical Standards for Interoperability, respectively. All trains have already audio/visual passenger information systems installed.

There are currently no plans to introduce legislation that would require all public transport vehicles to have audio/visual information available, although I will keep the matter under review.

Audio/Visual Information on Buses

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development why there is a requirement for trains to include audio/visual information but the same requirement does not apply to buses.

(AQW 13880/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Different legislation applies to trains and buses.

The legislative requirements for Passenger Information Systems, including audio/visual Systems, on trains are set out in the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (NI). In addition, all trains that have come into service since 2008 must comply with the Passengers of Reduced Mobility Technical Standards for European interoperability.

The Department of the Environment is responsible, via the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (NI) 2003, for determining and setting the standards which buses should meet in terms of accessibility. At present there is no legal requirement for buses to be fitted with audio/visual information systems in Northern Ireland or in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail, for each of the last three financial years, (i) the number of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests received by his Department; (ii) the number of FOI requests responded to within the 20 working day requirement; (iii) the number of FOI requests that have taken longer than 20 working days to complete; and (iv) the number of FOI requests which were refused, broken down by the reason for refusal.

(AQW 13900/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The information requested is published in a series of FOI Annual Reports which are on the basis of calendar years, not financial years. The reports can be accessed from the OFMDFM website at:

http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/improving-public-services/information_management_and_central_advisory_branch/annual-reports-and-statistics.htm

The Member should note that statistics for 2011 are provided on a quarterly basis and cannot be seen as validated until the publication of the 2011 FOI Annual Report.

Cycle Lane Connectivity

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what action his Department is taking to improve cycle lane connectivity.

(AQW 13909/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is committed to providing safer roads for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. This is facilitated by the use of a range of measures, such as road safety education and engineering, traffic calming and enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network.

The provision of bicycle paths or cycle lanes in Northern Ireland is led by Roads Service, through its Local Transport and Safety Measures and in accordance with the Regional Transport Strategy and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. These plans build on the Northern Ireland Cycling Strategy and recognise that cycling is an ideal form of transport for short journeys.

It is Roads Service's intention to invest and implement, in so far as available resources permit, additional cycling measures which will complement the existing National Cycle Network and improve the connectivity of cycle lanes.

Parking in Cycle Lanes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps his Department is taking to educate motorists to prevent them from parking in cycle lanes.

(AQW 13915/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that Rule 140 of the Highway Code for Northern Ireland provides guidance on cycle lanes and specifically refers to parking. Therefore drivers should be aware of these rules.

My Department's new parking enforcement and car park management contract with NSL Ltd will commence on 30 October 2012. In advance of this, my Department will be running a parking enforcement awareness campaign.

This campaign will include the distribution of information leaflets to drivers to remind them of the importance of parking restrictions and the benefits of effective parking enforcement. The leaflet will include a number of "Dos" and "Don'ts" for drivers, advising them of where they should and should not park. In addition, it will clearly inform drivers not to park in mandatory cycle lanes.

Furthermore, my Department will also be publishing a parking enforcement protocol, to provide the public with detailed information on the various parking contraventions that can be enforced by traffic attendants. This will include information specifically related to mandatory cycle lanes.

Parking in Cycle Lanes in Belfast

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what enforcement action his Department is taking against parking in cycle lanes in Belfast.

(AQW 13916/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that a Traffic Attendant can issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) to a vehicle parked on a mandatory cycle-lane. However, a PCN cannot be issued to a vehicle parked on an advisory cycle-lane, unless other parking restrictions apply, for example, clearway restrictions.

Cycle Lanes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what strategy his Department is pursuing to encourage greater use of cycle lanes and to ensure that they are free from obstacles and blockages.

(AQW 13917/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department through its Travelwise initiative encourages cycling and the use of cycling facilities generally, as part of its promotion of sustainable modes of travel. The promotion includes regular messages to the media in support of cycling as well as production of posters, leaflets and maps and support for events that highlight cycling facilities.

The Department is also finalising an Active Travel Strategy, which I published for consultation in December 2011. The key elements of the strategy are to provide a more integrated approach across government in the delivery of active travel initiatives, including the encouragement of cycling and walking. I am currently consulting with Executive colleagues and hope to publish an agreed strategy shortly. My Department's Roads Service provides cycle lanes in Northern Ireland through its Local Transport and Safety Measures, in accordance with the Regional Transport Strategy and the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. These transport plans build on the Northern Ireland Cycling strategy and recognises that cycling is an ideal form of transport for short journeys.

Roads Service is committed to providing safer roads for the vulnerable road user, such as cyclists, by developing a high quality integrated cycle route network that is free of obstructions and links key origins and destinations and encourages more people to cycle.

The design and implementation of cycle lanes is carried out in accordance with standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, and takes into consideration 'Cycle infrastructure design', a publication by the Department for Transport which identifies the space needed for a cyclist in which to feel safe and comfortable.

With regard to obstacles and blockages on cycle lanes, I can advise that a Traffic Attendant can issue a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN) to a vehicle which is parked on a mandatory cycle lane. However, a PCN cannot be issued to a vehicle parked on an advisory cycle lane, unless other parking restrictions apply, for example, clearway restrictions.

Rail Network

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to increase the rail network.

(AQW 13922/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Within the current budget there are no plans for any extensions to the railway network. My Department has received approaches from interested parties with proposals for new rail links. These can be considered in the future under the prioritisation framework to be developed under the new approach to Regional Transportation Strategy. To advise the new approach, I propose to hold a public consultation to determine what should be the priorities for future investment in the railway network.

Funds Held by the Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development what discussions he has had with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners in relation to the £20 million per year the Executive plan to realise from that source.

(AQW 13955/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I discussed the release of value issue at various meetings with the Chairman and Chief Executive of Belfast Harbour Commissioners over the past year. This topic was also addressed during the two business review meetings which I have held with the Belfast Harbour Commissioners since taking up office.

Funds Held by the Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development when he plans to bring forward legislative proposals to enable the £20 million per year from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to be realised.

