

Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

Friday 11 October 2013

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Written Answers to Questions

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Suggested amendments or corrections will be considered by the Editor.
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to arrive not later than two weeks after publication of this report.

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Ní Chuilín, Ms Carál (North Belfast)
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Spratt, Jimmy (South Belfast)
Storey, Mervyn (North Antrim)
Swann, Robin (North Antrim)
Weir, Peter (North Down)
Wells, Jim (South Down)
Wilson, Sammy (East Antrim)

Northern Ireland Assembly

Friday 11 October 2013

Written Answers to Questions

Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

Visit to the USA

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail (i) the total cost of their recent visit to the USA; and (ii) who accompanied them on their visit.

(AQW 2637/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister): The cost of our delegation's visit to the United States in September 2011 is broken down as follows:

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| Flights | £38,388.33 & \$4,080.00 |
| Accommodation | £9,519.71 |
| Car Hire | \$13,665.76 |
| Subsistence | £1,059.85 |

We were accompanied on our visit by five members of staff, two of whom are Special Advisers.

Ulster Covenant Parade

Mrs D Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the Parades Commission's determination, for their assessment of the behaviour witnessed outside St. Patrick's Church, North Belfast and St. Matthews Church, East Belfast during the Ulster Covenant Parade on 29 September 2012.
(AQO 2653/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The right to assembly, the right to express cultural identity, the right to protest and the rights of those in and living in proximity to parades are at the heart of the proposals agreed at Hillsborough on parades and protests. We are convinced that the principles of mutual respect and tolerance are key to resolving the issue of disputed parades and counter-parades.

Both paraders and protesters should behave in a respectable and dignified manner, and the rule of law should be observed.

Departmental Press Office: Irish News

Mr Flanagan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether there is a policy or understanding within their Department's press office that not all Minister's will engage with the Irish News.

(AQW 18901/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: All OFMDFM press releases are distributed to all media outlets. We routinely undertake a broad range of interviews with all sections of the media, be it print, broadcast or online. Journalists are invited to departmental events.

Cohesion, Sharing and Integration Strategy

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

(AQO 3228/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Good Relations Strategy “Together: Building a United Community” is available online.

Total Spend on Hospitality by the Department

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what was the total spend on hospitality by their Department in 2011/12.

(AQW 19483/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The total spend on hospitality by our Department in 2011/12 was £160,864.

A significant proportion of the Department's hospitality spend relates to activities in the Department's offices in Washington DC and Brussels. The role of these offices is to support Northern Ireland's engagement with North America and the EU and to raise the positive profile of Northern Ireland.

South America: Visit

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they plan to visit South America during 2013 to promote investment in Northern Ireland.

(AQO 3350/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: As part of our work to build relationships with the world's leading economies, we visited Brazil in March and undertook a programme of activities in São Paulo, Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro to develop economic, political, educational, sporting, tourism and cultural links between Brazil and Northern Ireland.

Our visit laid the foundations for a follow-up trade mission to Brazil in May which was led by our colleague, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Good Relations Indicators Update

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the publication of the latest Good Relations Indicators Update.

(AQO 3353/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We welcome the findings that indicate that relations have improved between the two main traditions here. We are committed to improving relations and whilst the statistics included in the latest report are not the solution, they will inform future policy decisions.

It is important that we do not become complacent and we are committed to continue to improve on this trend and achieve our vision of a united and shared community particularly given the recent difficulties that have played out on the street.

We will continue to work towards creating the conditions to ensure that all sections of our community are empowered to contribute positively and have opportunities to learn from each other and increase understanding of each other's traditions.

The report's findings will enable us to progress on an evidenced based approach which will allow us to build on a shared and better future for everyone.

Peace IV Funding: Brussels

Ms Ruane asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to outline any discussions they had in Brussels in regard to Peace IV funding.

(AQO 3405/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We travelled to Brussels as negotiations to conclude an agreement on the EU budget for 2014-2020 entered a critical stage.

We used the opportunity to raise key issues of importance at the highest levels within the European Union.

One of the issues that required our presence in Brussels was to make a final push to ensure inclusion of financial provision for a possible PEACE IV. We raised this issue at a number of high level meetings, including with the President of the Parliament and the President of the Council. Our request received a positive response and built on the considerable efforts already made on this issue.

We are therefore very pleased to be able to indicate that the current position is that provision has been included for 150 million Euros for a PEACE IV Programme.

The European Parliament must give its approval. However, it is a significant step forward and we will continue to work with the European Parliament to secure its final agreement

Visit to Brazil

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what they hope to achieve as a result of their planned visit to Brazil.

(AQO 3408/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our visit to Brazil was part of our work to build relationships with the world's leading economies. We undertook a programme in São Paulo, Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro.

Our objectives included developing economic, political, educational, sporting, tourism and cultural links with Brazil.

We took part in a series of engagements with political and business leaders. We also had the opportunity to deliver speeches at one of Brazil's most prestigious universities and at the Brazilian Centre for International Relations.

Given the importance of football in Brazilian society, we launched a George Best exhibition at São Paulo Football Club that emphasised his international reputation as one of the greatest players in the history of the game.

We also hosted receptions to promote Northern Ireland as a tourism destination and as a location with a thriving culture and arts sector.

Our visit laid the foundations for a follow-up trade mission to Brazil in May which was led by our colleague, the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Hong Kong Government Secretary for Finance

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to AQW 17449/11-15, what potential initiatives were identified with the Hong Kong Government's Secretary for Finance.

(AQW 20152/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We discussed a number of proposals, including possible trade missions of interest to the Hong Kong government, collaborations in education and research and development programmes and potential trade opportunities for various NI export industries.

Following the meeting, we pursued these ideas with Invest NI and, as a result, it has agreed to bring a trade mission to Hong Kong later this year.

Desegregation of the Education System

Mr McCarthy asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which of their Department's policies promotes the desegregation of the education system; and what are the timescales for the realisation of these policies.

(AQW 20162/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Our Department does not have responsibility for the education system. Responsibility for managing the education system rests with the Department of Education.

Universal Credit

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) when they will publish the research commissioned by their Department from the Institute for Fiscal Studies, on assessing the impact of Universal Credit on poverty rates in different types of households from now until 2020; and (ii) what assurances they can give that this research will be published before Consideration Stage of the Welfare Reform Bill.

(AQW 20272/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The project entitled 'Poverty in Northern Ireland from 2011 to 2020 – the impact of Universal Credit' is being carried out by the Institute of Fiscal Studies; lead researchers are James Browne, Mike Brewer and Robert Joyce.

The overall research looks at the impact of aspects of Welfare Reform on poverty and child poverty in particular. The two main outputs from the research are two reports, the first of which looks specifically at the impact of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland, broadening the scope to look at its effect on household incomes here more generally and on work incentives.

The second report gives a background on poverty in Northern Ireland and how this compares to the rest of the UK and produces forecasts of poverty rates here for children and working-age adults for each year from 2011-12 to 2015-16 and for 2020-21. The report examines what is driving these trends, in particular examining the impact of tax and benefit changes and developments in the labour market, for example concerning employment and earnings.

The initial report looking at Universal Credit impacts was published on 19 March 2013 and can be found at <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/universal-credit-ni-impact-challenges-report.pdf>.

The second report looking at poverty rates was published on 7 May 2013 and can be found at <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/child-working-age-poverty-ni-2010-2020.pdf>.

Armed Forces Covenant

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for their assessment of the response of the administrations in Great Britain and that of the Northern Ireland Executive with regard to building support for and delivering the Armed Forces Covenant in Northern Ireland.

(AQW 20937/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: It would not be appropriate for the Executive to comment on the response of other administrations as the matter is reserved.

We have already agreed that officials engage with Ministry of Defence officials in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Second Visit to China

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether and when they are planning a second visit to China.

(AQW 21044/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following an invitation from the Chinese Government we visited Beijing in May this year.

Brazil: Businesses and Potential Investors

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many meetings with businesses and potential investors were held during their recent trip to Brazil; and how the success of the trip will be quantified.

(AQW 21102/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Specific detail in relation to potential investors is confidential. However, during our six-day official visit to Brazil, we undertook fourteen separate meetings during which we promoted investment, trade, sport and tourism as well as mutually beneficial relationships with universities.

As part of our engagements, we met the Vice President and Board of Federacao das Industrias do Estado de Sao Paulo (FIESP), Brazil's version of the CBI, in São Paulo. We used that meeting to promote investment and trade opportunities in the São Paulo metropolitan area, which has 22 million inhabitations and is the largest commercial centre in South America. At that meeting we secured support for the trade mission, which the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment Minister will lead to the city in May. We also visited Porto Maravilha, the biggest redevelopment project in the Southern Hemisphere, to promote our expertise in harbour regeneration and to encourage links and an exchange of expertise with Titanic Quarter.

In Brasilia, we had separate meetings with the Brazilian Foreign Minister and the Deputy Trade Minister, where we secured their agreement to support the forthcoming trade mission.

It should be emphasised that this was our first official visit to Brazil, where knowledge of Northern Ireland is limited. Every aspect of our itinerary was aimed at promoting the very best of what we have to offer.

St Patrick's Day Events Funding

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which St Patrick's Day events their Department funds; and how much funding is provided in each case.

(AQW 21156/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDM does not directly fund any St Patrick's Day events. Funding for some activities is available from the Community Relations Council and District Councils if it meets the relevant criteria.

Review of the Flags Protocol

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) for an update on the review of the flags protocol; and (ii) how long the review has been ongoing.

(AQW 21945/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Flags Protocol Working Group was convened in December 2011 with a view to bringing forward recommendations on a revised approach to dealing with issues around flags and emblems.

As you are aware as a member of the group, a draft discussion paper has been produced by the Flags Protocol Working Group and shared with the Good Relations Strategy Cross-Party Working Group. An All-Party Group, chaired by Richard Haass, will consider and make recommendations on matters, including parades and protests; flags, symbols and emblems and related matters; and dealing with the past.

Freedom of Information Requests

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the number of Freedom of Information Requests in their Department which remain outstanding by more than twelve months, including how long each request is outstanding and an explanation for each delay.

(AQW 22813/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Department has no requests outstanding by more than twelve months.

Flags Protocol Working Group

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister on what date the Flags Protocol Working Group last met.

(AQW 22906/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Flags Protocol Working Group last met on 4 April 2012.

An All-Party Group, chaired by Richard Haass, will consider and make recommendations on matters, including parades and protests; flags, symbols and emblems and related matters; and dealing with the past.

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consultation previous junior Ministers had with victims groups about the proposed Peace Building and Conflict Resolution Centre.

(AQW 22923/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There was not a formal consultation process. Junior Ministers met with a wide range of organisations. Records of the detail of these discussions are not kept.

Together: Building a United Community

Mr Copeland asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to list (i) the Executive Ministers; (ii) special advisors; and (iii) civil servants who had (a) a role in the drafting; or (b) sight, prior the afternoon of 9 May 2013, of the document entitled Together: Building a United Community.

(AQW 22938/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Publication of the 'Together: Building a United Community' document was announced on 9 May following finalisation and agreement by us. The document had been under construction within OFMDFM for some time, drawing on inputs from officials and Advisers in OFMDFM, and building on proposals and ideas from Ministers, Advisers, officials in a number of departments and their stakeholders.

The document reflects the consultation on the draft CSI Strategy as well as the work of the All-Party Group on Good Relations.

Together: Building a United Community

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the sports elements of 'Together: Building a United Community' will require participants from a unionist background to experience Gaelic games.

(AQW 23134/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: No participant will be forced to take part in any activity against their wishes.

Removal of Peace Walls

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether the removal of peace walls will be dependent on agreement from communities upon both sides of a wall.

(AQW 23189/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The 10 year programme to reduce and eventually remove all the interface barriers, announced on Tuesday 9 May, is an ambitious target. This will only be achieved by working together with the local community.

No peace walls will be removed without the support and agreement and consent of the communities living around the barriers.

Flag Poles on Government Buildings

Mr Dallat asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister whether they have had any discussions with the Minister of Finance and Personnel regarding his proposals to erect flag poles on some government buildings.

(AQO 4061/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There have been no such discussions.

Strategies for a Shared Future

Mr Ross asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the strategies for a shared future.

(AQO 4068/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We published the new good relations strategy – Together: Building a United Community – on 23 May 2013. In this strategy we agreed a package of significant and strategic actions aimed at building a prosperous, peaceful and safe society which is enriched by diversity and is welcoming to all.

We are committed to providing the necessary leadership through the Executive to ensure that we achieve our vision of a united community, based on equality of opportunity, the desirability of good relations and reconciliation – one which is strengthened by its diversity, where cultural expression is celebrated and embraced and where everyone can live, learn, work and socialise together, free from prejudice, hate and intolerance.

Strategic Support Fund

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which organisations had four or more staff posts funded under the Strategic Support Fund in (i) 2010/11; (ii) 2011/12; (iii) 2012/13; and (iv) 2013/14.

(AQW 23445/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The information requested is detailed in the table below.

| 2010-2011 and 2011-2012* | 2012-2013* | 2013-2014* |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ashton Community Trust | Ashton Community Trust | Ashton Community Trust |
| Corpus Christi Services | Corpus Christi Services | Colin Community Counselling |
| Cunamh | Cunamh | Corpus Christi Services |
| New Life Counselling | Ely Centre | Cunamh |
| NICTT | Holy Trinity | Ely Centre |
| NI Music Therapy Trust | New Life Counselling | FASA |

| 2010-2011 and 2011-2012¹* | 2012-2013* | 2013-2014* |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| NOVA | NOVA | Holy Trinity |
| Relatives for Justice | Relatives for Justice | New Life Counselling |
| Survivors of Trauma | SEFF | NOVA |
| TARA Centre | WAVE | Relatives for Justice |
| WAVE | | SEFF WAVE |

* funding period was 18 months from October 2010 to March 2012

¹ funding period was 18 months from October 2010 to March 2012

* part time staff are included

The Strategic Support Fund (SSF) ceased to operate on 31 March 2013.

The Victims and Survivors Programme 2013/15, administered by the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS), has subsumed all previous funding streams, including the SSF, to take the sector forward and improve the lives of victims and survivors.

Chinese Government: Human Rights

Mr Agnew asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) which members of the Chinese Government they met with on their recent visit to China; (ii) whether they raised the issue of human rights with these members; and (iii) what human rights issues were discussed.

(AQW 23790/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We met with Madam Li Xiaolin, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, Mr Sun Yongfu, Director General of the Ministry of Commerce, Mr Song Tao, the Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Mr Yuan Guiren, Education Minister and we were delighted to renew our friendship with Madam Liu Yandong, recently promoted to Vice Premier.

We raised issues surrounding promoting democracy in private discussion with the government and believe that sharing our experience may be of benefit as the Chinese society opens up to more ideas, although we need to recognise we are very small in size compared to China and that we are starting out on building a relationship. We must respect the cultures and traditions of other countries and we believe we have more chance of influencing policy as our relationship grows.

Links with China and Other BRIC Countries

Mr McElduff asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they plan to work more closely with the Irish Government to further develop political, social, economic, and cultural links with China and the other BRIC countries for the benefit of everyone on the island of Ireland.

(AQW 23913/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: We are increasing our efforts to build relationships with the world's leading economies. This overseas work is starting to pay dividends and we aim to continue to meet influencers and business representatives to promote trade, tourism, inward investment, education, university and government links.

We have met with diplomatic representatives from the Irish and UK embassies and they have been very helpful as we seek to move forward on our International Strategy and engaging with targeted countries.

Band Hall 7 Sports Hall at St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena

Mr Swann asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when the last structural assessment was conducted of the Band Hall 7 Sports Hall at St Patrick's Barracks, Ballymena.

(AQW 24062/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The St Patrick's site was gifted to the Executive under the Hillsborough Agreement to raise funds from the eventual disposal of the site. While security is maintained at the site to protect the buildings, no structural assessments have been carried out on the Band 7 sports hall or any buildings within the former military barracks.

Public Assemblies Parades and Protest Body

Mr Nesbitt asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the funding allocated to the Public Assemblies Parades and Protest Body over the current budgetary period.

(AQW 24220/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: There has been no funding allocated to a "Public Assemblies Parades and Protest Body" over the current budgetary period.

Infrastructure Guarantee Scheme

Mrs Overend asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the eligibility of business for the £40 billion Infrastructure Guarantee Scheme (i) up to the recent announcement of a package of economic measures; and (ii) in the future.

(AQW 24583/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The UK Guarantee Scheme was introduced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in July 2012 and is administered through HM Treasury.

It is a credit enhancement mechanism, used to achieve cheaper project finance for major infrastructure project developments, that may have stalled due to adverse credit conditions. The scheme is particularly applicable to major utility infrastructure projects.

To be eligible, the scale of the proposed investment needs to be significant (no less than tens of millions of pounds) and no other financing solution can be available to the company on acceptable terms. The project is also required to be ready to commence within the current year.