(AQW 13957/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Discussions are on-going with Belfast Harbour Commissioners and with other Departments with an interest in this matter to determine the optimum means of achieving the policy aims outlined in the Budget proposals. An early draft of legislation has been prepared but the outcome of these discussions will more fully inform that legislation and when it will be brought forward to the Assembly.

Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the pressures that will be put on his budget if he fails to realise the planned £20 million per year from the Belfast Harbour Commissioners; and how he plans to address this situation.

(AQW 13958/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Executive's Budget requires a release of value of £40 million from Belfast Harbour Commissioners, amounting to £20 million in each of years 2013-14 and 2014-15. The Executive is addressing the release of value through its Budget Review Group, and Ministers, including myself, have met the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to progress this issue.

2012 Regional Development Strategy

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development why, despite the assurance from the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in February 2011, that the 2012 Regional Development Strategy will include the provision of specific guidance that embodies the objectives of the European Landscape Convention, there is no mention of the European Landscape Convention, its requirements and obligations under the 2012 Regional Development Strategy.

(AQW 13961/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The assurance you refer to from OFMDFM has been checked and it appears that the undertaking was that the Regional Development Strategy 2035, which was out for public consultation

at that time, would include the provision of specific guidance that embodies the guidance of the European Landscape Convention.

The Regional Development Strategy 2035 published in March 2012 includes the provision of specific guidance that embodies the objectives of the European Landscape Convention. I would refer the member to the key objective on page 19 “Protect and enhance the environment for its own sake” as well as the specific regional guidance in RG11 on pages 47 to 50 which requires those making decisions with a spatial dimension to - “Conserve, protect and, where possible, enhance our built heritage and our natural environment”.

As the Regional Development Strategy 2035 contains many cross cutting issues a conscious decision was taken not to refer to the raft of EU Directives, strategies and regional operational policies that it influences or from which it is influenced. This includes EU directives, other strategies of the Executive and Planning Policy Statements.

Street Lighting

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of street lighting left on during the day in the North Down area, in each of the last 12 months.

(AQW 13964/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department’s Roads Service has advised that it believes the Member is referring to locations where there are groups of lights left on during daylight hours. These are areas where the lighting is supplied directly by Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE). I understand that the lighting is left on due to faults within the NIE network, and their usual method for locating those faults within their system is to switch the lighting on for a 24 hour period. My Department has no responsibility for, nor control over these operations. I can advise that officials have reported such incidents to NIE at the following locations in North Down area, all of which are in Bangor, over the past 12 months:

- Greenridge Park;
- Towerview Avenue;
- Robinson Road/Marlo Park;
- Abbey Mount/Abbey Drive;
- Gransha Road; and
- Chippendale Vale.

Officials have further advised that there is no additional cost incurred by my Department arising from these incidences.

Investment in Cycling Lane Infrastructure

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the investment in cycling lane infrastructure in each of the last five years.

(AQW 13970/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer the Member to my response to his previous query AQW 10961/11-15, in which I advised that my Department’s Roads Service can provide details of investment in cycling measures, which includes paths that are shared between pedestrians and cyclists, but is unable to provide details of investment in distinct cycling lane infrastructure which are not recorded separately.

My previous response covered the period 2006/07 to 2010/11, as figures for the year 2011/12 were not available at that time. The table below has been updated to include outturn for the five years up to 2011/12:

EXPENDITURE ON ROADS AND CYCLING MEASURES OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS £'000

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Cycling Measures	1,056	1,360	981	311	1,101

I can also advise the Member that information on proposed cycle path schemes for the 2012/13 financial year, can be found in Roads Service's Spring Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

Cycling Lane Infrastructure

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what evaluation has been carried out of the effectiveness of spend on cycling lane infrastructure to ensure maximum beneficial effect.

(AQW 13971/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is committed to providing safer roads for vulnerable road users, such as pedestrians and cyclists. This is facilitated by the use of a range of measures, such as, road safety education and engineering, traffic calming and enhancement of the pedestrian and cycling network.

As part of the design and implementation process, Roads Service reviews all cycling infrastructure schemes that have been in place and operational, for at least six months, to ensure that the intended objectives have been fully met.

This evaluation is intended to guide and assist Roads Service officials in assessing whether the scheme has achieved its objectives, and also if it has demonstrated value for money.

Proposals to Enable Taxi Drivers to Use Bus Lanes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what cognisance has been given to the needs of cyclists in relation to the proposals to enable all taxi drivers to use bus lanes.

(AQW 13972/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department recently initiated a consultation exercise on a proposal to permit all taxis to use bus lanes. The consultation period is due to close on 21 September, after which the responses will be given careful consideration. The proposal was developed in direct response to the forthcoming change in DOE taxi licensing arrangements, which will see the end of the private hire/public hire distinction with the introduction of a single-tiered system, which will allow all taxis to pick up on street.

The impact of the change is explored in the Consultation Document, which can be accessed via the following link:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/doc-details.htm?docid=8191

'Welcome to Northern Ireland' Signs

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister for Regional Development to provide details of the total cost of erecting the 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' signs at some border crossings, broken down by design costs, manufacturing costs, legal advice, and signage erection,

(AQW 13978/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that to date, the cost of providing 'Welcome to Northern Ireland' signs is £1,296. A breakdown of the cost is provided in the table below:

Element	Cost (£)
Design costs	150
Manufacturing costs	803
Sign erection	343

Tendering Process for the Lease of Land in the Mournes

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the tendering process for the lease of land in the Mournes; and what steps his Department is taking to ensure that the process is executed in a fair and equitable manner.

(AQW 14006/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the tender proposals for renewing the land leasing are well advanced and the tender opportunity should be advertised before the end of October 2012. The tenants presently leasing the land have been individually informed that NIW will no longer be using a local agent to manage the tender and leasing arrangements as this will be undertaken by NIW procurement staff. NIW is confident that the process will be executed in a fair and equitable manner.

Proposed Roundabout System at Craigantlet

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development for an estimate of the cost of the proposed roundabout system at Craigantlet.

(AQW 14007/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has estimated that this scheme will cost approximately £2.25 million.

Proposed Roundabout System at Craigantlet

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what consultation his Department carried out on the proposed roundabout system at Craigantlet.

(AQW 14009/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that its officials have met with landowners whose land would be acquired by the Department, if the preferred scheme is progressed.

Residents, living in the vicinity of the scheme, were advised of the proposal through the neighbour notification process, as part of the planning application. The planning process will also give interested parties an opportunity to comment on, or object to, the proposed scheme.

Proposed Roundabout System at Craigantlet

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development whether an Environmental Impact Assessment has been carried out on the effects of the proposed roundabout system at Craigantlet.

(AQW 14010/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that an Environmental Impact Assessment has been prepared and submitted, as part of the planning application for this scheme.

Repairing Bus Shelters in the North Down Area

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost to Translink of repairing bus shelters in the North Down area, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 14011/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: There has been no cost to Translink for repairing bus shelters in the North Down area over the last three years as they do not own them and it is not their responsibility for carrying out such repairs.

Traffic in the Exchange Street/Hector Street Area of Belfast

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Regional Development what action the Roads Service is taking to reduce traffic congestion and improve the flow of traffic in the Exchange Street/Hector Street area of Belfast.

(AQW 14033/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has advised that it has no plans, at present, to change the existing traffic management arrangements in this area. However, I understand that the proposed relocation of the University of Ulster, from its Jordanstown campus to a site in this general vicinity, may result in some changes to how these streets are used in the future.

Pension Arrangements for Senior Staff in Northern Ireland Water

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Regional Development why the pension arrangements for senior staff in Northern Ireland Water continue to provide for a 26.9 percent salary contribution by the employer and only a 1.5 to 3.5 percent contribution by the employee; and when prevailing public service pension arrangements will be applied to Northern Ireland Water.

(AQW 14208/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The NI Water Pension Scheme is outside of the remit of the current reforms and therefore any changes to it would be a matter for the Board of Trustees to determine. However, following the outcome of the Department of Finance and Personnel's consultation on proposed amendments to the Principal Civil Service Pension Scheme in 2012/13, my Department wrote to the Chair of NI Water to seek his views as to how the NI Water Board would be addressing this issue. The expectation is that the company will provide a plan to take forward the necessary work and relevant consultation with the Scheme Trustees, NI Water employees and Trade Unions to revise the NI Water Scheme to make it broadly comparable with the changes in the wider public sector.

Although preliminary work has been undertaken by the company, the Department is still awaiting a formal response from the Board. It is not yet possible to give a firm indication of when any changes may be implemented.

Pumping Station at New Court, Portavogie

Miss M McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) the outcome of the enforcement action, taken under Article 11, relating to the pumping station at New Court, Portavogie; and (ii) what steps will be taken to bring the station and the sewerage system up to adoption standards.

(AQW 13876/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that an Article 11 Enforcement Notice has been served on the developer in relation to New Court Portavogie. Article 11 and other provisions of the Private Streets (NI) Order 1980 enable the Department to require the person responsible for constructing private street works to bring them up to standard or recover costs from them if DRD/NIW undertakes remedial work. Quotations for remedial works to the pumping station and sewerage system have been obtained. Subject to final approvals, NIW intends to commence upgrade works before the end of September 2012 and to have the work completed during this financial year. NIW continues to work closely with its counterparts in Roads Service to bring the outstanding issues within the sewerage system and particularly the pumping station in this development to a conclusion.

Translink: Finances

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans are in place to address the anticipated deficit in Translink's finances over the next three years.

(AQO 2428/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have commenced preparatory work on their Corporate Plan which covers the three year period up to 2015/16. Translink has identified anticipated deficits in its plans for the next two years but will be concentrating initially on how to address the position for next year, in liaison with my officials. Careful consideration is required before deciding on the most appropriate way forward. It is too early to speculate at this stage on what the outcomes might be.

In developing a Corporate Plan and ensuring it achieves a balanced position, Translink has to take account of all relevant factors. This includes funding assumptions, revenue generation and costs. Some gains will be made by continuing to increase efficiency. Other options which need to be considered include services and ways to reduce the cost of delivering those services. On the income side Translink have to take account of the impact of decisions on fare revenue from passengers, as well as funding from the taxpayer in the form of the budget given to the Department.

I recognise that the funding position for Translink in the next two years is constrained. The position in the third year is less clear cut as it is beyond the scope of the current Spending Review.

My Department is now working closely with the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit of the Department of Finance and Personnel in carrying out an efficiency review which will also assist with the deliberations. The Committee for Regional Development will be fully engaged during this process and kept informed as plans are progressed. It is important to recognise the plans being drawn up will require time to develop and will be subject to change but I am confident that a resolution can be found.

Railways: Waterside Railway Station

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister for Regional Development what is the current status on the provision of a new station or preservation of the old Waterside Railway Station.

(AQO 2433/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink advise that it is working with Ilex to carry out a joint 'Londonderry Railway Station Feasibility Study' in order to identify the preferred location and concept layout of a new or refurbished station. As part of the study, Translink will consider options to continue using the existing location, acquiring and re-using the old station building, which is privately owned, and also a new build option, including consideration of a site in close proximity to the Peace Bridge. It is Translink's intention to hold a public consultation event in Londonderry as part of the decision-making process. The study is expected to be completed around the end of 2012.

The study is being undertaken at this stage so that suitable steps can be taken to protect any identified sites.

It should be emphasised that there is no funding within the current capital programme for a station to be built or refurbished and we need to consider all relevant costs.

Flooding: South Belfast

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the funding and start date for infrastructure upgrade work as a direct response to recent flooding in South Belfast.

(AQO 2434/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I wish to express my sympathy with those householders and businesses who have suffered from the upset, inconvenience and expense of flooding in all parts of Northern Ireland.

I take this issue very seriously and, along with my colleagues who share responsibility for this issue, will continue to play my part to reduce the risk of flooding. This includes continuing to make the case

for investment, whether for my own Departmental responsibilities or others, and pursuing every avenue to obtain funding.