Building a Prosperous and United Community – The Economic Pact has recently indicated that the Guarantee Scheme's eligibility criteria may in future be applied more flexibly. How this will impact on future infrastructure development will depend on the progression of suitable projects but could potentially be of benefit in addressing medium to long term requirements for energy infrastructure.

Protocol for Notifying MLAs When an Executive Minister is Visiting Constituencies

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the protocol for notifying MLAs when an Executive Minister is visiting their constituency.

(AQW 24726/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The procedures agreed by Executive Ministers for notifying MLAs of Ministerial visits within their constituencies were notified to the Speaker on 12 February 2008 and subsequently brought to the attention of the Business Committee at its meeting on 19 February 2008.

Under these procedures, and taking account of the underlying need to protect the safety and security of Ministers and their officials, MLAs should normally be informed of any Ministerial visit to their respective constituencies not less than 24 hours in advance of the visit. Notification of such visits should include as much detail as possible regarding the reason, location and timing of the visit.

Adherence to these procedures is the responsibility of individual Ministers.

Flags Protocol Working Group

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, pursuant to the unanswered priority written question AQW 22906/11-15, which was asked on 10 May 2013, on what date did the Flags Protocol Working Group last meet.

(AQW 24732/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A response to AQ 22906/11-15 issued on 9 October 2013.

Development of International Relations

Mr Dunne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what plans are in place to develop international relations further.

(AQO 4422/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Recent events have created unprecedented international exposure for our local businesses and tourism industry and we recognise the need to capitalise on these opportunities.

The G8 Summit proved to be a resounding success. We established important initial contact with World Leaders and met directly with President Obama, Prime Minister Abe of Japan and Prime Minister Zeidan of Libya to discuss economic and partnership issues.

We had a hugely productive visit to China when we held a series of meetings with senior Chinese Government officials. We also met Senior Ministers from the Indian Government to focus on trade and investment opportunities.

This is significant international activity. The access we have secured to important government and business leaders and influencers is the envy of many other administrations around the world. We now need to realise the potential of these relationships. To this end, we are finalising an International Relations Strategy and plan to share this with Executive colleagues shortly. Parallel to this, we have continued to develop our international priorities. In North America, Europe and Asia we have been proactive in raising our international profile and creating opportunities for trade, investment, tourism and skills development. We will continue this activity to support and promote economic growth.

Together; Building a United Community Strategy

Mr Kinahan asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister which areas are under consideration for the 10 shared campuses as part of their Together; Building a United Community strategy.

(AQW 24968/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: A project design team is working on the implementation process of this commitment. We cannot pre-empt the work of the design team on the areas that may have a shared campus or the schools that may be involved. An announcement will be made in due course.

Upgrade of the A5 Road

Mr McGlone asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, in light of the High Court ruling on 8 April 2013, what discussions they have had with the Minister for Regional Development on the upgrade of the A5 road.

(AQO 3830/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Following the High Court ruling we have had a number of discussions with the Minister for Regional Development on this issue. The Member will be aware of the Minister's statement of 15 April advising of his decision not to appeal the ruling and to initiate a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the scheme on the relevant Special Areas of Conservation. The Executive remains fully committed to the project and we are confident that all necessary assessments will be completed to get the A5 road project back on track.

Project Director of UK City of Culture 2013

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what role (i) their Department; and (ii) the Strategic Investment Board had in the secondment of Mr Dermont McLaughlin as Project Director of UK City of Culture 2013.

(AQW 25192/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: OFMDFM officials approved the Strategic Investment Board business case for the process to appoint a Programme Director on a direct appointment basis.

The Strategic Investment Board recruited Mr Dermot McLaughlin in October 2012 and seconded him to Derry City Council, where he was deployed as its City of Culture Programme Manager until his resignation.

Latitude Report

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister, at the time of the appointment of Mr Matt McNulty as Acting Chair of ILEX, whether their Department was aware of the content of the Latitude Report, which covered his previous role with the Temple Bar Cultural Trust; and what regard was given to that report.

(AQW 25193/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Matt McNulty agreed to act as Chair on behalf of the Ilex Board on a temporary basis in March 2012. The Department was not aware of the Latitude report or its content.

Project Director of UK City of Culture

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why, in the spring of 2013, only one Special Adviser was copied into departmental and Strategic Investment Board emails concerning the resignation of the Project Director of UK City of Culture; and to outline the policy on keeping Special Advisers of both parties informed.

(AQW 25273/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: It is standard practice within the Department and the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) to keep Special Advisers impartially informed on issues. Communication can be through a number of routes depending on circumstances and purpose.

In this case the e-mail was addressed to the lead official who would have communicated with both Private Offices.

Victims and Survivor Service

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what audit has been conducted by, or on behalf of, the Victims and Survivor Service to establish success rates with 'hard to reach' victims.

(AQW 25657/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since opening, the Service has utilised a number of methods to try and reach out to victims and survivors with particular emphasis placed on trying to reach those who have not, for whatever reason, previously come forward to groups or the Northern Ireland Memorial Fund to seek help.

Presentations and conferences have been held with victims groups to make them aware of the schemes available for individuals with particular reference to the individual needs assessment used to determine an individually tailored package of assistance for each person.

Advertisements have been placed in local newspapers to introduce the Service and to note its website and the schemes available.

Information events have been held in Belfast and Dungannon.

Awareness of the Service has also been raised among statutory services.

North/South and East/West Arrangements

Mr Allister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many meetings have been held at (i) Ministerial level; and (ii) official level, with the corresponding Minister or Department (a) in the rest of the UK; and (b) in the Republic of Ireland since May 2007, either under the aegis of the North/South or East/West arrangements, or, otherwise.

(AQW 25838/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Since 2007 there have been one hundred and forty six North South Ministerial Council meetings, including twelve in Plenary and seven in Institutional format, which have been attended by Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive.

There have been twenty eight meetings under the aegis of the British Irish Council attended by Ministers, including twelve at Summit level.

We do not collate information on other bi-lateral meetings which have taken place outside the remit of the NSMC or BIC involving individual Ministers or officials.

Together: Building a United Community

Mr McCallister asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the delivery of the Together: Building a United Community Strategy.

(AQO 4593/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 23 May this year we published the new Good Relations Strategy, Together: Building a United Community.

For the 7 headline actions, design groups have been established to draw up detailed proposals for implementation and to develop projected costs. It is our intention that the plans and proposals that arise from these design groups are robust and can move to the implementation phase as soon as possible.

In addition to the 7 strategic headline actions, we are currently developing the other commitments identified in the Strategy to ensure that we deliver robust actions which will oversee a transformation in our society. There are around 35 additional actions and commitments. To take this work forward, a new United Community Division has been created in OFMDFM.

Implementation of all the actions and commitments will be overseen by a Ministerial Panel, made up of all Executive Ministers and chaired by us.

Sub-groups to the Ministerial Panel will also be established to implement specific actions arising from the Strategy.

Work is also underway to establish a new Equality and Good Relations Commission which will be an independent and statutorily-based organisation to provide advice, and challenge, to all levels of government in terms of improving good relations.

The Panel of Parties has now begun its work to consider parades and protests; flags, symbols and emblems, and related matters; and the past. The Panel is expected to conclude its work by December.

Ten Year Strategy For Children And Young People In Northern Ireland 2006-2016

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister when they will produce the next action plan for the Ten Year Strategy For Children And Young People In Northern Ireland 2006-2016, given that the 2008-2011 Action Plan is now defunct.

(AQW 26266/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The current Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People is due to continue until 2016. Work to further the aims of the Strategy is now being taken forward through the Delivering Social Change framework which seeks to address the linked issues of poverty and improving children's lives. Through Delivering Social Change, we are moving away from plans with long lists of existing activities towards smaller numbers of cross-cutting and strategic objectives which are additional to existing work across government.

In support of this development, the Children and Young Persons Early Action document was published on 14 November 2012. This takes full account of the principles of the Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People including its high level outcomes. It also identifies the key priorities for children and families over the remaining years of the Ten Year Strategy. The Early Action document identifies five priority work programmes focused on (i) early years and early intervention (ii) actions to improve children's early literacy and numeracy skills; (iii) support for services and interventions which protect and support young people through key life transitions; (iv) integrated service delivery (v) joined up planning and commissioning.

The document has been developed to assist key stakeholders in delivering further programmes and initiatives.

Children and Young People's Strategic Indicators

Mr Eastwood asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister why the 'Living in a society which represents their rights' indicator was omitted from the Children and Young People's Strategic Indicators update.

(AQW 26269/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Ten Year Children and Young People's Strategy 2006-2016 'Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge' sets out six high level outcomes against which the Strategy would deliver:

- Healthy
- Economic and environmental well-being
- Enjoying, learning and achieving
- Positive and valued contribution
- Safety and stability
- Living in a society which respects their rights

A set of strategic indicators was developed to measure delivery on the first five outcomes. As set out in the Strategy, the final outcome 'Living in a society which respects their rights' is central to the outcomes framework and delivery of the other five outcomes, for example, delivering improved health outcomes for children and young people would ultimately demonstrate government's intention to work towards a society which respects the rights of the child.

Planning Applications in North Down

Mr Weir asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how many planning applications in North Down are with the Planning Appeals Commission.

(AQW 26370/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent tribunal Non-Departmental Public Body. Given its status, we have asked its Chief Commissioner to provide a response directly to you.

United Youth Programme

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how much the annual stipend will be for participants in the United Youth Programme.

(AQW 26441/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The process of designing the United Community Youth Programme is being taken forward by a design group specifically established to detail proposals and costs for implementation.

Until that work is completed no final decisions will be made on specific aspects of the Programme.

The design group is expected to conclude its work in the next few months and its report will inform Ministerial decisions on the way forward.

Children and Young People Strategy

Mr Lyttle asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what indicators are used to monitor progress on the Children and Young People Strategy.

(AQW 26443/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Ten Year Strategy for Children and Young People – Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge was published in 2006 and set out a shared vision that “all children and young people living in Northern Ireland will thrive and look forward with confidence to the future”

The Strategy identified six high level outcomes against which the Strategy would deliver for children and young people:

- Healthy
- Economic and environmental well-being
- Enjoying, learning and achieving
- Positive and valued contribution
- Safety and stability
- Living in a society which respects their rights

The Children and Young People's Strategic Indicators measure delivery against the first five outcomes and have been monitored annually since the publication of the Strategy in 2006. The latest update was published on 25 September 2013 and can be found at:

<http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/commentary-cyp-strategic-indicators-2012-update-september-2013.pdf>

Social Investment Fund

Mrs D Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the delivery of the Social Investment Fund.

(AQO 4655/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Strategic area plans were received by the Department on 28 February 2013. Each zone submitted economic appraisals for up to ten projects within their area plans. These are currently being considered as part of a comprehensive appraisal process.

Review of Legislation Underpinning the Social Care Regime

Mr Campbell asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what is the expected timescale for the review by the Commissioner for Older People into the legislation underpinning the social care regime.

(AQW 26605/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The research phase of the project will be completed and delivered by the Project Team based in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Queen's University by March 2014, in accordance with the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland's 2013/14 Business Plan. In the three months to June 2014, the Commissioner will consider and may engage on the findings with Age NI and other key stakeholders.

Social Investment Fund

Mr Dunne asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an assessment of the performance of the Social Investment Fund in relation to social enterprises within local communities.

(AQO 4649/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: On 28 February, the 9 Social Investment Fund Steering Groups submitted a total of 89 Projects in their plans for the zones.

The project proposals are now going through a quality assurance review. This will ensure that only the most robust projects and those that will have the most positive impact within their communities are recommended for funding.

Throughout this process our officials have had ongoing engagement with each of the Zones to ensure that their proposals meet the criteria as set out under the Social Investment Fund programme.

As the assessment process is ongoing, it is not possible to comment on the role that social enterprise will have in the delivery of the Fund's objectives.

Victims

Mr D McIlveen asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on their Department's work with seriously injured victims of the Troubles, following historical failures and the real hurt caused by the Eames/Bradley report.

(AQO 4657/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: Over the next two years, £19.7m has been committed to support individual victims' needs. The Victims Support Programme, run by the Victims and Survivors Service, includes Health and Wellbeing, Social Support and Individual Needs.

The programme includes assistance specifically aimed at victims with serious injuries. This support covers a wide range of needs such as help with chronic pain and disability support. Each individual will have a package of assistance tailored to their own particular assessed requirements.

Planning Appeals Commission

Mr Wells asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister for an update on the case load of the Planning Appeals Commission.

(AQO 4650/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Planning Appeals Commission is an independent Tribunal which operates at arm's length from Government and exercises its functions independently of our Department.

OFMDFM holds sponsorship responsibility for the Commission and provides the necessary resources to enable the Commission to meet its commitments. The overall operating budget provided to the Commission is £2,258,000 in the current year.

The Chief Commissioner is responsible for the day to day operation of the Commission and for deployment of its resources to meet the prevailing workload. Our Department has no locus in the Commission's workload scheduling or decision-making.

However, the Chief Commissioner has informed us that the work of the Planning Appeals Commission falls into 2 broad categories – appeals and referred work.

The appeals work involves making independent decisions on appeals against planning decisions made by Departments. The number of appeals in hand at 31 August 2013 was 157, which compares favourably with the 246 figure reported to the Member in reply to an Assembly Question to which we replied on 21 January 2013. This is a significant improvement on the backlog of over 3,000 cases at the end of December 2007.

More detailed information is available from the Commission should the Member require it.

Referred work relates to important cases referred to the Commission, including development plans and major planning applications under Article 31 of the Planning Order. This involves reporting back to Departments – principally the Department of the Environment – following a public inquiry or hearing. Final decisions on referred work are taken by the Departments concerned – again, mainly the Department of the Environment.

The Commission is currently progressing 8 major planning applications under Article 31 of the Planning Order and is preparing its report into the Public Examination of the Northern Area Plan which is programmed for completion at the end of 2013.

We continue to liaise closely with the Commission to ensure that it has the resources it requires to enable it to meet its prevailing workload.

Economic Pact

Mr D Bradley asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister how they intend to utilise the opportunities afforded by the Economic Pact in the coming months.

(AQO 4658/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The Economic Package ‘Building a Prosperous and United Community’ was announced on 14 June and ratified by the Executive on 27 June.

We welcome the pact which we believe will provide us with additional tools to rebalance our economy. Many of the measures in this Economic Pact complement the measures we are already taking to grow the local economy and to increase employment opportunities and prosperity for all.

There are a number of significant measures to note. We welcome the Government’s clear commitment to take a decision on the devolution of Corporation Tax powers by autumn 2014. Officials are examining the actions that could be taken forward now, so that a devolved rate could be implemented as soon as possible after what, it is hoped, will be a positive decision in the autumn of 2014.

Opportunities will be provided by the additional resources which are being made available through additional EU funding and the increase in the RRI borrowing limit. The additional RRI borrowing will be used to help to support specific shared housing and education proposals for the benefit of our citizens.

We also welcome the commitment that all of the local economy will continue to enjoy Assisted Area Status post 2013. The outcome will be to help drive continued investment and business expansion in the local economy.

The commitment to establish a Joint Ministerial Taskforce is significant and it will examine whether tailored support is required for our local banks.

We welcome the UK Government’s pledge to work together to improve the uptake of national schemes aimed at improving business access to finance in the local economy. This is critical for our economic recovery and rebalancing efforts.

The Irish Government has also pledged its support for the Pact and agreed to work with us to ensure it is fully implemented.

Programme for Government

Mr G Kelly asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister what consideration is being given to extending the current Programme for Government, or bringing forward a new one, if the Assembly mandate goes past 2015.

(AQO 4654/11-15)

Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness: The current Programme for Government sets out a challenging agenda for delivery by the Executive in the period to 2015.

Through delivery against its commitments, the Executive has realised major economic and social benefits for people here – we are on track to deliver commitments to, for example:

- promote the creation of 25,000 new jobs;
- support £300 million investment in Research & Development;
- provide 200,000 qualifications to the working age population;
- increase the literacy and numeracy levels of all school leavers; and
- make free pre-school education available to every family that wants it.

The potential extension of the term of the current Assembly through the provisions of the legislation presently being considered at Westminster may, in due course, provide the opportunity to achieve further progress.

We are determined that, should this opportunity arise, we are positioned to take full advantage.

For this reason, we are making preparations for a PfG review, should it be required, which will include measures to tackle the economic and social issues that we still face, during the period of any extension of the mandate.

This work, presently underway, will position us to move swiftly to ensure continuity in Programme for Government delivery if and when a decision on the extension of the mandate is taken.

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

Construction Projects: West Tyrone

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail (i) the current construction projects; and (ii) planned construction projects being undertaken by her Department in West Tyrone which will involve the use of Project Bank Accounts; and to explain how this approach will protect sub-contractors against possible risk of non-payment in the future.