As regards Sicily Park and the surrounding area of South Belfast, NIW is currently progressing a study to determine the best option for future investment in the sewerage infrastructure to minimise the risk of flooding and pollution to watercourses. NIW recently completed a drainage survey of the area and will be meeting with Roads Service and Rivers Agency (the statutory drainage and flood protection authority) later this month to ensure a catchment wide solution.

It is expected that the study will be completed in early 2013 which will enable a preferred solution to be adopted. At that point costs will be clarified and NIW will seek any necessary regulatory or Departmental approvals, including funding.

The proper planning, evaluation of options and viability of complex drainage projects is an integral part of putting solutions in place. Therefore, work to address flood alleviation in the Sicily Park and surrounding area has already begun as a result of NIW having accelerated this element of the wider Glenmachan Scheme programme. This programme will require substantial investment in the future.

Translink: Wi-Fi

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Regional Development when the first live WiFi facilities will be rolled out across Translink.

(AQO 2435/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised that Wi-Fi will be provided on key longer distance Goldline* services from Monday 1 October 2012. This will enable the majority of Goldline customers to avail of this facility. It is hoped that expanded Goldline services will be in place by early 2013 which will also have this facility.

Wi-Fi is already fitted and in operation on Cross-channel bus services.

On the rail side, it is expected that Wi-Fi will be introduced on local rail services by the end of this week, and will be introduced on Enterprise services from mid-October 2012 onwards.

Railways: Larne Railway Station

Mr Beggs asked the Minister for Regional Development whether Translink is currently proposing any additional capital investment for Larne Train Station.

(AQO 2436/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink advise that capital works are underway to extend the platforms at both Larne Stations.

The platform extension works at Larne Town are complete and the platform works at Larne Harbour are due to start on 6 October and last for 4 weeks.

The works are being undertaken to facilitate the use of the 6-car train sets on the railway line.

I am pleased that the Executive's investment of close to £150m on the New Trains programme will be of major benefit to rail users on this line.

A28 Armagh East Link

Mr Irwin asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will consider an alternative route for the new East Link road in Armagh given the concerns of residents opposed to the current proposal.

(AQO 2437/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise the Member that I am aware of the concerns of the local community in relation to the impact of the A28 East Link Road. However, I am also aware the selection of the preferred route for this scheme, which follows the line of Ardmore Road for a distance of 460 metres

and was made public at an information event in March 2007, followed the careful assessment of several corridor options.

On 27 January 2012, officials from my Department's Roads Service met with local residents, yourself, Councillor Thomas O'Hanlon and Councillor Gareth Wilson, to describe the proposal and explain the assessments, including the need to demonstrate a satisfactory economic appraisal that led to the selection of the Preferred Route. Officials also explained that there is still much to be done to progress this scheme, including completing the detailed design and the publication of an Environmental Statement, along with the Direction Order and Vesting Order, and the potential for a Public Inquiry.

These Statutory Procedures will provide an opportunity for anyone with an interest in the scheme to formally record their views, including objections, and have their opposition considered by an independent Inspector, should the Department decide a public inquiry is required.

I can assure you that all concerns raised will be carefully considered and officials, from Roads Service, will continue to be available to meet with those with concerns to discuss the potential impacts of the scheme.

Flood Prevention

Ms Lo asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has had any discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development regarding the role of the Rivers Agency in the potential alleviation of flooding in certain areas through drainage diversions to rivers and watercourses.

(AQO 2438/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Rivers Agency is the statutory arterial drainage and flood defence authority for Northern Ireland and my Department and Northern Ireland Water (NIW) have ongoing contact with Rivers Agency on a range of issues. For example, as a matter of due process, NIW will seek Consent to Discharge from the Rivers Agency where NIW are seeking to discharge storm water to a river or watercourse. NIW also works with the Rivers Agency to promote joint projects where work is required to NIW and Rivers Agency assets to deliver an overall solution.

The Executive-commissioned review of the response to the recent flooding incidents is currently ongoing and I look forward to seeing its recommendations to improve co-ordination and efficiency across all government agencies.

Rathlin Island

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what work he has done this year in regard to improving the quality of life of residents living on Rathlin Island.

(AQO 2439/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Through the Rathlin Ministerial Forum which I chair work is ongoing with the Rathlin Community Development Association and other Departments and local bodies to deliver the Executive's commitment in the Rathlin Island Policy to ensure the sustainability of island life and maintain a vibrant island community.

The forum meets twice a year to monitor progress against the strategic objectives set out in the Action Plan and I will be chairing the next meeting in late October to review recent progress. At the last forum meeting in April this year I confirmed that work was about to commence on a review of the Action Plan as required by the Rathlin Island Policy. This work is ongoing and working with the Islanders will review and refresh the Plan to reflect changing circumstances.

The Forum meetings provide the islanders with the opportunity to have face to face discussions with senior officials from relevant Government Departments on issues that affect them on a day to day basis.

To date this has helped build relationships and provided opportunities for joined-up working which has brought significant successes for the islanders. Recent joint working between DRD, DSD and DOE helped overcome planning issues and ensured that approval for the social housing scheme on the island was not delayed.

My Department provides ongoing support for the Rathlin Island ferry service. Under the current six year contract the Department will provide £3.8m, or approximately £630,000 per annum, until 2014.

This financial support has borne tangible results, with significant benefit to the island's economy. For example, in 2009 the current operator was enabled to introduce an additional passenger-only vessel onto the route. As a result of this Government support for the Rathlin ferry service passenger numbers have increased from 37,000 in 2000/01 to over 80,000 in 2011/12, indicating a major increase in tourist interest on the island. In turn, this has delivered significant economic benefits, including increased employment, in a geographically isolated location where job opportunities are limited.

A1 Roundabout: Hillsborough

Mrs Hale asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on any planned developments to alleviate the traffic problems associated with the A1 Dual Carriageway junction at Hillsborough Roundabout.