(AQW 26077/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development): My Department is currently undertaking one construction project in West Tyrone which will involve the use of a Project Bank Account. This is in relation to the construction of the Rivers Agency Regional Office in Omagh. DARD does not currently have any other planned construction projects in West Tyrone requiring the use of a Project Bank Account.

Project Bank Accounts were introduced by the Finance Minister in January 2013, now form part of the conditions for contracts with an estimated value of £1million and over and where there is a significant subcontracting element. The purpose of these bank accounts is to ensure that major first tier subcontractors working on a project will receive payment directly through a bank account specific to the project they are working on, rather than have to wait for main contractors to process their payment. The objective is to ensure that subcontractors working on Government projects receive payment within 5 days or less from the date the client deposits funds in the Project Bank Account. A further objective

of such accounts is to help protect the subcontractor's money in the event of the contractor entering administration or receivership as the money is held in an account in trust for the supply chain.

Alphachloralose; Carbofuran; Strychnine; and Paraquat

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in what circumstances is it legal to (i) own; (ii) sell; or (iii) use (a) Alphachloralose; (b) Carbofuran; (c) Strychnine; and (d) Paraquat.[R] **(AQW 26095/11-15)**

Mrs O'Neill: Biocidal products containing Alphachloralose as the active ingredient can be owned, sold or used subject to compliance with the conditions required under the biocides legislation. The conditions for biocidal products containing Alphachloralose include that they are only used in-doors and that their use is to control mice. The Health and Safety Executive is the lead authority for biocidal products.

Alphachloralose is not authorised for use as a plant protection product.

No products containing Carbofuran; Strychnine or Paraquat as active ingredients are currently authorised for plant protection or biocidal purposes. Plant protection product authorisations for Alphachloralose, Carbofuran, Strychnine and Paraquat expired on 31 December 2004, 31 Dec 2001, 31 Dec 2004 and 11 July 2008 respectively.

Animal Health and Welfare NI

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail her departmental staffing costs, including the number of employees, associated with Animal Health and Welfare NI. **(AQW 26097/11-15)**

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not have any dedicated full time staff working with AHWNI and their Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) voluntary programme, rather a percentage of 4 members of staff time is spent on production related diseases including BVD and the AHWNI project. Over the past year, the staffing costs for BVD and the AHWNI project, including the preparation of a consultation on a proposal to introduce legislation to make BVD testing compulsory is estimated to be approximately £21,000. There are also some Veterinary Service staff costs regarding attendance at meetings etc however these are negligible.

Animal Health and Welfare NI

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an itemised breakdown of all items purchased by Animal Health and Welfare NI utilising the financial assistance provided by her Department.

(AQW 26100/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has, through a Letter of Offer, made available £125,497 to support Animal Health and Welfare NI. This is to assist in the delivery of its Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication programme and with the development of a control programme for Johne's disease between 4 March 2013 and 31 March 2014. The Letter of Offer provides support funding for the following:-

| | |
|--|---------|
| BVD Database | £24,523 |
| Letters/SMS notifications | £ 2,769 |
| Database maintenance | £ 2,904 |
| Confirmatory tests | £4,983 |
| Recruitment costs, Johne's Expert | £7,935 |
| Johne's Programme Manager salary/costs | £50,217 |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------|
| Development Officer/Admin support | £20,725 |
| Advertising/ Communication/Website | £4,499 |
| Contingency | £6,942 |

My officials are currently assessing Animal Health and Welfare NI first claim but no payments have been made yet.

Animal Health and Welfare NI

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the criteria used by her Department to measure mid-term reviews; and when a review of Animal Health and Welfare NI will take place.

(AQW 26102/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department does not have pre-set criteria for use in mid-term reviews rather when required each is developed specifically for the particular project. The mid-term review of the Animal Health and Welfare NI (AHWNI) project is scheduled to take place in March 2014 and will assess AHWNI's progress towards its objectives including consideration of the following:-

| Item | DARD |
|--|---|
| Mid Term Review | DARD will complete in March 2014 |
| AHWNI to introduce a voluntary BVD testing programme | 31-Mar-13 |
| AHWNI to develop and deliver a communication strategy for BVD eradication including the development of a web site; | 31-Mar-13 |
| AHWNI to attract 30% of the Northern Ireland annual calf crop (150,000 calves tagged and tested and results maintained on BVD Database) into the BVD testing programme and to ensure that Persistently Infected (PI) animals identified as a result are removed; | 31-Dec-13 |
| AHWNI to trial and test computer systems, testing procedures and test results reporting for the BVD testing Programme; | 31-Dec-13 |
| AHWNI to maintain the tissue Tag /database systems throughout 2014 and should the case be made for mandatory testing roll out a comms strategy and deal with queries arising from mandatory testing by 31 December 2013, | 31-Dec-14 |
| AHWNI to develop a national Johne's Disease control programme by 31 Dec 2014 | 31-Dec-14 |

Councils: Dog Wardens

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, as of 1 April 2013, which councils have at least one dog warden in post.

(AQW 26133/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Dogs Order 1983, as amended by the Dogs (Amendment) Act 2011, provides for the licensing of dogs by Councils and other related enforcement matters. Article 40(b) gives authority to Councils to appoint such number of officers as each Council considers necessary to exercise the powers conferred to its officers under the Order.

There is no requirement for Councils to supply my Department with information on the number of officers employed by them, and therefore my Department does not hold this information. However, Councils have advised my officials that, as of 1 April 2013, all 26 Councils have at least one dog warden in post.

I understand that a Council Dog Warden may not always be deployed full time on dog warden activities, as an officer's duties may include other Council enforcement roles.

Rural Development Programme: Livestock Marts

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline the proposals for upgrading livestock marts to improve animal welfare and facilities for farmers through the utilisation of Rural Development Programme monies.

(AQW 26138/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Funding towards the improvement of infrastructure facilities at livestock markets is eligible under the EU Processing & Marketing Grant (PMG) Scheme, which is part of the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

Since 2007, my Department has received and approved one funding application towards the construction of a new purpose built livestock market at Markethill, County Armagh.

The PMG Scheme closed on 20 September 2013. This was the last call for applications under the current Rural Development programme 2007-2013.

The type of future investments that will benefit from support under the next round of Rural Development 2014 - 2020 are currently under consideration and my Department is currently seeking views and comments from individuals and organisations on the proposed content of the RDP 2014-2020. The consultation process will close on Monday 21 October 2013. .

Funding is not normally available to assist market operators in meeting minimum legal standards in relation to EU requirements, including animal health and welfare requirements. To date, my Department has not provided financial assistance to cattle markets to enable them to undertake their statutory obligations in relation to animal health and welfare, and I have no immediate plans to do so.

North Down: Stolen Livestock

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many incidents of stolen livestock have been reported in the North Down area, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 26141/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

| | 2011/2012 | 2012/2013 |
|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Number of incidents | 66 | 88 |

The above table only records the number of incidents involving missing or stolen cattle in the Newtownards Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) area. The whole of the North Down area is in the Newtownards DVO area.

APHIS does not differentiate between missing or stolen cattle. Information involving any other missing or stolen livestock is not recorded on APHIS at present.

APHIS does not record information on a constituency basis.

North Down: Claims for Animal Loss

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many claims for animal loss, due to the severe weather conditions, have been made in the North Down area, in each of the last two years.

(AQW 26142/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In 2013 there were two claims for animal loss in the North Down area following the heavy snow fall which took place on 22 and 23 March.

Farmers in North Down: Lost Livestock

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the compensation paid to farmers who lost livestock due to heavy snowfall, in the North Down area, in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 26144/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has provided funding to farmers who lost livestock due to the heavy snowfall, in the North Down area, as follows:

In financial year 2012/2013 there was no funding for this purpose.

In financial year 2013/2014 the Department assisted a very small number of farmers, in the North Down area, by way of the Agricultural (Hardship Payment) Scheme 2013, to a total value of £1215.00

Under protection afforded by the Data Protection Act I am obliged not to release the actual number as to do so may allow the individuals to be identified.

Farmers in North Down: Grants

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much has been awarded to farmers in the North Down area through departmental grants, in each of the last two financial years.

(AQW 26145/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department has awarded grants of £343,549 in the 2012/13 financial year and £166,071 in the 2011/2012 financial year. Subsidy schemes are not included in these figures and some information is based on scheme year rather than financial year.

Farmers in North Down

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farmers have ceased trading in the North Down area, in the last two financial years.

(AQW 26147/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: DARD does not hold information on the number of farmers that have ceased trading. However, APHIS does hold information on the number of livestock keeper registrations that have been made non-operational in the last two financial years.

| | 2011/2012 | 2012/2013 |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Number of herds or flocks made non-operational | 178 | 123 |

The above table records the number of herds or flocks made non-operational in the Newtownards Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO) area. The whole of the North Down area is in the Newtownards DVO area.

APHIS does not record information on a constituency basis.

Ploughing Competition

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 25632/11-15, to detail the cost of attending and providing a stand at the Ploughing Competition in (i) Northern Ireland; and (ii) the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 26156/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: At this stage the costs for attendance at the 2013 National Ploughing Championships at Ratheniska, Co Laois have not been finalised. The estimated cost including staff costs will be around £31,000.

Likewise as the north of Ireland Ploughing Championships have yet to take place, a number of costs relating to the DARD exhibit and staffing costs have yet to be finalised.

Countryside Management Scheme

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for her assessment of (i) the organic management option within the Countryside Management Scheme; and (ii) the application process for receiving support payments given that only six farmers are availing of this option.

(AQW 26212/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) The Organic Management Option (OMO) is only available to NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS) participants. To be eligible to avail of this option an NICMS farmer must have improved and/or semi-improved land which is fully converted to organic production and which remains certified as fully organic by a recognised organic sector certification body. This option provides encouragement to farmers to remain within the organic farming system beyond the end date of their five-year Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) agreement by providing funding to assist with certification and management costs associated with organic farming practices. Managing land under the OMO, without the use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides contributes to scheme aims by helping to reduce water pollution and enhance biodiversity for a range of species and habitats on the farm. There are now five participants in NICMS who have availed of the OMO.
- (ii) Farmers who wished to take up the Organic Management Option (OMO) were offered the opportunity to do so at the time of application to the NICMS. Applications to NICMS are now closed. The OMO is one of thirteen Habitat Enhancement Options within NICMS and a separate application for the OMO was not required. The application process for NICMS was a paperless application process whereby the applicant supplied their Farm Business Identification number and the details of their leased land by telephone, e-mail, fax in writing or by calling in person at a DARD Office. The relatively low uptake of the option may be explained by the fact that the Organic Management Option within NICMS cannot be claimed in addition to Organic Farming Scheme (OFS) payments on the same land and only applies to improved land which is fully converted to organic and which remains certified as fully organic.

Assistance to Organic Farmers

Mrs Dobson asked Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 18155/11-15, to detail the ongoing assistance her Department is providing to organic farmers.

(AQW 26215/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My Department currently provides financial support for farmers converting to organic production through the Organic Farming Scheme. The scheme compensates farmers for the additional costs associated with converting land to organic production methods. Payments range from £470 to £670 per hectare over 5 years, depending on land-type, and there are currently 37 farmers in the scheme.

Support is also provided for organic farmers through the Organic Management Option within the NI Countryside Management Scheme. This provides an annual support payment of £30 per hectare for organically certified land and there are currently 5 farmers availing of this option.

Both the Organic Farming Scheme and the Organic Management Option are currently closed to new applicants.

Furthermore, ongoing technical advice and training courses on organic production are available through CAFRE, where there is also an organic unit at Greenmount Campus. This unit is used to demonstrate best practice in organic farming to both agricultural students and organic farmers within the industry.

Fires on Rathlin Island

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what assistance her Department has provided to landowners on Rathlin Island following the gorse fires in May 2013.

(AQW 26260/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: To date, my Department has not received any requests for management advice from landowners affected by gorse fires on Rathlin Island in May 2013. However my Department has previously issued advice that farmland damaged by wildfires should be allowed to regenerate naturally.

If as a result of this fire, land that was claimed as eligible for Single Farm Payment, Less Favoured Areas Compensatory Allowance or agri-environment purposes in 2013 is no longer eligible, the EU rules require the farm business involved to advise DARD, in writing, of the change in eligibility and the reasons for this within 10 days of being in a position to do so. This requirement is further explained in Section 11 of the 2013 "Guide on how to complete your 2013 Single Application and Field Data Sheet" booklet.

Departmental Headquarters in Ballykelly and Enniskillen

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the number of staff in her Department that (i) have been relocated to new departmental headquarters in Ballykelly and Enniskillen; (ii) are still to be relocated; and (iii) will remain in Belfast or other locations.

(AQW 26263/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill:

- (i) As yet no members of staff have relocated to new Departmental headquarters in Ballykelly or Enniskillen. The headquarters of one post in Forest Service was moved to Enniskillen for operational reasons.
- (ii) The actual number to be relocated to new departmental headquarters has still to be decided. An exercise is underway to identify the phasing of areas of work which will in turn identify posts. In addition to the Ballykelly and Forest Service projects, the other relocation projects are Fisheries Division to South Down and Rivers Agency to Cookstown.
- (iii) The number of DARD staff who will remain in Belfast or other locations has yet to be decided and is part of ongoing considerations around the relocation of functions and posts. Furthermore, the level and extent of inter-Departmental moves to facilitate both DARD staff who do not wish to relocate and also those staff across other Departments who wish to avail of the opportunity to take up posts in the new locations will also assist in determining the number of DARD staff who will remain in Belfast or other locations.

Land Owners: Giant Hogweed

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what arrangements are in place to encourage land owners to deal with the problem of Giant Hogweed.

(AQW 26265/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Farmers in receipt of EU Area-based payments, such as Single Farm Payment, must follow Cross-Compliance rules. As part of Cross Compliance farmers are required to maintain their land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC).

One of the requirements of GAEC is “Undergrazing”. Under this requirement farmers must prevent encroachment by invasive species on their agricultural area. Species such as rhododendron, giant hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam degrade the agricultural and environmental value of the land. Farmers, who are found to be in breach of Cross-Compliance rules, may have penalties applied to their payments. In addition, agri-environment scheme participants who are managing riparian zones, along the margin of a waterway, must control invasive species such as giant hogweed. Penalties may be applied to a scheme payment if the management requirements are not followed.

To encourage the control of invasive species the NI Environment Agency (NIEA) through applications to its Natural Heritage Grant Programme and Water Quality Improvement Grant Scheme can provide funding to local community groups and environmental NGOs to take forward sustainable invasive species control projects. In recent years NIEA through these grant schemes have provided funding to several projects which included giant hogweed control. Examples of funded projects include The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) undertaking control along the Ballinmallard River in County Fermanagh and more recently providing funding to the River Blackwater Catchment Trust to undertake control along the River Blackwater.

In addition in 2011 the Department of Environment provided part funding towards a catchment scale InterReg IVA project, led by QUB, which is currently controlling a range of invasive species including giant hogweed in the Newry Canal, Clanrye River and River Faughan catchments.

To assist landowners in controlling giant hogweed both DARD and NIEA have developed best practice control guidance that is available online.

Information guidance on identifying and controlling giant hogweed may be found at the following link.

http://www.dardni.gov.uk/ruralni/giant_hogweed.pdf

Farm Takeovers: Herds

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why her Department can not accommodate requests from a person, who is taking over a family farm, to retain the herd number held by their deceased father; and whether she plans to address this issue to permit some flexibility.
(AQW 26273/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: This policy has been in place for over four years.

The herd or flock number is not the keeper's property, but merely a reference number used by DARD for administrative and disease control purposes. It is not a “herd” number, but rather a “keeper” registration number and, being person-related, is not transferable under the current administrative systems in the case where a sole registered keeper has died.

My staff have recently commenced a project to review the retention of herd/flock keeper registration when a sole registered herd or flock keeper dies. The project team will look at the processes involved and potential risks attached to these processes given our current IT systems.

Single Farm Payment Applications

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development why local farmers are not in a position to avail of advanced payments for the 2013 Single Farm Payment; and to outline the actions she took over the last twelve months to rectify this.

(AQW 26294/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: In order to make advance payments it is necessary that all administrative checks, including on the spot inspections are completed. Over the last twelve months, DARD has introduced significant changes to its validation and control systems, including the deployment of a new mapping

system and ensuring its integration with on-the-spot inspections. It was not possible to complete these changes in time to allow advance payments in 2013.

As these changes bed in, this position will be rectified. I have increased use of control with remote sensing and promoted more online applications by farmers to help the Department complete its validation processes earlier and, in turn, increase the scope for advance payments in future years.

For this year, I am looking to pay as many farmers as possible early in December and I will be announcing a more detailed payment timetable in November.

Farm Businesses in Ballymena Borough Council; Ballymoney Borough Council; and Moyle District Council

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many farm businesses are in the (i) Ballymena Borough Council; (ii) Ballymoney Borough Council; and (iii) Moyle District Council areas.

(AQW 26339/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Table 1 provides a breakdown of Farm Businesses by Council Area where the post code is wholly within the Council Area.

TABLE 1

| Ballymena | Ballymoney | Moyle | Total |
|-----------|------------|-------|-------|
| 2,499 | 1,303 | 972 | 4,774 |

Table 2 provides a breakdown of Farm Businesses where the post code straddles two Council Areas.

TABLE 2

| Ballymena & Ballymoney | Moyle & Ballymoney | Total |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------|
| 74 | 57 | 131 |

Farming Community: Winter Conditions

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what plans her Department has in place to help the farming community deal with adverse winter conditions.

(AQW 26402/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: You will be aware of the severe winter of 2012 and 2013 and the devastating impact that had on the farming community. You will also be aware of my Department's responses to the animal welfare issue and hardship incurred.

As a result of the severe weather I set up the Fodder Taskforce which is a joint Government and industry group which has identified a wide range of issues affecting farmers as a result of unfavourable weather conditions in the first half of 2013.

The Taskforce publicised its action plan in July 2013 which included actions that both my Department and the Industry can do to avoid similar issues to those of last winter. My Department through its CAFRE Development Advisers provided good advice on grass management and fodder management to ensure that farmers are well prepared for any prolonged bad weather during the coming months.

I will be monitoring the situation and if required I will ask the Taskforce to meet earlier should the need arise during the forthcoming winter.

The farming community as well as all other rural and urban dwellers in the north have a responsibility to ensure they prepare for the winter months to minimise any problems that may occur. Simple actions such as checking water pipes are lagged can minimise the potential of frozen pipes and reduce the risk of flooding.

Farm Safety Partnership

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development for an update on the work of the Farm Safety Partnership since the publication of its Action Plan in November 2012, including the number of (i) meetings held; (ii) farmers who have undertaken Farm Safe Awareness courses; and (iii) training events and workshops which the Development Advisers from the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise have distributed health and safety information to farmers.

(AQW 26416/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: You will be aware that the Farm Safety Partnership was set up in response to the worsening situation in relation to fatalities on farms. The Farm Safety Partnership was established in May 2012 between the Health & Safety Executive NI, DARD and the Ulster Farmers Union. Since then the Partnership has also been joined by NFU Mutual, the Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster and NIAPA.

The aim of this Partnership is to improve health and safety standards on farms and strive to significantly reduce work-related deaths, injuries and illnesses. The Farm Safety Partnership developed an Action Plan that sets out its priorities and objectives over 18 months ending March 2014. This was launched at Ravenhill Rugby Ground on 27 November 2012.

The action plan sets out a clear strategy aimed at reducing injury and deaths on farms and includes details of specific goals and targets. The main thrust of the plan is to raise farm safety awareness and change farmers' attitude to risk through a wide range of training events, farmers meetings, open days, demonstrations, focus farm events and farm business mentoring sessions. The Action Plan contains 44 commitments of which my Department has lead responsibility for 7.

The Partnership is making excellent progress implementing this action plan and promotes the farm safe message at every opportunity including the Multi Media campaign that is currently running, the PTO week starting 23 September 2013 and a presence at many agricultural shows and events including Balmoral Show.

I am aware that the Partnership is now making plans to review the outcomes of its Action Plan and will be reporting on these in due course.

The Farm Safety Partnership has held 4 meetings and the Partnership's steering group has held 4 meetings since its action plan was launched on November 2012. Each of the Partnership's 4 working groups meet regularly in relation to the targets they are assigned.

To date 1062 farmers (including members of their families) have undertaken Farm Safe Awareness courses. The average attendance is 14 people. A further 30 scheduled sessions have been organised between October 2013 and January 2014.

CAFRE Development Advisers have distributed health and safety material at 257 training events and workshops where there were attended by 8,587 people. Farm Safety is also an integral part of the course work in all of the CAFRE colleges and students gain first hand demonstrations of proper procedures and practices that ensure farm safety.

Farm Safety Partnership: Financial Assistance

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she expects to receive the report from the Farm Safety Partnership on the potential for financial assistance to farmers to promote improved health and safety on farms.

(AQW 26418/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Farm Safety Partnership launched its Action Plan in November 2012 and set out a number of actions to be completed by March 2014. The Partnership does not provide a report on its individual actions but is about to start a review of the outcomes of the actions and will report on its Action Plan when the review is complete.

Action 3.2 of the Action Plan is "Explore the potential for financial assistance to farmers to promote improved health and safety on farms." This action point is recorded against my Department to lead

on and my officials have carefully considered funding streams that can be used to promote improved health and safety.

Safety equipment is clearly only a part of the solution in creating a safer working environment for farmers and their families. The recent tragic events only confirm that Health and Safety practices must be incorporated into the day to day activities of the entire farm family, leading to real improvements in behaviours and attitudes to risky practices.

The current FarmSafe Awareness training is funded under the Rural Development Programme. In addition, the issue of health and safety on farms is being raised with farm families through a number of other DARD programmes and at various DARD events. Within the Rural Development Programme, on-farm health and safety risks are being highlighted at Focus Farm training visits and at Farm Family Options Business Mentoring sessions. My Department is also distributing advisory leaflets prepared by HSENI and allocating space for HSENI display at the large scale CAFRE events. CAFRE is also providing an appropriate Health and Safety presentation to students at the colleges and my Department has also made the FarmSafe presentation available to HSENI for delivery to farmers.

Over the three Tranches of the Farm Modernisation Programme some £4.2m of financial support for safety-related items has been awarded in Letters of Offer to successful applicants.

I also announced during the Assembly debate on 30 September 2013 that I am planning to extend the current tranche of the Farm Modernisation Programme, subject to receiving the necessary funding and approvals. This will provide financial support for those farm businesses that applied but just missed out under the first allocation earlier this year of Tranche 3 funding. It will provide these applicants with an opportunity to access grant aid for items to help modernise their farms including a range of items that promote safer working practices on farms. When funding and the necessary approvals have been secured I will make a formal announcement on the extension.

The Consultation period for the next Rural Development Programme is currently open and due to close on 21 October, and I have asked individuals and organisations to submit their views on the proposed health and safety content for the new programme. I have also asked officials to develop proposals for a scheme that would support larger capital investment to improve health and safety.

Safety of Reservoirs and Quarries

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what discussion her Department has had with the Department of the Environment on ensuring the safety of reservoirs and quarries.
(AQW 26459/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Officials from my Department have engaged with their counterparts in the Department of the Environment throughout the policy development and consultation stages of the proposed Reservoir Bill. This legislation will enable assurance to be provided that the risk of flooding due to an uncontrolled release of water as a result of a dam failure is being appropriately managed and will therefore ensure the safety of those who live and work in the potential downstream inundation areas. These engagements have been primarily concerned with environmental and cultural heritage matters as the protection of these sites from reservoir flooding will influence the risk designation that will be applied to a reservoir. There has also been significant discussion with the DOE Officials involved in the revision of Planning Policy Statement (PPS)15 to ensure it adequately addresses the risk of development in the potential flood inundation areas of reservoirs. My officials have had no discussion with DOE on the safety of quarries as this is outside the remit of my Department.

Departmental Land in South Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the (i) amount; and (ii) location of departmental owned/controlled land in South Down.
(AQW 26462/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: My department owns or controls approximately 4,442 hectares of land in South Down. Each location is detailed in the table below. All of the land is managed by the Forest Service.

TABLE - OWNED AND CONTROLLED LAND IN SOUTH DOWN

| Location | Amount (Hectares) |
|--|--------------------------|
| Annalong Forest, Annalong, Newcastle | 303.41 |
| Bohill Forest, Loughinisland, Ballynahinch | 90.42 |
| Castleward Forest, Strangford, Downpatrick | 75.31 |
| Castlewellan Forest, Castlewellan, Newcastle | 637.80 |
| Donard Forest, Bryansford, Newcastle | 296.22 |
| Drumkerragh Forest, near Ballynahinch | 200.28 |
| Hollymount Forest, Annaclay, Downpatrick | 110.95 |
| Mourne Forest, Attical, Kilkeel | 270.87 |
| Narrow Water Forest, Burren, Warrenpoint | 138.41 |
| Rostrevor Forest, Warrenpoint | 1,676.39 |
| Tollymore Forest, Bryansford, Newcastle | 642.05 |
| Total Owned/Controlled Land | 4,442.11 |

Departmental Headquarters

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 25403/11-15, how many of the respondents were from a corporate body, and how many from the North West branch of a corporate body.

(AQW 26465/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Of the 24 responses received 17 were from corporate bodies. The remaining 7 were from individuals, all of whom are elected representatives.

All of the responses provided by corporate bodies were on behalf of their respective HQs/head offices and not North West branches only.

Small Scale Generation Projects

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, of the applicants who received Rural Development funding for small scale generation, to detail the number that were issued a conditional letter of offer from Northern Ireland Electricity which is insufficient to allow them to progress with their project.

(AQW 26551/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: No such applicants have confirmed that they are unable to progress with their projects.

Rural Development Programme: Unspent Monies

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether unspent monies within the Rural Development Programme will be redirected to other projects or refunded.

(AQW 26552/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: Any unspent monies within the Rural Development Programme are allocated against projected expenditure to the end of the Programme. My officials will continue to monitor the programme's expenditure and make any further adjustments, as permitted within programme rules, to ensure the drawdown of funds is maximised.

Small Scale Generation Projects

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of the current difficulties faced by small scale generation projects, what level of flexibility there is on the deadline for the Rural Development Funding Capital Spend for generation projects.

(AQW 26553/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: The Operating Rules for Axis 3 of the Rural Development Programme state that: 'All payments of grant assistance under the programme must be made by 31 December 2014. A Letter of Offer must not issue with a final project completion date later than 30 September 2014'.

All seven Rural Development Programme Joint Council Committees responsible for delivery have confirmed with the Department they will spend their full Axis 3 funding allocation within the programme period.

Small Scale Generation Projects

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how much Rural Development Funding will be lost as a result of applicants being unable to connect to the national grid for small scale generation projects.

(AQW 26554/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: All seven Rural Development Programme Joint Council Committees have confirmed with the Department they will spend their full Axis 3 funding allocation within the programme period.

Property-Level Flood Protection Scheme

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development whether there are plans to introduce a property-level flood protection scheme.

(AQW 26576/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: As part of the ongoing work of my Department to implement the EU Floods Directive, I have asked that the possibility of a property-level flood protection programme be explored. Rivers Agency is currently scoping the options for such a scheme, with cooperation from the other departments on the Floods Directive Steering Group, and I expect to receive the completed business case soon. I am pleased to tell you that initial analysis looks positive, and I hope to be able to make a public statement on the way forward toward the end of this year.

Export of Pork to China

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, in light of her recent visit, to detail the progress made on applications for the export of pork to China.

(AQW 26691/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: I was recently invited to deliver a key-note at the 4th Sino-European Agricultural Conference. Whilst in China I took the opportunity to request a meeting to discuss progress on the applications for the export of pork to China. I am happy to report that I had a meeting with CNCA government officials on September 24th in Beijing. During the meeting, senior CNCA officials advised me that they will consider the north of Ireland applications before November 2013, which is earlier than originally indicated.

Agri-Food Industry: Recent Visit to China

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to detail the benefits to be gained by the agri-food industry following her recent visit to China.

(AQW 26692/11-15)

Mrs O'Neill: There are several key benefits to be gained by the local agri-food industry following my recent visit. Firstly during my key-note speech at the Sino European Agricultural Conference and I used

the opportunity to make the conference delegates aware of our global reputation for high standards of traceability, safety and wholesomeness of our agri products.

Secondly, I also met with Vice President Li Jianping of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries in Beijing to cultivate and enhance this strategic relationship between the north of Ireland and China. As you are aware building relationships is key to developing business links in China.

Finally I met with officials from the registration department responsible for approving our applications for the export of pork. I was pleased to hear that they will consider our application for the export of pork products sooner than we had previously been advised.

The overall strategic objective for my visit to China was to enhance the north of Ireland-China relationship and foster opportunities for gain for the north of ireland in the agri-product and agri-food sector. The First and deputy First Minister began this relationship at the invitation of the Chinese Government and I am happy to continue to build on the relationships I made during my last visit in November 2012.

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Funding: Local Kickboxers

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding available to support local kickboxers.

(AQW 26182/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure): Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has advised that there is no funding currently available to support local kickboxers.

Sport NI is supporting Kickboxing as they progress through a process to be recognised as a sport, with Kickboxing Ireland applying to become the recognised governing body for local kickboxers. On completion of this process, Sport NI will be able to advise kickboxing on the next steps and / or opportunities available to local kickboxers.

Sports in Fermanagh, South Tyrone and West Tyrone

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the funding offers made for sports or partial sports facilities in the constituencies of (i) Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and (ii) West Tyrone, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 26411/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Sport NI, an arms length body of my Department, has provided total Exchequer funding of £5,620,921 for sports or partial sports facilities in Fermanagh and South Tyrone; and, West Tyrone in the last five years up to 31 March 2013 as detailed below.

| | 2008/09 | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | Total |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Fermanagh and South Tyrone | 633,975 | 1,649,020 | 231,078 | 480,667 | 50,000 | 3,044,740 |
| West Tyrone | 1,125,669 | 1,303,057 | 147,455 | - | - | 2,576,181 |

Libraries: Ballymena; Kells and Connor; Ballycastle; Broughshane

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail the number of members of (i) Ballymena; (ii) Kells and Connor; (iii) Ballycastle; and (iv) Broughshane libraries, in each of the last four years.

(AQW 26613/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The number of active members for (i) Ballymena; (ii) Kells and Connor; (iii) Ballycastle; and (iv) Broughshane libraries, in each of the last four years is as follows:

| Branch | 01-Apr-2010 | 01-Apr-2011 | 01-Apr-2012 | 01-Apr-2013 |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| (i) Ballymena Library | 8,108 | 7,070 | 7,471 | 7,406 |
| (ii) Kells and Connor Library | 546 | 582 | 661 | 666 |
| (iii) Ballycastle Library | 2,010 | 1,748 | 2,046 | 1,998 |
| (iv) Broughshane Library | 829 | 786 | 777 | 744 |

Rural Libraries: Value to Rural Communities

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the value of rural libraries as an educational and social asset to rural communities.

(AQW 26674/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I recognise the importance and value of rural libraries as both educational and social assets. Rural libraries are more than just a place for borrowing books, important though that is. They are a public resource which can contribute significantly to the quality of life for the people they serve as they are often seen as a community hub and a place of safety and neutrality.

Rural libraries provide people with an opportunity to: contribute to lifelong learning, foster good relations with their neighbours; and facilitating the development of informed and responsible citizenship. They also provide a location for targeted outreach interventions that seek to tackle social exclusion and inequality in our society.

With 28 of Libraries NI's 96 branches located in rural areas these libraries serve areas where poverty is often hidden. The use of mobile libraries and the Home Call service further supports our rural library network.

Rural Libraries: Libraries NI

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, taking into account the work done by the local communities, such as in Kells and Connor, to increase the use of libraries, what additional resources her Department can make available to LibrariesNI specifically to support rural libraries.

(AQW 26676/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: I recognise the strenuous efforts that local communities such as Kells and Connor have been making to halt declining use of their libraries. The recent opening of a relocated library in Draperstown provides an example where the determination and foresight of individuals has brought a positive change to the community.

I was pleased earlier this year to make an additional £97k available for two Libraries NI projects which will help to increase the support to rural communities: The 'library in a box' pilot scheme, which seeks to provide access to borrowing services in communities with no library, and for an extension to the successful 'Health in Mind' project. A new library build at Lisnaskea will also be supported with an additional £800k of Departmental funding.

Aside from these additional funds, the Board and Senior Management of Libraries NI will continue to allocate their existing resources to the areas of the public library service where they are needed most, including support for rural libraries.

Rural Libraries: Support

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether she has made any approaches to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to seek support for rural libraries.

(AQW 26677/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Officials both within my Department and Libraries NI are actively working in partnership with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to help support rural libraries.

In response to the Executive's Rural White Paper a joint Working Group has identified a number of rural issues which libraries can help address. These include: access to broadband, access to information, developing ICT skills (particularly within the elderly and farming communities) and addressing mental health issues.

This partnership approach has been designed both to make rural communities more aware of the free services which are available, and to help increase support for rural libraries in danger of closure. Examples of this successful working arrangement with DARD include:

- The expansion of the highly successful the 'Health in Mind' awareness programme.
- 30,000 farmers received Single Farm Payments information packs which included information on the availability of free internet access in libraries and the training support that library staff were pleased to provide.
- Targeted marketing of free IT services to both individuals and rural businesses which enable the completion of on-line grant and benefit forms.
- Mobile libraries have been taken to a number of Agricultural Shows to promote library services to rural communities.