(AQO 2440/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service has considered a number of options to improve the capacity of the existing Hillsborough roundabout, at the junction of the A1 Hillsborough Bypass with the B77 Lisburn Road.

Roads Service officials have advised that they met with you, other public representatives and residents from Halftown and Culcavy on 10 February 2012 to discuss the feasibility of installing part-time traffic signals at this roundabout in order to minimise delays in the morning peak. I understand from officials that there was a less than positive response to this proposal.

You may also be aware that this issue was informally discussed with the Rt. Hon Jeffrey Donaldson MP on 13 April 2012, at a general meeting with Mr Donaldson, attended by Roads Service officials. In addition, I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit Hillsborough with you on 25 June 2012 to observe, at first hand, the problems faced at this junction by both the local and wider community.

Roads Service understands that, as a result of the meeting in April, Mr Donaldson is planning to arrange a meeting with local representatives and local officials, to discuss the proposal to signalise the roundabout. To date, this meeting has not taken place. However, I believe it will represent an important step forward in fully debating the proposal and deciding on the best way forward.

If you consider that a meeting with Roads Service to discuss this matter would be beneficial you should contact Mr John Irvine, Divisional Roads Manager, Roads Service Eastern Division to arrange suitable date.

Footpaths

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development what actions his Department has taken to address the gaps in legislation regarding responsibility for the gritting of footpaths.

(AQO 2441/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the Member will be aware, there is no statutory duty on my Department's Roads Service or on Councils to salt or clear snow and ice from footways. Roads Service clears ice and snow from carriageways under the 1993 Roads Order legislation. While new legislation may be necessary in the future, it is not an option that I am actively pursuing at present.

The Member may recall that following heavy snowfalls and prolonged periods of wintry weather in previous years, it was generally accepted by the Assembly that Roads Service should, where possible, enlist the help of other agencies, such as district councils, to help clear busy town centre footways of snow and ice. It was envisaged that the best way of salting busy town centre footways in prolonged

freezing conditions would be a partnership between Roads Service and Councils, with Roads Service supplying the salt and the Councils supplying the plant and labour to spread it.

In an attempt to facilitate such agreements, Roads Service held discussions with all Councils during last year's winter season, and as a result, I am happy to confirm that as of January 2012, the majority of Councils had agreed a Memorandum of Understanding or exchanged letters agreeing local arrangements for the removal of ice and snow from town centre footways during severe winter weather. A small number of Councils have indicated that they are unlikely to agree to such arrangements. However, Roads Service will continue its efforts to try to bring these Councils on board with this initiative.

I believe the best way to deal with this matter is through the partnering arrangements that have been offered and agreed by the majority of Councils.

Department for Social Development

Replacement of Reversible Windows

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development whether an Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on any proposal to change the criteria for the replacement of reversible windows.

(AQW 13780/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): Reversible windows that are currently installed in Housing Executive stock will not be replaced under the double glazing programme if they are in good condition. Only those reversible windows that are in poor condition and warrant replacement will be removed and replaced with casement style windows.

Therefore, as this is an operational decision for the Housing Executive, based on the condition of the window and not a policy matter an equality impact assessment is not required.

Employment and Support Allowance Refusal Decisions

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development how many Employment and Support Allowance refusal decisions have been overturned at the point of Mandatory Consideration in each of the last three years.

(AQW 13836/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information requested is set out in the table below:

Year	Decisions reconsidered in customer favour upon receipt of an appeal
April 10 to March 11	635
March 11 to April 12	685
April 12 to August 12	341
Total	1661

Local Area Priority Scheme in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has given the Housing Executive permission to install double glazing under the Local Area Priority Scheme in North Down.

(AQW 13849/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that Local Area Priority schemes (LAPs) were a mechanism adopted by them to help identify and prioritise planned maintenance schemes at a local level. However, given the introduction of the Programme for Government (PFG) target that all Housing

Executive properties should have double glazing installed by 2015, the need for double glazing schemes to be programmed through LAPs has been superseded by the Housing Executive's adoption of double glazing as one of their investment priorities across Northern Ireland.

They have developed a programme to meet the PFG target and, with regards to North Down, have three double glazing schemes due to start in the autumn of 2012 in the following areas of North Down:

- Lisnabreen and Clanmorris, Bangor
- Whitehill, Bangor
- Rathgill and Kilcooley, Bangor
- Loughview, Holywood

Any remaining double glazing installation required in the borough will be programmed for 2013/14 or 2014/15.

Councillors Employed by Community Organisations

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development to detail (i) the Councillors that have been employed in each of the last five years by community organisations which were in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal funding; (ii) the organisations which employed the Councillors; and (iii) the length of employment in each organisation.

(AQW 13883/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Please see the table attached at Annex A, which provides the requested information.

ANNEX A

AQW 13883/11-15 - COUNCILLORS EMPLOYED BY COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS IN RECEIPT OF NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL FUNDING

Organisation	Name Of Councillor	Year (2008/09 - 2012/13)
Galliaugh Development Trust	Elisha McCallion (nee McLaughlin)	2008/2009 - 2010/2011
Glen Development Initiative	Maeve McLaughlin	2008/2009 - 2012/2013
Hillcrest House	Gerry Maclochlainn	2008/2009 - 2012/2013
Bogside & Brandywell Initiative	Kevin Campbell	2008/2009 - 2012/2013
Waterside Area Partnership	Drew Thompson	2008/2009 - 2012/2013
Greater Turf Lodge Residents Assoc. / Ardmonagh Family & Community Grp.	Janice Austin	2008/2009 -2012/2013
Clonard Neighbourhood Development Association	Deirdre Hargey	2011/2012 – 2012/2013
South City Resource and Development Centre	Robert Stoker	2008/2009 – 2012/2013
Lower North Belfast Community Council	Ian Crozier	2008/2009

Hotel Type Hinges on Windows

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Social Development what are the benefits of 'hotel' type hinges on windows that led to their initial adoption by the Housing Executive.