I would also draw your attention to the successful partnership between Libraries NI, DARD and the Big Lottery Fund that led to the re-location of the new library at Draperstown. This was listed for closure but is now a thriving community hub which is now attracting new users and providing an expanded programme of activities and initiatives.

Culture Night

Dr McDonnell asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how her Department supported the various Culture Nights that took place on 20 September 2013.

(AQO 4713/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The various Culture Nights that took place on 20 September 2013 across the north were organised and operated by a mixture of private organisations and local Councils. My Department, through the Arts Council NI, provided £24,250 in funding to the Cathedral Quarter Trust for the Culture Night in Belfast. Culture Nights held outside Belfast were funded by the relevant local Council.

Although I am unable to comment on the success of Culture Nights outside Belfast and no definitive figures are yet available for Culture Night Belfast, I am advised that initial reports suggest that the Belfast event was a huge success. Early estimates suggest that 42,000 people came out across Belfast to enjoy the biggest Culture Night to date. The high attendance figures provide an excellent indicator of the interest in and willingness to support the local arts scene in Belfast, and also of the arts sector's potential to contribute to the development of a diverse and dynamic culture within the city.

The Culture Nights have now become a staple part of the wide ranging cultural offerings supported by my Department, which included activities such as the Belfast Pride in July and the All Ireland Fleadh in August. Both of these events attracted huge numbers of spectators and participants, and provided something for everyone to enjoy and engage with.

Irish Language

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how she intends to enhance and protect the long-term development of the Irish language.

(AQO 4714/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: In line with the 2011-2015 Programme for Government, I will be bringing forward to the Executive a Strategy for Enhancing and Protecting the Development of the Irish language.

The Strategy has been strengthened following a comprehensive public consultation exercise and has also been informed by engagement with other Executive Ministers. The crucial role of Irish language stakeholders and the community has been more fully reflected in the Strategy.

The Strategy sets out a framework for the next 20 years in areas such as public services, education, the home and community, the media and economic life to enhance, protect and develop the Irish language.

Following Executive agreement, a Strategy Delivery Group will progress the Strategy by agreeing detailed action plans with Departments.

Initiatives such as the Líofa campaign, the Belfast Gaeltacht Quarter and Irish Language Academy will also contribute to enhancing and developing the Irish language.

I remain committed to bringing forward to the Executive legislative proposals for an Irish language Act which experience elsewhere suggests is an effective to protecting the language.

Stadia Development

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how the social benefits from the 3 stadia development will support the construction industry.

(AQO 4715/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Social Clauses are a Programme for Government commitment with a requirement to include social clauses in all public procurement contracts for supplies, services and construction.

My Department are committed to embedding social clauses at the heart of all procurement contracts and the Stadium Programme is an excellent example of how such clauses can be used to derive maximum gains for those facing social and economic disadvantage.

The Ravenhill, Windsor Park and Casement Park investments will result in contract works over £115m which will be a real driver for job retention and creation with a minimum of 2,276 job years of work generated by the three projects.

Within these construction contracts, 70 opportunities for the long term unemployed and 39 apprenticeships will be generated. Each of the contractors appointed are also required to deliver 5 socio-economic proposals for local communities in the areas around the stadium sites.

In addition, contractors will develop skills in relation to working with those sectors facing the greatest inequalities within areas of greatest objective need. Contractors will gain experience of working with local communities around employment of long-term unemployed and apprenticeships, which will undoubtedly improve the contractor's ability to tender for future works containing social clauses as award criteria.

Culture Night

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for her assessment of the recent Culture Night in Belfast.

(AQO 4717/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: The various Culture Nights that took place on 20 September 2013 across the north were organised and operated by a mixture of private organisations and local Councils. My Department,

through the Arts Council NI, provided £24,250 in funding to the Cathedral Quarter Trust for the Culture Night in Belfast. Culture Nights held outside Belfast were funded by the relevant local Council.

Although I am unable to comment on the success of Culture Nights outside Belfast and no definitive figures are yet available for Culture Night Belfast, I am advised that initial reports suggest that the Belfast event was a huge success. Early estimates suggest that 42,000 people came out across Belfast to enjoy the biggest Culture Night to date. The high attendance figures provide an excellent indicator of the interest in and willingness to support the local arts scene in Belfast, and also of the arts sector's potential to contribute to the development of a diverse and dynamic culture within the city.

The Culture Nights have now become a staple part of the wide ranging cultural offerings supported by my Department, which included activities such as the Belfast Pride in July and the All Ireland Fleadh in August. Both of these events attracted huge numbers of spectators and participants, and provided something for everyone to enjoy and engage with.

City of Culture: Legacy Plan

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, given that it is now the last quarter of the 2013 City of Culture programme, for an update on the Legacy Plan for the city.
(AQO 4718/11-15)

Ms Ní Chuilín: Whilst the official City of Culture year may end in December, Derry will remain a centre for cultural activity. We will ensure that the work done in 2013 continues to be built on to leave a lasting legacy.

To this end, Derry City Council has submitted a draft Legacy Plan to DCAL for consideration. DCAL Officials will continue to work with the Council and Culture Company in the coming weeks to further refine proposals on structures and actions in relation to Legacy.

I also recently announced that I have set aside funding for a very special project which will retain some of the Lumiere magic in Rosemount. Subject to the necessary planning approvals, the project would see an illuminated sign located in the heart of the community, on top of the Rosemount Factory. The sign will celebrate the cultural identity of the community, embodying the new cultural strategy for the Outer West area. Its location has been deliberately selected to shift the focus of cultural provision from the City centre to the communities surrounding it.

Department of Education

New School Buildings in the Holywood Area

Mr McCarthy asked the Minister of Education for an update on the provision of new school buildings for (i) Holywood Nursery School; (ii) Holywood Primary School; and (iii) Priory Integrated College.
(AQW 25784/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education): The South Eastern Education & Library Board identified a multi-schools project for Holywood as one of its top three priorities for major capital investment. However the project was not included in my January 2013 announcement due to the need for clarity on enrolments at Priory Integrated College and the potential to increase these above sustainable schools thresholds, as well as the potential for alliances with other secondary schools in relation to 6th form provision.

On 16 April 2013, the South Eastern Education and Library Board published a Development Proposal proposing that the approved enrolment at Priory College, Holywood should increase from 450 to 600 with effect from 31 August 2014 or as soon as possible thereafter. Officials are currently compiling the available information and I expect to take a decision on this in the near future.

While Holywood Primary / Holywood Nursery / Priory Integrated College will be disappointed that they were not included in the capital investment announcement in January 2013, this in no way implies that they will not be considered for funding at a later stage within the on-going area planning process.

Membership of the Strategic Funding Panels

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25286/11-15, to list the membership of the strategic funding panels.

(AQW 25907/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The strategic funding panels comprise representatives from various stakeholder groups. In relation to the panels convened to discuss the DE Early Years Fund in 2013/14, the bodies which were represented were:

Western Childcare Partnership (CCP) Assessment Panel - completed 7 June 2013

- Early Years
- Western Childcare Partnership
- ALTRAM (Chairperson)
- Western Education and Library Board
- NICIE

Southern CCP Assessment Panel - completed 18 June 2013

- Early Years
- Southern Childcare Partnership
- Homestart
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust
- Orana Children's & Family Centre

Belfast /South Eastern CCP Assessment Panel - completed 28 June 2013

- Belfast & S.E Childcare Partnership
- Early Years
- Scoil na Fuiseoige
- The Ashton Centre
- Belfast Trust

Northern CCP Assessment Panel - completed 28 June 2013

- Northern Childcare Partnership
- Early Years
- NICMA
- Playboard

Gaisce Awards Programme

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education what his Department is doing to promote the benefits of participating in the Gaisce Awards programme.

(AQW 26090/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Department of Education delegates funding and decision-making in relation to programmes they may use to schools and youth clubs who are best placed to assess the needs of their

pupils or members. It is therefore for schools and Youth Clubs to decide whether or not a programme provided by an external body might enhance their formal or non-formal education experience.

Accordingly, the Department does not endorse, promote or recommend such resources or programmes. However, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award works closely with Gaisce - The President's Award within the terms of the Joint Award Initiative Agreement whereby young people from the North of Ireland may choose upon completion of the Programme to have the Gaisce Award presented.

In order to promote the Joint Award Initiative, the main documentation for participants - the Joint Award Initiative Welcome packs, clearly identify Gaisce – The President's Award as a partner and includes detailed information about the choice of certification available to young people.

The availability of the Joint Award Initiative is promoted widely by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme at every opportunity, including leader/supervision/expedition assessor training courses. The Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Gaisce- the President's Award are currently developing plans to recruit a Development Officer to increase participation among young people and, in particular, to further promote the choice of certification available under the Joint Award Initiative.

School Buildings That Have Closed

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to list the school buildings that have closed in the past three years and subsequently sold; and to detail the total net proceeds of the sales.

(AQW 26109/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A list of the School buildings that have closed in the last three years and subsequently sold, along with detail of the net proceeds, are listed below.

| School | Net Proceeds (£000's) |
|--|-----------------------|
| Ballee Primary School (Building Demolished) | 61 |
| Bangor Grammar School (College Avenue) | 1,178 |
| Clogher Regional Primary School | 69 |
| Former Tor Bank Special School | 995 |
| Grove Primary School, Belfast (buildings demolished) | 116 |

Dean Maguire College, Carrickmore

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Education how the new build proposals for the replacement of the Dean Maguire College, Carrickmore are being advanced.

(AQW 26126/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: There have been no further developments since my last response to you in April this year. A major capital works project for Dean Maguire College is one of a large number of proposals currently with the Department. There are a number of site and planning issues still to be resolved around the plans for a new build for the school.

I met with local representatives in August to review the need for a new build for Dean Maguire College and will continue to examine the case for capital investment for the school together with other new build propositions as part of any future announcement. If the precise nature of any capital works required at the existing school is determined, a bid could be made through the Schools Enhancement Programme.

Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register

Mr Flanagan asked the Minister of Education how many people on the Northern Ireland Substitute Teacher Register are currently employed on a permanent basis.

(AQW 26157/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: No teachers on the Substitute Teacher Register (NISTR) are employed on a permanent basis, as they are employed on temporary contracts to cover absent teachers. Teachers seeking employment through NISTR can be offered periods of employment from as short as half a day's work to longer periods involving a fixed term contract of several months, where it is known that longer term cover is required from the outset, due to a secondment for example. The majority of appointments are for shorter periods of days or weeks to meet the needs of schools.

Capital Works and Refurbishment Projects

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Education, in relation to capital works and refurbishment projects, whether a school, architect, electrical or mechanical consultant, can specify, within the specification or employer's requirements, a brand of products to be used; and whether a proposed equal alternative product would be accepted.

(AQW 26163/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In the education sector, the Contracting Authority will be either a school (e.g voluntary sector) or an Education & Library Board (e.g. controlled sector). The Contracting Authority, or consultants acting on its behalf, procuring goods, works and services, is governed by The Public Contract Regulations 2006. Regulation 9 states that: '...a contracting authority shall not lay down technical specifications in the contract documents which refer to— (a) materials or goods of a specific make or source or to a particular process; or (b) trademarks, patents, types, origin or means of production; which have the effect of favouring or eliminating particular economic operators' [Reg 9 (16)].

In addition, '...exceptionally, a contracting authority may incorporate the references referred to in paragraph (16) into the technical specifications in the contract documents, provided that the references are accompanied by the words 'or equivalent', where—(a) the subject of the contract makes the use of such references indispensable; or (b) the subject of the contract cannot otherwise be described by reference to technical specifications which are sufficiently precise and intelligible to all economic operators' [Reg 9 (17)].

Therefore, generic specification of products should be the norm for public procurement policy. If however, a Contracting Authority in the education sector or its consultant believes that a particular circumstance satisfies the restrictive requirements of the Regulation, they must be able to robustly defend their position if challenged.

Common Funding Scheme: Schools

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the financial impact of the proposed Common Funding Scheme on schools in the district electoral areas of (i) Carrickfergus; (ii) Antrim; and (iii) Newtownabbey.

(AQW 26203/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The illustrative budgets prepared for schools as part of the current Common Funding Scheme (CFS) consultation exercise reflect what schools would have received in the current year if all the proposed changes had applied. The figures are based on this year's enrolment numbers, free school meals entitlement and Aggregated Schools' Budget (plus the additional £10m for social deprivation). The ASB for next year will increase by an additional £15.8m which is not included in these figures.

My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals yet.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures, or an assessment, on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as

the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

The report of the independent review panel highlighted the relationship between social deprivation and low educational outcomes and recommended that more funding should be targeted at pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and that this funding should be weighted towards schools with significant concentrations of disadvantage.

The consultation period closes on 18 October and I would encourage everyone with an interest in education to take part in the debate. I will take all responses into account before I make my final decisions on the way ahead.

A-Level Grades of the Last Five Academic Years

Mr Lunn asked the Minister of Education (i) how many students enrolled in year 13 for AS levels; (ii) how many of that cohort then progressed to do A-levels; (iii) how many studied for three A-levels; (iv) how many achieved three A-levels at Grade A* to E; (v) how many achieved two A-levels at Grade A* to E; and (vi) how many achieved one A-level at Grade A* to E, broken down by school, in each of the last five academic years.

(AQW 26209/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The data is not available in the format requested.

The 'Schools+' database available on the Department of Education website provides the year group enrolment data for the most recent 5 years for each school, sourced from the Annual School Census, and examination achievement data for those pupils in the final year of an A level or equivalent course of study, for the most recent 4 years, for each post primary school, sourced from the Summary of Annual Examination Results. <http://apps.deni.gov.uk/appinstitutes/instmain.aspx>

Meals Provided to Children

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25578/11-15, whether his Department has undertaken research into whether breakfast might be a more beneficial meal to provide to children.

(AQW 26240/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The consumption of a well-balanced meal can make an important contribution to a child's nutrition and health in addition to the associated impacts on behaviour, concentration and cognitive development. The Department recognises that all children should eat three regular meals per day – breakfast, lunch and the evening meal.

The Department has not undertaken research on the benefits of free school meals provided at mid-day in comparison to breakfasts and is not aware of research of this nature having been undertaken in Scotland, Wales or the South of Ireland. Officials in the Department for Education (England) have also confirmed that they have not undertaken a direct comparison in this regard.

Expert advice indicates, however, that in a school setting, the lunch menu can provide a wider variety and complexity of food compared to breakfast which helps towards meeting children's daily nutrient and energy requirements.

Consequently, the Department requires that the Education and Library Boards and schools ensure that in providing free school meals these must be "suitable as the main meal of the day" (as set out in the Department's "Arrangements for the Provision of Milk, Meals and Related Facilities") and must comply with the Nutritional Standards for School Meals.

I consider that this approach will help ensure that the direct and wider benefits of nutritious free school meals to pupils from low income households are realised.

I will continue to review any new or emerging evidence on the benefits of food provided in school to inform future Departmental policy interventions in this regard.

Circular 9/99 Pastoral Care in Schools: Child Protection

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Education what consideration his Department has given to updating Circular 9/99 Pastoral Care in Schools – Child Protection, which outlines schools responsibility in communicating child protection matters.

(AQW 26243/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: A revision of Circular 1999/10 is under active consideration. The revision will update and expand the content and also change the format to be web-based. Any revised version must be compatible with the key children's safeguarding policy guidance, 'Co-operating to Safeguard Children'. This overarching policy framework for all relevant Departments is maintained by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and is currently being revised. The new version is to be published in March 2015 after a period of consultation.

The same target will be used for the launch of a revised version of Circular 1999/10.

The guidance set out in Circular 1999/10 for schools to use is still valid. This has been supplemented since 1999 by further Circulars on various aspects of child protection and with letters of advice on related topics.

Since 1999 the Child Protection Support Service for Schools has been established and a structured approach to child protection training for key schools' staff has been implemented. All newly appointed principals, designated teachers and deputy designated teachers for child protection are offered training in their first year in post and refresher training every third year thereafter. The actual content of the training is kept under continuous review and updated to accommodate any relevant developments, such as child sexual exploitation.

Engineering Skills and Demand in Industry Report

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education, given that the Institution of Engineering and Technology's Engineering Skills and Demand in Industry Report 2013 revealed that just 7 percent of the engineering and technology workforce was female, what his Department is doing to promote the uptake of STEM subjects amongst female pupils.

(AQW 26249/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The promotion of STEM subjects is one of the Department's priorities and we are currently supporting a number of programmes to promote the uptake in STEM subjects.

Sentinus, the Department's front line STEM delivery partner, delivers in excess of 57,000 primary and post-primary pupil engagements annually across a portfolio of STEM enhancement and enrichment programmes. One of the targets set annually by the Department requires Sentinus to ensure a gender balance within a tolerance of +/- 5% across all DE funded programmes.

Sentinus has achieved this target in each of the last four years (2009/10 – 2012/13) with a maximum gender variance of +/-2%.

Since 2007/08 the gender breakdown of the total A-Level STEM examination entries has remained within a tolerance of +/- 5%.

Payments to Non-Teaching Staff

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education for an update on the payment of £250 to non-teaching staff who earn less than £21,000 per year; and whether any payments from previous years remain outstanding.

(AQW 26295/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The £250 payments have been made to the majority of eligible staff. Staff across the Voluntary Grammar and Grant Maintained Integrated Sectors eligible for the payment but yet to receive it, will do so as soon as the necessary approvals are in place. I have instructed my officials to progress this work as a matter of urgency.

Irish Medium Education Sector

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education what assessment has been carried out of the efficiency savings which could be made within the Irish Medium Education sector.

(AQW 26301/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Schools across all sectors are expected to manage their delegated budgets efficiently and effectively and the Irish Medium sector is no different in that regard to any other sector.

In line with its statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish medium education, the Department provides funding to Comhairle na Gaelscolaichte. Again in common with other executive non-departmental bodies it is required to deliver its functions in a manner that delivers value for money.

I am committed to ensuring that the education budget is effectively disbursed and used in a manner that delivers value for money. It is not, however, my approach to target one particular sector.

Free School Meals

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education how many children receive free school meals, broken down by the (i) Catholic Maintained; (ii) Controlled; (iii) Integrated; and (iv) Irish language sectors.

(AQW 26328/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures for entitlement to free school meals relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the table overleaf. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census, which will be carried out during October.

NURSERY SCHOOLS, PRIMARY AND POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOLS MEALS BY MANAGEMENT TYPE – 2012/13

| Management/ school type | Pupils entitled to FSM | Total pupils |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Catholic Maintained | 39,391 | 119,078 |
| Controlled | 29,417 | 126,356 |
| Integrated | 5,630 | 21,503 |
| Irish medium | 1,574 | 3,261 |
| Total | 76,012 | 270,198 |

Source: School census

Note:

- 1 Figures include all pupils entitled to free school meals, including the nursery sector (whether free school meal or JSA). Special schools and voluntary and private preschool centres have not been included.
- 2 Figures relating to primary schools include nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- 3 Figures for integrated include controlled integrated and grant maintained integrated schools.
- 4 Figures for Irish medium include two controlled Irish medium schools and one Catholic maintained Irish Medium School.
- 5 Irish medium units have been included with the management type of the school to which they are attached, not the Irish medium sector.
- 6 Figures do not include other maintained non Irish medium schools or voluntary schools.

Western Education and Library Board

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25583/11-15, to detail (i) the schools that are still in the ownership of the Western Education and Library Board; and (ii) the schools that have been sold.

(AQW 26329/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Pursuant to my answer to AQW 25583/11-15

(i) A list of the controlled schools still in the ownership of the Western Education and Library Board is as follows:

- Lisnaskea High School
- Bridgehill Primary School
- Ardstraw Primary school
- Drumlegagh Primary School
- Strabane Grammar School
- Strabane High School
- Devenish College

(ii) None of these schools have been sold yet.

Common Funding Scheme: Primary Schools

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education why fourteen out of the seventeen primary schools in the North Down area will lose financial support from his Department, as a result of the Common Funding Scheme.

(AQW 26346/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The independent review of the Common Funding Scheme (CFS) recommended that more funding should be targeted at pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and that this funding should be weighted towards schools with significant concentrations of disadvantage.

As part of the current consultation on the proposed changes to the CFS, schools have been provided with illustrative budgets which reflect the total Aggregated School Budget (ASB) individual schools would have received in this current financial year, if the proposed changes had been implemented.

My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals. It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools next year, until these decisions are made.

In the case of primary schools in the North Down area, based on the illustrative budgets, fourteen out of the seventeen would have lost funding as a result of the proposed changes in funding for TSN allocations and changes to the sports and premises factors. It should be remembered however that these illustrative budgets only and do not reflect the £15.8m that the ASB will increase by in April 2014 nor my final decisions on the proposals currently out for consultation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level such as pupil enrolment numbers and FSME as well as my final decisions on changes to the Scheme.

The consultation on the proposals for the reform of the Common Funding Scheme runs until 18 October. I would encourage everyone with an interest in Education to respond to this consultation exercise. I will take into account all responses received before I make my final decisions on the way ahead.

Retention of School Crossing Patrols

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education whether the criteria for the retention of school crossing patrols is the same throughout Northern Ireland.

(AQW 26368/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Responsibility for the provision of school crossing patrols rests with the Education and Library Boards, and all five Boards have confirmed that they use the same criteria when assessing whether there is a continued need for a school crossing patrol at a particular location.

Paediatric Psychology Reports

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education what weight is given to paediatric psychology reports when assessing the needs of pupils.

(AQW 26371/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is normal practice for educational psychologists (EPs) to give due consideration to reports from other psychologists during assessments at Stage 3 (non-statutory) and Stage 4 (statutory) of the Code of Practice on the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs (COP).

At Stage 4 of the COP education and library boards (ELBs) are required to seek parental, educational, medical, psychological and social services advice and the EP must record any advice received from any other psychologist such as a clinical or occupational psychologist who may have relevant knowledge of or information about the child.

Educational Psychologists

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education how many educational psychologists are employed by (i) the North Eastern Education and Library Board; and (ii) his Department.

(AQW 26372/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: (i) The North Eastern Education and Library Board (NEELB) currently employ 25.92 full time equivalent (FTE) educational psychologists.

(ii) The Department of Education does not employ educational psychologists.

Educational Psychologists

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Education how schools are allocated pupil assessments by educational psychologists.

(AQW 26373/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At Stage 3 of the Code of Practice on the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs, when schools are supported by specialists from outside the school including an educational psychologist (EP), education and library boards' educational psychology services employ a time allocation model of delivery. Working closely with their named EP schools prioritise their needs based on the principles of consultation, equity of access and flexibility. Psychology support using this model is apportioned based on school enrolment, social deprivation and educational achievement.

Homophobia in Schools

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education for an update on his Department's work to address the problem of homophobia in schools.

(AQW 26382/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under the Department's revised curriculum, teachers should address homophobia as part of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (PDMU) at primary level and Learning for Life and Work (LLW) at post-primary level. The issue should also be raised as part of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE).

Each school sets its own policy on RSE but this must take account of the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2006, which gives all pupils the right to learn in a safe environment, treated with respect and dignity and without discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Homophobia will commonly manifest itself through bullying behaviour. Bullying, for whatever reason and in whatever form, is unacceptable and schools are required by law to have policies in place to tackle all types of bullying. I am aware, however, that homophobic bullying remains a live issue.

Addressing this is a shared challenge, which is why my Department funds and is a member of the Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF). The Forum has produced resources specifically dealing with homophobic bullying and has a task group devoted to tackling this and promoting best practice in schools.

The Forum has also produced a new general resource for schools called "Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour" which identifies best practice in creating a whole school anti-bullying culture, assists schools in developing clear and effective discipline and anti-bullying policies. It also provides guidance to help staff support pupils who have been bullied and challenge those pupils engaging in bullying behaviour.

DE makes use of information on sexual orientation gathered through research exercises, to inform its policies and programmes. The last DE initiated research was conducted in 2004 and I have asked my officials to scope fresh research on the needs of young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T). I have also asked the NIABF to review current bullying provisions and identify those areas requiring further departmental action.

Reduction of Primary School Budgets

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many children will be affected by the reduction of primary school budgets under the funding formula proposals; and how much money per child will be lost to those schools.

(AQW 26430/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

It is not possible therefore to project the levels of funding that will be available at individual school or pupil level in the incoming financial year.

It should be remembered that investment in schools is on the way up rather than on the way down. The ASB is set to increase by £15.8m next year and I have already announced my intention to inject an additional £30m into it over the next two years, targeted at social deprivation.

Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Reduction of Primary School Budgets

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether there will be teacher redundancies in North Down as a result of the funding formula proposals for primary schools.

(AQW 26431/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

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Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Reduction of Primary School Budgets

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education whether there will be classroom closures in North Down as a result of the funding formula proposals for primary schools.

(AQW 26432/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My proposals on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme are still out for consultation. I have not taken any final decisions on these proposals.

It is not possible therefore to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year, until these decisions are made. In addition, other factors, such as the increased Aggregated Schools' Budget (ASB) for next year, overall enrolment levels, the number of Free School Meal Entitled pupils, and the number of Newcomer and Traveller pupils etc will impact on funding levels at individual school level.

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Actual allocations for the 2014-15 financial year will be notified to schools in the early part of 2014. They will reflect increases in the ASB in 2014-15, factors at individual school level as well as my final decisions on changes to the Common Funding Scheme.

Funded Activities Under Pressure of Closure

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Education whether he has any evidence of a growing trend in councils of closing visitor attractions, leisure facilities, community or amenity facilities that were initially jointly funded by Government and/or European funding provided on a three year sustainability basis; and if any funded activities are under pressure from closure or additional funding requirements.

(AQW 26445/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: These matters are not the responsibility of my Department.

Omagh Christian Brothers Grammar School

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Education what progress has been made by Omagh Christian Brothers Grammar School in addressing the issues raised in the June 2013 inspection report, particularly the issue of bullying and intimidation of staff.

(AQW 26452/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Progress continues to be made by the school in addressing the issues raised in the recent inspection report but there are further steps to be taken. Senior officials from my Department met recently with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board of Governors who provided assurance about the determination of the governors to resolve outstanding issues.

The school is required to submit an action plan to the Department by mid-October and is receiving support from the Western Education & Library Board in finalising this plan.

In addition, my Department is working with the school and the WELB to put in place in the coming weeks a suitable mediation arrangement designed to help the governors address outstanding issues and build a culture of trust and mutual support throughout the school community

Special Educational Needs: Change in the Number of Children

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Education to detail the change in the numbers of children identified as having Special Educational Needs in each of the last five years.
(AQW 26471/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the table overleaf. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census, which will be carried out during October.

ALL SCHOOLS – PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) – 2008/09 – 2012/13

| | 2008/ 09 | 2009/ 10 | 2010/ 11 | 2011/ 12 | 2012/ 13 |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total SEN pupils | 60,520 | 63,107 | 64,931 | 67,344 | 69,603 |
| Change in total from previous year | - | 2,587 | 1,824 | 2,413 | 2,259 |

Notes:

- 1 Figures include voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, primary, post-primary and special schools.
- 2 Figures for primary include nursery classes, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- 3 Figures include pupils at stages 1 – 5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

Newtownbreda High School and Knockbreda High School

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposed amalgamation of Newtownbreda High School and Knockbreda High School.

(AQW 26476/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Development Proposal No 237 for the amalgamation of Knockbreda High School and Newtownbreda High School was published by the South Eastern Education and Library Board (SEELB) on 16 April 2013.

The statutory 2 month consultation period ended on 16 June. However on 25 June the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) advised my Department that it had not carried out the required consultation with schools in its area which may be affected by the 3 SEELB development proposals namely

- Knockbreda/ Newtownbreda High Schools;
- Dundonald High School; and
- Priory Integrated College, Holywood.

This consultation was initiated by BELB in the week commencing 9th September and ended on 30 September. A response from the BELB is expected within the next few weeks.

I will then make my decision on the proposal as soon as possible in order to provide clarity and certainty for the schools affected by the proposals.

Exploris Aquarium

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to assist in securing the future of Exploris.

(AQW 26518/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am aware of the decision by Ards Borough Council to delay the closure of the Exploris Aquarium for two months to allow Government Departments to consider proposals for the future funding of the centre.

The Department of Education (DE) does not provide funding for the upkeep of Exploris, nor would it be appropriate to do so. DE delegates as much funding and decision-making as possible to schools, which are best placed to assess the needs of their pupils. It is a matter for schools to decide on the resources they wish to use to support their delivery of the curriculum, including educational visits to centres such as Exploris.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education what assurances he can give that examination subjects offered by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment are timetabled to maximally facilitate multiple entry in other examination boards by being offered on different days.

(AQW 26537/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: CCEA operates along with the other four main awarding organisations, within the common timetable for GCSE and GCE qualifications agreed by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ). By operating this collaborative system, awarding organisations can ensure that timetabling clashes of high entry subjects are avoided, thus minimising excessive hours of examining time for students on any one day.

The JCQ instructions make provision for situations where a clash occurs, i.e. where a student wishes to sit examinations, offered by different awarding organisations, that are timetabled at the same time.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education to detail the equating procedure used to support his claim of equivalence between Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment examinations and those of the English board examinations.

(AQW 26538/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: To date both proactive and reactive measures have been used to ensure comparability of standards. The regulator of general qualifications here, the Council for the Curriculum, Qualifications and Standards (CCEA), works with counterparts in England and Wales to develop common criteria against which the GCSE and A level specifications (together with sample assessment materials and mark schemes) are accredited.

Joint arrangements are in place for awarding, where the marks achieved on the papers are translated into grades A* to E for A levels and A* to G for GCSEs.

Joint work is undertaken by the regulators to monitor the operation of the qualification by Awarding Organisations (scrutiny reports) and make judgements about the maintenance of standards over time and across Awarding Organisations (standards reviews).

The regulator here is engaging in discussions with Ofqual and the Welsh Government to ensure that arrangements continue to be in place to assure comparability.

Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Education whether local pupils will be restricted to taking only Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment examinations funded by the Executive.

(AQW 26539/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have no objections to English or Welsh Awarding Organisations offering qualifications here, provided that the content of those qualifications do not corrupt our curriculum.

As policies here and across the other jurisdictions develop, I will wish to keep this matter under review.

Magherafelt District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the starting time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Magherafelt District Council area.

(AQW 26564/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Magherafelt District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the break time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Magherafelt District Council area.

(AQW 26565/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Magherafelt District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the lunch time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Magherafelt District Council area.

(AQW 26566/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Magherafelt District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the finish time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Magherafelt District Council area.

(AQW 26567/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Schools Renting Property

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of Education to list the schools which currently rent (i) land; or (ii) properties; and to list the (a) landlord and (b) rent paid.

(AQW 26587/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Schools which currently rent land or properties are listed in the table below, including details of the rent paid. Education and Library Boards (ELBs) have provided the information on

schools in each ELB area and have advised that information about individual landlords is commercially sensitive, held in confidence, protected under the Data Protection Act 1998.

WESTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD AREA

| | Landlord | Rent |
|--|---------------------------|------------------|
| Dunmullan Primary School (Land) | Private | £500 pa |
| Lisnagelvin Primary School (Land) | Derry City Council | £1 – if demanded |
| McClintock Primary School (Land and Building) | Private | £17,500 pa |
| Dunmullan Primary School (5 car parking spaces) | Church | £17 per week |
| Gaelscoil Uí Dhochartaigh | Strabane District Council | £6,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil Éadain Mhóir | Private | £15,000 pa |
| Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Lisnaskea (Accommodation) | Private | £9,948 pa |
| Bunscoil an Traonaigh, Lisnaskea (Site) | Private | £19,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Daróige, Derry (Site) | Private | £11,300 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Daróige, Derry (Accommodation) | Private | £6,200 pa |
| Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh, Limavady (site) | Private (1) | £6,700 pa |
| Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh, Limavady (accommodation) | Private (2) | £41,600 pa |
| Gaelscoil Léim an Mhadaidh, Limavady (accommodation) | Private (3) | £15,600 pa |
| Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh (Site) | Private (1) | £4335.84 pa |
| Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh (Site) | Private (2) | Lease awaited |
| Gaelscoil na gCrann, Omagh (Accommodation) | Private (3) | £12,500 pa |

BELFAST EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD AREA

| | Landlord | Rent |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Gaelscoil an Lonnain | Private | £35,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Mona (site) | Private | £14,450 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Mona (accommodation) | Private | £23,689 pa |
| Scoil an Droichid | Private | £8,000 pa |
| Little Flower HS | Private | £32,000 pa |
| Blackmountain PS (Caretaker's House) | NIHE | £3,297 pa |

***SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD AREA**

| | Landlord | Rent |
|--|-----------------|-------------|
| Brookfield Special | Private | £1,070 pa |
| Derryboy PS | Private | £100 pa |
| Ballyvester Primary School | Church | £8,250 pa |
| Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, Castlewellan (Site) | Private | £9,000 pa |

SOUTHERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD AREA

| | Landlord | Rent |
|---|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Armstrong Primary School, Armagh | Private | £1,600 pa |
| Carrick Primary School, Lurgan | Craigavon Borough Council | £4.83 pa |
| Armagh High School - Playing Fields | Private | £1,400 pa |
| Craigavon Senior High School, Lurgan Campus | Private | £12,750 pa |
| Craigavon Senior High School, Lurgan Campus | Private | £13,750 pa |
| Craigavon Senior High School, Lurgan Campus | Private | £7,500 pa |
| Dromore Central Primary School | Private | £8.00 pa |
| Maralin Village PS | Church | £1,000 pa |
| Millington PS | Private | £10.00 pa |
| The Cope PS | Church | £1,500 pa |
| Gaelscoil na mBeann, Kilkeel (Site) | Private (1) | £2,016 pa |
| Gaelscoil na mBeann, Kilkeel (Accommodation) | Private (2) | £7,764 pa |
| Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, Dungannon (Site) | Private (1) | No rent demanded |
| Gaelscoil Aodha Rua, Dungannon (Accommodation) | Private (2) | £15,600 pa |
| Gaelscoil Eoghain, Cookstown (Site) | Private (1) | £13,800 pa |
| Gaelscoil Eoghain, Cookstown (Accommodation) | Private (2) | £15,600 pa |
| Bunscoil an Iúir, Newry (Site + Accommodation) | Newry & Mourne District Council | £40,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil Uí Néill (Site) | Private | £8,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil Uí Néill (Site Access) | NIHE | If demanded |

NORTH EASTERN EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARD AREA

| | Landlord | Rent |
|---|------------------------|-----------------|
| Carnalbanagh PS (Land) | Church | £1,200 pa |
| Carnalbanagh PS (use of Church Hall) | Church | £10,750 pa |
| Carnalridge Primary School | Private | £25 pa |
| Creavery Primary School (Building) | Private | £8,500 pa |
| Creavery Primary School (Land) | Private | £1,000 pa |
| Crumlin Primary School | Private | £30,000 pa |
| Culnady Primary School (use of Church Hall) | Church | £1,000 pa |
| Culnady Primary School (car park) | Church | £850 pa |
| Desertmartin Primary School (use of Church Hall) | Church | £750 pa |
| Longstone Primary School | Private | £13,500 pa |
| Gaelscoil an tSeancháí (Car Park) | Private | £6,500 pa |
| Gaelscoil an tSeancháí (Mobile Site) | Private | £525 pa |
| Parkgate Primary School (use of Church Hall) | Church | £12.00 per hour |
| Straid Primary School (Land for playground) | Private | £2,000 pa |
| Straid Primary School (Mobile site) | Church | £2,000 pa |
| Straid Primary School (use of Church Hall) | Church | £5,100 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Spéiríni, Draperstown | Private (1) | £8,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil na Spéiríni, Draperstown | Private (2) | £5,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach, Crumlin (Accommodation) | Private | £4,400 pa |
| Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach, Crumlin (main hall) | Antrim Borough Council | £5.10 per hour |
| Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach, Crumlin (sports hall) | Antrim Borough Council | £4.10 per hour |
| Gaelscoil Éanna, Glengormley (Site) | Private | £7,000 pa |
| Gaelscoil Éanna, Glengormley (Accommodation) | Private | £15,600 pa |
| Gaelscoil an tSeancháí, Magherafelt | NEELB | 1p if demanded |

INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

| | Landlord | Rent |
|---|-----------------|-------------|
| Drumlins Integrated Primary School - Site | Private | £32,000 pa |
| Drumlins Integrated Primary School - Mobile | Private | £26,700 pa |
| Blackwater Integrated College | SEELB | £136 pa |
| Blackwater Integrated College - Mobiles | Private | £44,600 pa |

* South Eastern Education & Library Board has also added that “there are a number of other sites for which a rent is paid but this is by way of ground rent and not for rental of land (eg play area, siting of mobiles). There are additional rentals in relation to other Board areas eg youth, grounds maintenance but the question appears to relate solely to schools.”

Standard School Inspections

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Education to list the schools that have not had a full standard inspection in the last ten years; and the reasons why they have not been inspected.
(AQW 26590/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The standard inspection is an inspection model for post-primary schools which was introduced by ETI in 2006. In the last ten years (1 September 2003 to 31 August 2013) three post-primary schools have not had a published inspection report using this approach or its predecessors. These three schools were involved in the School Support Programme which resulted in annual published follow-up inspection report for each of them until 2007.

The names of the 3 post-primary schools cannot be released as they are due for inspection. This is in accordance with the standard two week inspection notification period.

Suicide Awareness in Schools

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education what steps his Department has taken to help schools deal with the issue of suicide; and what is the minimum level of advice and support pupils can expect from a school in relation to suicide awareness.

(AQW 26596/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: If a school has experienced the death of a pupil by suicide, support is available from the Critical Incident Response Team at the local Education and Library Board. The Team will support the Senior Management Team and direct the school to a range of appropriate services. Counselling support is made available in these circumstances to pupils in all grant-aided primary and post-primary schools.

A “Guide to Managing Critical Incidents in Schools” along with a supporting DVD is in the final stages of preparation and will be launched in this school year. It aims to help schools prepare for a range of serious incidents such as the sudden death of a pupil.

While there is no minimum level of advice and support for pupils, each school will determine an appropriate response as part of their pastoral care arrangements

As part of the suicide prevention arrangements, the Department aims to help schools promote positive emotional health and wellbeing of pupils.

The Revised Curriculum has elements designed to help pupils identify the stressors in their lives and develop the capacity to deal with them.

The 'iMatter' Programme provides advice and guidance on emotional health and wellbeing. Working groups have developed a range of products including a suite of 20 homework diary inserts / posters on topics of concern to young people including self esteem, substance abuse and relationships. These detail sources of help and support for the pupils.

Free School Meals: South Down

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Education how many pupils have Free School Meal Entitlement in each school in South Down; and what this figure represents as a percentage of the number of pupils attending each school.

(AQW 26598/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures for entitlement to free school meals relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the tables below. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census which will be carried out during October.

Pupils entitled to free school meals who are enrolled in schools located in the South Down constituency - 2012/13

VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE PRESCHOOL CENTRES

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|--|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Ardglass Community Playgroup | 24 | 7 | 29% |
| Atticall PreSchool Playgroup | 15 | 0 | 0% |
| Ballykinlar Cross Community Preschool | 14 | * | * |
| Busy Bees Playgroup (Burren) | 24 | * | * |
| Carrick PreSchool | 24 | * | * |
| Castlewellan Community Playgroup | 26 | 0 | 0% |
| Clonduff Playgroup | 52 | 10 | 19% |
| Crossgar Community Playgroup | 21 | * | * |
| Drumaness CrossCommunity Playgroup | 30 | * | * |
| Dundrum Cross Community Playgroup | 21 | * | * |
| Dunnaman Childrens Centre | 13 | 5 | 38% |
| Glenn & Barr Playgroup | 24 | * | * |
| Great Oaks Playgroup | 10 | 0 | 0% |
| Jolly Tots Playgroup | 45 | * | * |
| Kids Kabin PreSchool (was Drumaroad CC PG) | 19 | 0 | 0% |
| Kilcoo Playgroup | 23 | * | * |
| Kilkeel Playgroup | 16 | * | * |
| Killough Playgroup | 9 | * | * |
| Kingdom Playgroup | 21 | 5 | 24% |
| Leitrim Community Playgroup | 24 | * | * |

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Little Folk Playgroup | 38 | * | * |
| Loughinisland Playgroup | 26 | * | * |
| Lower Mourne PreSchool Playgroup | 18 | * | * |
| Naíscoil Dhun Padraig | 19 | 0 | 0% |
| Naiscoil na mBeann | 19 | * | * |
| Naíscoil Uachtar Tíre | 22 | * | * |
| Newcastle PreSchool Playgroup | 21 | * | * |
| Playlinks Playgroup | 14 | * | * |
| Rascals 'n' Ruffians | 26 | 5 | 19% |
| Rathfriland Pre School Playgroup | 51 | * | * |
| Rathkeltair Cross Community Playgroup | 21 | * | * |
| Rockmount Day Nursery | 17 | 0 | 0% |
| Saul Cross Community Playgroup | 25 | 0 | 0% |
| Strawberry Tree Playgroup | 26 | * | * |
| Teconnaught CrossCommunity Playgroup | 20 | 0 | 0% |
| Tiny Toons Community Playgroup | 12 | * | * |

NURSERY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Convent of Mercy Nursery School | 52 | 31 | 60% |
| Downpatrick Nursery School | 26 | 13 | 50% |
| Kilkeel Nursery School | 83 | 16 | 19% |
| Seaview Nursery School | 78 | 12 | 15% |
| St Colmcille's Nursery School | 52 | 26 | 50% |

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| All Childrens Integrated Primary School | 220 | 56 | 25% |
| Annalong Primary School | 167 | 51 | 31% |
| Annsborough Primary School | 41 | 11 | 27% |
| Ballydown Primary School | 333 | 28 | 8% |

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Ballyholland Primary School | 232 | 43 | 19% |
| Brackenagh West Primary School | 169 | 32 | 19% |
| Bronte Primary School | 161 | 16 | 10% |
| Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche | 84 | 37 | 44% |
| Carrick Primary School | 401 | 37 | 9% |
| Castlewellan Primary School | 73 | 22 | 30% |
| Cedar Integrated Primary School | 207 | 27 | 13% |
| Christ the King Primary School | 95 | 34 | 36% |
| Clontfleece Primary School | 34 | 5 | 15% |
| Cumran Primary School | 200 | 35 | 18% |
| Down High School | 57 | * | * |
| Downpatrick Primary School | 204 | 72 | 35% |
| Dromore Road Primary School | 72 | 28 | 39% |
| Drumadonnell Primary School | 204 | 25 | 12% |
| Gaelscoil Na mBeann | 20 | 10 | 50% |
| Glasswater Primary School | 84 | 14 | 17% |
| Grange Primary School | 97 | 32 | 33% |
| Holy Cross Primary School, Kilkeel | 130 | 21 | 16% |
| Iveagh Primary School | 233 | 72 | 31% |
| Kilbroney Integrated Primary School | 99 | 40 | 40% |
| Kilkeel Primary School | 410 | 109 | 27% |
| Killowen Primary School, Rostrevor | 106 | 13 | 12% |
| Moneydarragh Primary School | 72 | 12 | 17% |
| Newcastle Primary School | 167 | 52 | 31% |
| Our Lady and St Patrick Primary School | 412 | 159 | 39% |
| Sacred Heart Primary School, Newcastle | 77 | 25 | 32% |
| Spa Primary School | 156 | 10 | 6% |
| St Brigid's Primary School, Downpatrick | 239 | 73 | 31% |
| St Bronagh's Primary School, Rostrevor | 157 | 50 | 32% |
| St Colman's Primary School, Kilkeel | 186 | 94 | 51% |
| St Colman's Primary School, Saval | 177 | 42 | 24% |
| St Colman's Primary School, Banbridge | 160 | 27 | 17% |
| St Colmcille's Primary School, Downpatrick | 163 | 117 | 72% |

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|---|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| St Dallan's Primary School, Warrenpoint | 446 | 147 | 33% |
| St Francis' Primary School, Castlederg | 82 | 23 | 28% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Downpatrick | 61 | 25 | 41% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Newcastle | 164 | 30 | 18% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Strangford | 43 | 12 | 28% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Tyrella | 72 | 12 | 17% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Killough | 72 | 32 | 44% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Kilkeel | 84 | 23 | 27% |
| St Macartan's Primary School, Downpatrick | 185 | 24 | 13% |
| St Malachy's Primary School, Coleraine | 67 | 17 | 25% |
| St Malachy's Primary School, Kilcoo | 133 | 43 | 32% |
| St Malachy's Primary School, Castlewellan | 326 | 118 | 36% |
| St Mary's Aughlisnafin | 160 | 48 | 30% |
| St Mary's Primary School, Ardglass | 86 | 15 | 17% |
| St Mary's Primary School, Newcastle | 339 | 109 | 32% |
| St Mary's Primary School, Rathfriland | 103 | 32 | 31% |
| St Mary's Primary School, Annalong | 62 | 22 | 35% |
| St Marys Primary School Dechomet | 79 | 16 | 20% |
| St Matthew's Primary School, Magheramayo | 60 | 18 | 30% |
| St Nicholas' Primary School, Ardglass | 101 | 54 | 53% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Saul | 184 | 29 | 16% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Castlewellan | 52 | 9 | 17% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Downpatrick | 166 | 61 | 37% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Mayobridge | 303 | 79 | 26% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Hilltown | 288 | 99 | 34% |
| St Patrick's Primary School, Drumgreenagh | 86 | 18 | 21% |
| St Paul's Primary School, Cabra | 73 | 14 | 19% |
| St Ronan's Primary School, Newry | 398 | 53 | 13% |
| The Holy Family Primary School | 192 | 29 | 15% |

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Abbey Christian Brothers Grammar School | 907 | 87 | 10% |
| Blackwater Integrated College | 271 | 71 | 26% |
| De La Salle High School | 354 | 118 | 33% |
| Down High School | 968 | 35 | 4% |
| Kilkeel High School | 680 | 78 | 11% |
| Rathfriland High School | 311 | 52 | 17% |
| Sacred Heart Grammar School | 849 | 78 | 9% |
| Shimna Integrated College | 547 | 98 | 18% |
| St Colmcille's High School, Crossgar | 372 | 80 | 22% |
| St Columban's College, Kilkeel | 193 | 64 | 33% |
| St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel | 587 | 85 | 14% |
| St Malachy's High School, Castlewellan | 1015 | 283 | 28% |
| St Mark's High School, Warrenpoint | 889 | 254 | 29% |
| St Mary's High School, Downpatrick | 437 | 136 | 31% |
| St Patrick's Grammar School, Downpatrick | 718 | 50 | 7% |

Source: School census

Note:

- 7 Figures include all pupils entitled to free school meals, including the nursery/preschool sector (whether free school meal or JSA). Special schools have not been included.
- 8 Figures relating to primary schools include nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
- 9 * denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Lisanelly Project

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25903/11-15, how he proposes to deal with the issues of ownership surrounding the Lisanelly project.

(AQW 26600/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Lisanelly site is in the ownership of the Department of Education. As the Department moves forward with the implementation of the Lisanelly campus it will be engaging with the relevant stakeholders to establish an agreed vehicle for dealing with the ownership, management and financing of the site, which will form the basis of a legally binding Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).

Area Learning Community

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25329/11-15, to outline the criteria used to allocate the funding.

(AQW 26601/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The criteria against which applicants to the Strategic Development Fund were assessed were the extent to which the proposal:

- Included activities that will enable the ALC to become more focused on Programme for Government commitments to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of underachieving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Assessed existing levels of performance of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, established a baseline for year 1, and set realistic targets for improvement
- Used data within schools to identify and prioritise pupils
- Proposed actions leading to:
 - the identification and sharing of best practice
 - the drawing up of strategies for improvement of outcomes
 - the building of sustainable improvement through, for example, the development of teaching plans and resources
- Clearly outlined what the role of school leaders, year heads/heads of departments, class teachers, non-teaching staff/volunteers, and any other expertise would be in relation to raising literacy and numeracy standards for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Included plans for capacity building across the ALC

Further priority was also given to applications that demonstrated:

- How parents would be involved in their child's literacy and numeracy skills development
- How Assessment for Learning processes would be incorporated

Strategic Funding Panels

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25286/11-15, what advice his officials gave the Strategic Funding panels prior to the assessment process of applications for 2013/14.
(AQW 26602/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Fund is administered by Early Years – the Organisation for Young Children (EYO) on DE's behalf. In order to ensure compliance with the aims and criteria for the Fund, DE continues to require, as in previous years, that funding is appropriately allocated and managed by EYO in accordance with Managing Public Money (MPMNI). DE officials do not directly advise the Strategic Funding Panels.

I am advised by EYO that the Strategic Funding Panels were notified that in assessing applications to the Fund, projects must evidence financial need, as well as other issues such as quality and governance.

Building Schools Handbook

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education when the Building Schools Handbook was last reviewed.
(AQW 26603/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Schools' Building Handbook is divided into a number of sections relating to school builds for nursery, primary, secondary schools, school meals accommodation and energy efficiency. The nursery section of the handbook carries a date of February 2009, the primary June 2011 and the secondary March 2003. While the section relating to secondary schools is dated 2003 a number of draft updates relating to accommodation for media studies, learning support, Disability Discrimination Act requirements and Information and Communications Technology infrastructure have been issued, on a project by project basis, to schools and their design teams.

The Department is currently reviewing the secondary school section of the handbook and the sections relating to school meals accommodation and energy efficiency. When these have been finalised updates will be published on the Departments website.

Changes to GCSEs and A-Levels

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education to list the meetings which have taken place between his officials and officials from the Department of Education in England and the Department for Education and Skills in Wales about the potential changes to GCSEs and A-Levels.

(AQW 26604/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: My officials attend quarterly three-jurisdiction meetings with their counterparts from the Department for Education in England, and the Department for Education and Skills in Wales. The meetings are also attended by the qualifications regulators and officials from the Department for Employment and Learning.