(AQW 13907/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In 2006 the Housing Executive introduced fully reversible hinges across all of its stock. The "hotel hinge" is a variant of this and is produced by the same manufacturer. It was introduced into the Housing Executive's windows programme in January/February 2010 for all first and second floor situations following internal approvals to vary the specification.

Whilst this hinge is of the same quality, dimensional configuration, and has identical features to the fully reversible hinge it has the following benefits:-

- The integral restrictor provides for initial restrictions at 100mm and 200mm as per relevant standards, there is however, a reverse catch and turn lever (hold open) mechanism integrated with the restrictor that maintains all of the required safety features on the "open out" of the opening vent, but allows the user importantly to close the window with a "one-handed" operation.
- Window Opening Vent is restricted at the intervals as stated and can be "held restricted" with the turn lever as stated. Even if the window opening vent is fully reversed, the subsequent closure will default with two re-engagements of the restrictor, the full closure is undertaken by simply pulling the window with one hand.
- The turn lever/hold open device is the critical component that distinguishes the two hinges – both, however, contribute the highest possible safety features as standard and have been used extensively across the Housing Executive's stock with no recorded issues.

The "hotel hinge" is being retained for the medium/high rise stock. The Housing Executive is satisfied that the replacement hinge proposed for the low rise stock is of good quality and meets their needs though it will require "two handed operation".

Pensioners' Bungalows at Bloomfield Estate, Bangor

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the proposed transfer of ownership of the pensioners' bungalows at Bloomfield Estate, Bangor to a Housing Association.

(AQW 13950/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Oaklee Housing Association is currently finalising its response to the Housing Executive transfer brief for Bloomfield bungalows. This will allow the formal consultation exercise to commence around November of this year, with an on-site start, subject to a positive tenant vote, envisaged in May 2013.

This is a challenging timeframe and remains predicated on no major issues arising during the formal consultation period.

Squatting

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development what plans he has to change the law on squatting given the recent changes in England and Wales.

(AQW 13962/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have no plans to change the law on squatting.

Squatting is already a criminal offence in Northern Ireland under Article 10 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. A person guilty of an offence under this Article is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (£5,000) or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months or to both.

Ministerial Papers

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how many papers, which have been approved by the Minister, have yet to be placed on the agenda for an Executive meeting, including (i) the date on which the papers were circulated to ministerial colleagues; (ii) the subject matter of each paper; and (iii) the consequences of a delay in securing Executive approval.

(AQW 13967/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The content of Executive papers and all aspects of Executive business are confidential.

Work Capability Assessment

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Social Development what factors determine whether a person undergoing a Work Capability Assessment is examined by an Atos doctor or by an Atos nurse.

(AQW 13990/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As part of the process, customers undergoing the Work Capability Assessment complete a Limited Capability for Work questionnaire (ESA50). The information contained in the completed questionnaire is used to determine whether a face-to-face assessment is required and whether the examination is carried out by a doctor or a nurse.

Work Capability Assessment

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what elements of Professor Harrington's Year 2 Recommendations on the Work Capability Assessment have been implemented; and which are yet to be implemented.

(AQW 13991/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In his second independent report on the Work Capability Assessment, laid before the Assembly in November 2011, Professor Malcolm Harrington made 23 recommendations, of which 12 have already been completed and work is ongoing to implement the remaining 11 as soon as possible.

- The elements which have been implemented relate to changes in the Atos Healthcare Logic Integrated Medical Assessment (LiMA) system, Atos training and wording of descriptors.
- The remaining recommendations relate to customer research, evaluation of previous recommendations, proposed changes to descriptors and the customer journey.

In terms of the remaining recommendations, work has commenced on the evaluation process and the type of customer research required. The Social Security Agency are also engaged with the Department for Work and Pensions pilot schemes that are examining changes to descriptors, the customer journey, etc.

Double Glazing in Housing Executive Properties

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister for Social Development to list the number of Housing Executive properties in (i) Banbridge; (ii) Portadown; and (iii) Lurgan which have yet to be double glazed, broken down by (a) older person's dwellings; and (b) non-older person's dwellings; and for an estimated timescale by which these works will be completed.

(AQW 13996/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested because the Housing Executive does not designate properties as older person's dwelling or non-older person's dwellings.

However, the overall number of properties that still require double glazing for each District is:

Portadown	298
Lurgan	1494
Banbridge	529

The Housing Executive has advised that a scheme for 313 dwellings in Lurgan is currently programmed to commence in late October 2012 with an estimated completion date of August 2013. The remainder of the dwellings will be addressed over the next two years through a new double glazing contract being introduced by the Housing Executive in January 2013.

Future of Passported Benefits

Mr Durkan asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on his Department's analysis of the future of passported benefits.

(AQW 14047/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is currently providing assistance with the analysis of the impact of Universal Credit on a range of passported benefits. This information will help my Executive colleagues develop new eligibility criteria and delivery models for those passported benefits for which they have responsibility. I am unable to provide an update on those passported benefits that are within the purview of other Executive Departments.

A number of passported benefits, which currently form part of the regulated Social Fund, are administered by the Social Security Agency. The benefits are Cold Weather Payments, Funeral Payments and Sure Start Maternity Grants. New eligibility criteria have been proposed and are being evaluated to assess the impact on Universal Credit customers in Northern Ireland.

Grants to Help Small Businesses

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department has grants available to help small businesses.

(AQW 14089/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Small businesses can receive grants through the Urban Development Grant (UDG) Programme. The UDG programme aims to encourage job creation and private sector investment by providing a grant to assist in the development of derelict, vacant or underused land and properties in town and city centres, neighbourhood renewal areas and, within Belfast, along designated arterial routes. Applications are open under UDG for programmes in towns and cities in Northern Ireland with populations above 4.5 thousand. Occasionally small businesses may benefit from Shop Front Improvements funded through the Restore and Revitalisation Programmes being rolled out, which aim to improve trading conditions in town and city centres.

Grants for Community Groups

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development for an up to date list of the grants available from his Department for community groups.

(AQW 14152/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The following are grants which are available from the Department for Social Development for community groups:

- Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund
- Areas at Risk
- Small Pockets of Deprivation (administered by NIHE on behalf of the Department)
- Regional Infrastructure for the Voluntary and Community Sector
- Support for Volunteering
- Community Investment Fund
- Women's Centre Childcare Fund
- Innovation Fund
- Modernisation Fund

Golden Share Scheme

Mr A Maginness asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the development of the Golden Share scheme to assist residents in proposed redevelopment areas to tackle the problem of negative equity.

(AQW 14155/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The “Golden Share” scheme was introduced to support owner occupiers living in areas which are undergoing major redevelopment or regeneration. This initiative provides the opportunity to purchase a new home in the community post regeneration, with any difference in the value of their old and new home held by the Housing Association building the new housing. Those wishing to avail of the scheme in a regeneration area should make an application to the relevant Housing Association.

The scheme has been piloted in an area of regeneration in Carrickhill, Belfast with one owner occupier availing of this Shared Equity option.

Negative equity is an issue which affects all sectors of the community. Although the policy itself does not compensate for any loss arising from negative equity, it may indirectly mitigate the problems facing those owner occupiers wishing to remain in their community post regeneration.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Social Development why the Welfare Reform Bill has not yet been introduced in the Assembly; and whether he can give a commitment that this delay will not result in any breach of parity.

(AQW 14170/11-15)

Mr McCausland: It is normal practice for a Northern Ireland Social Security Bill to be introduced as soon as possible after the corresponding Westminster Bill has received Royal Assent, in this case, the Welfare Reform Act 2012 received Royal Assent on 8th March 2012.

The Department for Work and Pensions accept that some delay between the Great Britain Act and the corresponding Northern Ireland Act is inevitable, as Northern Ireland legislation can only be introduced to the Assembly after the Great Britain legislation has achieved Royal Assent and a number of pre-introductory legislative processes are completed. On previous occasions, this delay was not regarded as a breach of parity as our aim has always been to facilitate the passage of the Bill and obtain Royal Assent in as timely a fashion as possible here.

I should explain that the pre-introductory legislative processes include seeking confirmation from the Departmental Solicitor's Office and the Attorney General that any proposed Bill is within the legislative competence of the Assembly, as well as seeking the consent of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on the inclusion of provisions which deal with excepted matters under section 4(1) of, and Schedule 2 to, the Northern Ireland Act 1998. These approvals and consents have all been received and I can confirm that I hope to receive agreement from the Executive to introduce the Bill to the Assembly shortly.

ASM Howarth Report into the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development why the ASM Howarth report into the Northern Ireland Housing Executive of July 2012 has yet to be published.

(AQW 14209/11-15)

Mr McCausland: On 3 July 2012, I made a statement to the Northern Ireland Assembly about the concerns I had regarding contract management by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive following an investigation into their management of response maintenance contracts, conducted by ASM.

In the interests of due process, it would not be appropriate to publicly release ASM's investigation until it has been fully considered by the Department and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Further

there are matters contained within the investigation which are of a commercial nature which might fall for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to take forward through their contractual arrangements.

Housing Executive Properties: Asbestos

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department will provide financial support to people who have purchased Housing Executive properties and have then found asbestos present in the fabric of the building.

(AQW 14235/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that, in relation to current owners of former Housing Executive properties, any grant aid that could be considered towards the removal of high risk asbestos from such properties would only be through discretionary grant. Discretionary grants however can only be considered where there are clear exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, any grant aid would be subject to a means test being undertaken on individual owners to determine their ability to contribute towards the decontamination works, and would also require that the decontamination works be certified.

Welfare Reform Bill

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on discussions he has had with the Department for Work and Pensions in relation to identifying areas of flexibility which may exist for the Welfare Reform Bill.

(AQO 2459/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I recognise the need to ensure that the reforms proposed in the Welfare Reform Bill reflect the particular needs of Northern Ireland. Any potential areas of flexibilities have to be considered within the context of maintaining parity with Great Britain.

I continue to maintain regular contact with Department for Work and Pensions Ministers on all issues arising from Welfare Reform including the particular needs of Northern Ireland. Indeed, I met with Lord Freud in London today (18 September) as part of that ongoing dialogue in relation to the flexibilities required for Northern Ireland.

In parallel, with this Ministerial dialogue, my officials are working with their counterparts from the Department for Work and Pensions to identify and explore the detailed feasibility of delivering meaningful flexibilities that will benefit the people of Northern Ireland.

The potential flexibilities that have been identified so far have been tabled for discussion with Executive colleagues on the Sub-Committee on Welfare Reform.

Housing Strategy

Mr Rogers asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Housing Strategy.

(AQO 2462/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My officials are putting the finishing touches on the draft Housing Strategy which will be a comprehensive document available for wide-ranging consultation in October 2012 at the latest. Much time and care has gone into the drafting of this document to reflect the importance of getting such a strategic piece of work right. This has delayed publication a little beyond the original timescale of spring this year.

Housing Executive: PEDU Review

Mr Hamilton asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit's review of the Housing Executive's delivery of new social housing.

(AQO 2463/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU) of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) has been engaged to review management and delivery of the Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

I asked for this work to be undertaken to provide me with the necessary assurances that robust and effective systems are in place to deliver this important programme. I have also asked that cost and delivery implications of the current design and specification standards for social housing stock are reviewed.

Whilst annual targets are being met, I have concerns about the risk attached to some aspects of the Housing Executive's programme delivery and I want to see these much improved.

The review commenced in July with interviews of key stakeholders to identify any process difficulties that might need to be addressed. PEDU will also examine good practice in other jurisdictions to identify good practice that might be adopted locally.

PEDU will submit their final report to my officials within the next few weeks. On consideration of the report findings I will instruct my officials to put together an action plan setting out how I intend to take forward recommendations.

Belfast City Centre

Ms S Ramsey asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on proposals to deal with the blight which exists in parts of Belfast City Centre.

(AQO 2464/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department recognises that the regeneration of Belfast City Centre is far from complete. During the last decade we began the process of reversing the 30 years of under-investment with developments such as the £400m invested at Victoria Square and the £28m public investment in the renewal of 13 of the main shopping streets. Due to the impact of the current recession our plans to attract further investment in the city centre are moving forward more slowly than we would have wished in common with other cities across the country. However, we continue to plan for the future upturn in the economy and I am pleased to announce that the Bank Square renewal scheme will commence in April 2013 with an investment of £4.4 million by the Executive. This is good news for the city centre and the construction sector and builds on the £800,000 which I have already committed to the design of a scheme to renew the Donegall Square area. I will also be announcing later this month proposals for bringing forward development sites in the Northside of the city centre which aim to attract private investment to complement the £250 million investment by the University of Ulster at its York Street campus.

Housing Executive: Maintenance Contracts

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the recent Audit Office report on the Northern Ireland Housing Executive Management of Response Maintenance Contracts, particularly in relation to Red Sky.

(AQO 2465/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I welcome this NIAO report which focuses on four main areas:-

- Management of response maintenance contracts including termination of the Red Sky contracts;
- Inspection of repairs and maintenance work;
- Whistleblowing and complaints; and
- Contract management and governance in the Housing Executive

It is inappropriate for me to comment in detail in advance of the DFP Minister's considered response following the Public Accounts Committee hearing on Wednesday 12 September at which my Permanent Secretary and the Chief Executive of the Housing Executive gave evidence. The report focuses on the seriousness of problems identified in the management of specific response maintenance contracts

against the significant level of expenditure and finds that the problems identified are indicative of wider governance deficiencies.

The issue of Housing Executive contract management is an area where I have had considerable concerns and I made a statement to the Assembly on 4 July advising that I intended to introduce special accountability measures with immediate effect that must bring about improvements efficiently and effectively. These measures enhance significantly the current oversight arrangements between my Department and the Housing Executive.

My Department is committed to working with the Housing Executive to implement the changes necessary to improve governance and contract management.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Mr Lynch asked the Minister for Social Development what measures he is putting in place to deal with the problem of anti-social activity which affects many housing estates.

(AQO 2466/11-15)

Mr McCausland: While the Housing Executive and registered housing associations already have a range of powers at their disposal for dealing with anti-social activity, my Department has been working with social landlords to improve their capacity in this area. My Department is developing proposals to place anti-social tenants on notice that, if they unreasonably refuse to engage with any support that the landlord may offer, the landlord will take immediate steps to repossess their homes.

While there are no easy solutions, my Department has been involved in delivering training for social housing landlords on dealing with anti-social behaviour and I aim to ensure that social landlords will be in a position to show a "Yellow Card" to anti-social tenants who persist in their behaviour.

Anti-social behaviour is one of the issues that will be addressed in the new Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Community and Voluntary Sectors: Government Policy

Ms Ruane asked the Minister for Social Development for his assessment of the importance of the role of the community and voluntary sectors in influencing and examining the impact of government policies.

(AQO 2467/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My assessment is that the voluntary and community sector, including sporting and faith based organisations has a significant and important role to play in influencing and examining the impact of government policies. Effective engagement on key policy issues presents a valuable opportunity to maximise input from the voluntary and community sector and the need for such engagement is embedded within the Concordat for Relationships between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector, which has been endorsed by the NI Executive.

- Concordat Action Team established on issue of voluntary sector engagement in policy development and impact.
- Action Team has members from government and voluntary and community sector
- Action team has met on four occasions.
- Report due early 2013
- Participative policy development leads to better policy

Housing Executive: Anti-Social Behaviour

Mr Lunn asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the Housing Executive's policy on dealing with anti-social, provocative and offensive behaviour of tenants towards other tenants.

(AQO 2468/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am concerned about the serious problems that can be caused by anti-social behaviour. While there are no easy solutions, I aim to ensure that the Housing Executive uses all the powers at its disposal to deal with this issue.

The Housing Executive is required by statute to publish its policies and procedures in relation to anti-social behaviour and the latest policy statement was published in January 2011. The policy statement acknowledges that every individual is entitled to live in peace within their neighbourhood and that to provide a quality service, anti-social behaviour must be addressed effectively. The statement commits the Housing Executive to tackling anti-social behaviour wherever it occurs and in whatever form it presents itself. The Housing Executive must respond to instances of anti-social behaviour whether the complainant is one of its own tenants, a private tenant, an owner occupier or any other person visiting or engaging in a lawful activity within the locality of its property. The Executive is also committed to preventing anti-social behaviour through a range of early intervention support and diversionary measures.

The policy statement is available upon request from the Housing Executive and an electronic version of the statement can be found on their website.

Housing: Dampness Problems

Mr Irwin asked the Minister for Social Development what action is being taken on the problems facing residents of older Housing Executive and housing association homes in combating condensation, damp and mould growth on interior walls.

(AQO 2469/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Mould growth is the main symptom of condensation and may be confused for damp. It is best treated by regular ventilation of the property. Where the Housing Executive is aware of condensation in a property the tenant will be advised that it can be prevented by:-

- Allowing air to circulate throughout the property by opening doors occasionally
- Using extractor fans in kitchens and bathrooms
- Opening windows when cooking
- Not blocking air vents
- Drying clothes outside if possible
- Ensuring there is ventilation in the property, especially bedrooms, during the night.

Reports of damp are assessed by the Housing Executive's maintenance staff and contractors on a case by case basis and the necessary remedial action is taken. Typical examples of work carried out would be:-

- Damp proof course
- Installation of extractor fans in kitchens
- Checking of water pipes in kitchens and bathrooms
- Cleaning of outside guttering to prevent water penetration
- Inspection of roofs and external doors

Every Housing Executive tenant is provided with a tenant's handbook at the start of their tenancy which includes advice on condensation. The Housing Executive also has a separate condensation advice leaflet which is available in all of their District offices and also online at www.nihe.gov.uk.

Of those Housing Associations that have reported problems with condensation, damp and mould growth on interior walls, the majority adopt a variety of measures used to combat these problems. These measures range from installing ventilation systems to educating tenants on improving air circulation in their properties.

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