The meetings provide a formal opportunity for officials to share information and provide policy updates from their respective jurisdictions. Potential changes to GCSEs and A levels have been and continue to be included on the agenda for these meetings.

My officials also met their Welsh counterparts earlier this year to provide updates and exchange views on qualifications reviews that were ongoing in both jurisdictions.

Good channels of communication exist between officials in the three jurisdictions.

Transport to Local Schools

Mrs Dobson asked the Minister of Education why his Department has instructed Education and Library Boards not to offer pupils assistance with transport to a more distant school when A-Levels are available within statutory walking distance of a pupil's home, even if all subjects are not available at the nearest school; and for his assessment of the impact this decision has on freedom of subject choice.

(AQW 26633/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Under the existing Home to School Transport policy, assistance with school transport is based on only two criteria, that is (i) distance, and (ii) suitable school. At post-primary level, transport assistance is restricted to pupils who enrol at a school which is more than three miles from their home, and who have been unsuccessful in gaining a place at all schools of the same category within that three mile limit. While A-Level pupils may decide to apply to a school which is more than three miles from their home in order to study a particular combination of subjects, they will not be eligible for transport assistance unless they have applied to, and been turned down by, all schools of the same category within the three mile limit. Transport cost is therefore a factor which must be taken into consideration when deciding which school to attend at A-Level.

While there may be some instances in which pupils feel that the current Home to School Transport policy restricts their choice of subjects at A-Level, since the introduction of the Entitlement Framework in September 2013, all schools have been required to offer a minimum of 21 courses to pupils in Years 13 and 14. This minimum requirement will increase to 24 courses from next September, and to 27 courses from September 2015. The Entitlement Framework will help to ensure that every pupil has access to a wide range of courses from across all the areas of learning, no matter which post-primary school they attend.

In recognition that the existing Home to School Transport policy may not have kept pace with the significant changes which have benefited other areas of the education system over recent years, I have signalled my intention to bring forward a wide-ranging review of this policy. My officials are currently taking forward work to establish the review and I hope to make an announcement in the near future.

Cookstown District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the finish time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Cookstown District Council area.

(AQW 26635/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Cookstown District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the start time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Cookstown District Council area.

(AQW 26636/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Cookstown District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the break time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Cookstown District Council area.

(AQW 26637/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Cookstown District Council: Schools

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister of Education to detail the lunch time of each (i) primary; and (ii) post-primary school in the Cookstown District Council area.

(AQW 26638/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is the Department's policy to give as much autonomy as possible to schools. In line with this policy, schools have the flexibility to set their own starting, break, lunch and finishing times. The Department of Education does not therefore hold such information at individual school level.

Nursery Places: Coalisland

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education what steps are being taken to deal with the shortfall of nursery places in Coalisland.

(AQW 26662/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At the end of the Pre-School Admissions Process for 2013/14 all parents in the Coalisland area who participated fully in the process received the offer of a funded place for their child.

Preparations are underway for the admissions process to pre-school settings in September 2014. The Department will continue to liaise with the Southern Education and Library Board to ensure that the level of provision in area remains sufficient to meet the Programme for Government commitment of providing a place for every family that wants it.

Nursery Places: Coalisland

Mr McGlone asked the Minister of Education how many eligible children in the Coalisland area have yet to receive a nursery or pre-school place for September 2013.

(AQW 26663/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: At the end of the Pre-School Admissions Process for 2013/14 all parents in the Coalisland area who participated fully in the process received the offer of a funded place for their child.

Preparations are underway for the admissions process to pre-school settings in September 2014. The Department will continue to liaise with the Southern Education and Library Board to ensure that the

level of provision in area remains sufficient to meet the Programme for Government commitment of providing a place for every family that wants it.

Children who Cannot Attend School

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 25553/11-15, when he will publish draft guidance.

(AQW 26702/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Work on this guidance is progressing and it is intended that a draft will be shared with the Education Committee, Education and Library Boards and other interested stakeholders early in the New Year.

Special Education Needs

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Education what evidence there is to show that there are higher instances of special education needs in areas where there is a higher uptake of free school meals.

(AQW 26712/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have arranged for the information requested to be placed in the Assembly Library.

Common Funding Scheme: Schools

Mr Ross asked the Minister of Education what impact the review of the Common Funding Scheme will have on the budgets of (i) nursery units and schools; (ii) primary schools; (iii) secondary and grammar schools; and (iv) special schools in East Antrim.

(AQW 26738/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Indicative budgets for each grant-aided school were prepared as part of the consultation process. Those budgets are for illustrative purposes only and reflect the delegated budget that individual schools would have received in the current financial year, if the proposed changes had been implemented. The figures are based on this year's enrolment numbers, free school meals entitlement and Aggregated Schools' Budget (plus the additional £10m for social deprivation).

I would also emphasise that the budgets schools are working with do not include the additional £15.8 million that will go into the aggregated schools budget next year.

It is not possible, therefore, to provide figures on the budgets that will be made available to schools for next year until I make my final decisions on the proposals which are currently out for consultation.

I have not made final decisions on changes to the Scheme. I have made it clear that I am open to hearing alternative ideas.

The consultation on the reform of the Common Funding Scheme closes on 18 October and I would encourage everyone with an interest in education to take part in this debate and to submit their views to my Department by that date.

Free School Meals: South Antrim

Mr Girvan asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of pupils with Free School Meals entitlement in each school in South Antrim; and what this figure represents as a percentage of the number of pupils attending each school.

(AQW 26741/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures for entitlement to free school meals relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the tables below. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census which will be carried out during October.

PUPILS ENTITLED TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS WHO ARE ENROLLED IN SCHOOLS LOCATED IN THE SOUTH ANTRIM CONSTITUENCY - 2012/13

VOLUNTARY AND PRIVATE PRESCHOOL CENTRES

| School name | Total funded enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| ABC Day Nursery | 25 | 0 | 0% |
| Ballymacward PreSchool Playgroup | 8 | * | * |
| Crumlin Integrated Pre School | 12 | * | * |
| Greendale Day Nursery | 16 | * | * |
| Kilbride Playgroup | 12 | * | * |
| Little Hands PreSchool (previously Greystone) | 14 | * | * |
| Maine Integrated Playgroup | 19 | * | * |
| Mallusk Community Playgroup | 13 | 0 | 0% |
| Muckamore PreSchool Playgroup | 26 | 7 | 27% |
| Naíscoil Éanna | 33 | 9 | 27% |
| Naíscoil Ghleann Darach | 14 | * | * |
| Randalstown Community Playgroup | 18 | 0 | 0% |
| Round Tower Community Playgroup | 37 | 9 | 24% |
| St Comgall's Playgroup | 24 | * | * |
| St MacNassis Preschool Playgroup | 24 | 0 | 0% |
| Thrushfield Nursery | 20 | 0 | 0% |
| Tiny Tots PreSchool Centre | 23 | 0 | 0% |
| TirnanÓg Playgroup | 26 | * | * |

NURSERY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Ballyclare Nursery School | 156 | 8 | 5% |
| Mossley Nursery School | 78 | 16 | 21% |
| St Joseph's Nursery School | 78 | 13 | 17% |
| Steeple Nursery School | 156 | 20 | 13% |

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| Antrim Primary School | 596 | 94 | 16% |
| Ballycarrickmaddy Primary School | 144 | 14 | 10% |
| Ballyclare Primary School | 472 | 98 | 21% |
| Ballycraigy Primary School | 138 | 70 | 51% |
| Ballymacrickett Primary School | 333 | 45 | 14% |
| Ballymacward Primary School | 60 | 13 | 22% |
| Ballynure Primary School | 117 | 6 | 5% |
| Carnmoney Primary School | 371 | 84 | 23% |
| Creavery Primary School | 62 | 13 | 21% |
| Creggan Primary School | 116 | 16 | 14% |
| Crumlin Controlled Integrated Primary School | 156 | 14 | 9% |
| Doagh Primary School | 64 | 6 | 9% |
| Duneane Primary School | 50 | 0 | 0% |
| Earlview Primary School | 166 | 94 | 57% |
| Fairview Primary School | 527 | 55 | 10% |
| Gaelscoil Ghleann Darach | 75 | 11 | 15% |
| Greystone Primary School | 181 | 63 | 35% |
| Groggan Primary School | 93 | 14 | 15% |
| Kilbride Primary School | 126 | 15 | 12% |
| Loanends Primary School | 186 | 7 | 4% |
| Maine Integrated Primary School | 113 | 19 | 17% |
| Mallusk Primary School | 65 | 14 | 22% |
| McKinney Primary School Dundrod | 147 | 15 | 10% |
| Moneynick Primary School | 66 | 15 | 23% |
| Mossley Primary School | 618 | 104 | 17% |
| Mount St Michael's Primary School | 457 | 77 | 17% |
| Parkgate Primary School | 84 | 8 | 10% |
| Parkhall Primary School | 213 | 127 | 60% |
| Randalstown Central Primary School | 203 | 23 | 11% |
| Rathenraw Integrated Primary School | 77 | 53 | 69% |
| Round Tower Integrated Primary School | 280 | 74 | 26% |

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|--|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| St Comgall's Primary School, Antrim | 476 | 91 | 19% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Antrim | 205 | 81 | 40% |
| St Joseph's Primary School, Crumlin | 766 | 121 | 16% |
| St Macnisius' Primary School, Antrim | 27 | * | * |
| St Macnissi's Primary School, Newtownabbey | 177 | 12 | 7% |
| St Oliver Plunkett's Primary School, Toomebridge | 190 | 44 | 23% |
| Straid Primary School | 87 | 8 | 9% |
| Straidhavern Primary School | 52 | * | * |
| Templepatrick Primary School | 444 | 27 | 6% |
| Thompson Primary School | 167 | 14 | 8% |
| Tildarg Primary School | 77 | 8 | 10% |
| Tir-na-Nog Primary School | 23 | * | * |

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

| School name | Total enrolment | Free school meal entitlement | % of pupils entitled to free school meals |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---|
| Antrim Grammar School | 749 | 25 | 3% |
| Ballyclare High School | 1223 | 22 | 2% |
| Ballyclare Secondary School | 1037 | 125 | 12% |
| Crumlin Integrated College | 169 | 32 | 19% |
| Parkhall Integrated College | 702 | 170 | 24% |
| St Benedict's College, Randalstown | 412 | 122 | 30% |

Source: School census

Note:

10. Figures include all pupils entitled to free school meals, including the nursery/preschool sector (whether free school meal or JSA). Special schools have not been included.
11. Figures relating to primary schools include nursery, reception and year 1 – 7 classes.
12. * denotes fewer than 5 pupils

Common Funding Formula

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education what is the closing date for responses to the consultation on the proposed changes to the Common Funding Formula.

(AQW 26762/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Consultation on the proposed changes to the Common Funding Scheme was launched on 26 June and continues until 18 October 2013.

I am currently considering requests I have received for an extension to this deadline and will make a decision on this shortly.

Education and Library Board: Dyscalculia

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Education how many children in each Education and Library Board have been identified as having dyscalculia.

(AQW 26773/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The most up-to-date figures for special educational needs relate to the 2012/13 school year, these are detailed in the table overleaf. Updated 2013/14 figures will be available following the completion of the annual school census which will be carried out during October.

NUMBER OF PUPILS WITH DYSCALCULIA – 2012/13

| ELB | Total pupils recorded as having dyscalculia |
|---------------|--|
| Belfast | 13 |
| Western | 47 |
| North Eastern | 36 |
| South Eastern | 24 |
| Southern | 34 |
| Total | 154 |

Source: School census

Note:

13. Figures include pupils in voluntary and private preschool centres, nursery schools, primary, post-primary and special schools.
14. Figures include pupils at stage 1 – 5 of the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

Glenwood Primary School

Mr Humphrey asked the Minister of Education when work will commence on the new hub school at Glenwood Primary and Edenderry Nursery schools.

(AQO 4728/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Glenwood Primary School and Edenderry Nursery School, Belfast was one of the 22 projects included in my announcement in January 2013 to be advanced in planning.

The Board is currently preparing Economic Appraisals (EA) for both projects.

The Edenderry Nursery School EA will be completed and submitted to the Department of Education for review and approval in October 2013. Full Planning Approval has been granted for a new Nursery building on a new site on Lanark Way.

Preparation of the Glenwood EA is on-going. It is anticipated that a target date for completion and submission of the Glenwood EA will be agreed early November 2013. There are a number of issues that impact on the timescale of the Glenwood EA such as Area Planning, the listed status of the Glenwood building and the identification of suitable sites within the pupil catchment area. The Board is actively working on these separate strands of the scheme.

Small Schools Policy

Mr Attwood asked the Minister of Education how he intends to develop a Small Schools Policy, as recommended in the Review of the Common Funding Scheme.

(AQO 4725/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: Having carefully considered all the recommendations in the report, I set out my own proposals for change to the Common Funding Scheme in a statement to the Assembly on 11 June. The proposed changes are currently being consulted upon.

In my statement I advised that I have no difficulty with the thinking behind the recommendation but I do not believe that another policy is necessary.

We already have a Sustainable Schools policy that sets out the criteria and quality indicators to help managing authorities to assess schools' sustainability.

We already have an extensive area based planning process underway designed to ensure that schools are planned strategically to deliver sustainable, high quality education.

I will provide further clarification within existing policy on the circumstances as to when a small school will need to be retained and how it will be supported when the current consultation has concluded and responses have been considered.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Education to outline his Department's approach to addressing the problem of the sexual exploitation of children.

(AQO 4726/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am very disturbed about the nature and extent of the recent child exploitation investigation.

As the single statutory service in daily contact with the majority of children and young people, a school's role in responding to concerns about an individual child and teaching all children to keep safe is vital.

I am committed to protecting our children and young people and to ensuring that our child protection arrangements within education are robust and to implementing an effective preventative curriculum which teaches all children how to keep safe.

My Department supports schools through the 'iMatter' Programme, in promoting resilient emotional health for all pupils by providing advice and support on issues such as sex abuse, domestic violence and abuse relationships to post-primary aged pupils.

An independent school based counselling service is accessible to post primary age during difficult and vulnerable periods and the Child Protection Support Service operates a Helpline for schools' staff on child protection matters and provides extensive training, including on child sexual exploitation.

Womens'Aid make a significant contribution to preventative education for young people through their 'Helping Hands' Programme in primary schools, training teachers to understand the context and impact of domestic violence and early intervention strategies for young people who do not feel safe.

I have recently commissioned the NSPCC to work jointly with the Department on an 'effective preventative education programme' producing a learning package of training, development and support for schools to implement delivery of 'keeping safe' messages to all primary school aged children.

Professional Development Scheme

Mr Lynch asked the Minister of Education for an update on the establishment of a Professional Development Scheme.

(AQO 4727/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I consider that good teaching is central to school improvement and I want to ensure that there is a coherent system of continuous professional development throughout a teacher's career.

In doing so my Department needs to review teacher education programmes to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of pupils in the 21st century – particularly to address underachievement in literacy and numeracy.

I intend that a new single school development service will facilitate and commission professional development for all teachers.

Schools are best placed to take forward improvement and identify their support and professional development needs. The new service will therefore be designed to be responsive to the needs of school principals.

The new regional approach will deliver greater consistency, avoid duplication of provision and thus ensure value for money. This will ensure teachers and school leaders receive the support they need.

I am not happy with the time it has taken to develop this service. It is essential that irrespective of the timing of the establishment of ESA, work is now taken forward to establish the service, as quickly as possible.

A project Manager has been appointed to lead the development and implementation of a new School Development Service.

A series of workshops has been organised to engage with school leaders on the role and structure of the new service.

Common Funding Scheme

Mr Anderson asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the impact of the proposed changes to the Common Funding Scheme on rural schools.

(AQO 4729/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I have already outlined to this Assembly, in earlier statements and in particular during a recent debate, my intention to continue 'putting pupils first. The changes I propose to introduce will target areas of highest need in an effort to try and break the clearly evidenced link between social deprivation and poor educational outcomes. The implementation of the proposed changes may result in some schools experiencing an increase in their budget and others a reduction.

Although there are a higher number of rural schools than urban schools, the number of pupils attending urban schools is nearly twice that of rural schools, 66% compared to 34%. In addition, there are a higher percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in urban schools than rural schools – 34% Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME) in urban schools compared to 22% in rural schools.

As funding for social deprivation is awarded using Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME), as an indicator of social deprivation, it follows therefore that urban schools are more likely to gain funding under the new proposals, as I am directing funding to those schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage.

Free School Meals

Mr Wilson asked the Minister of Education to outline why the redirection of funding towards schools, on the basis of the number of free school meals claimants, is good educational practice.

(AQO 4730/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The independent panel which reviewed the Common Funding Scheme examined the use of free school meal entitlement (FSME) as an indicator of social deprivation as being the most appropriate indicator of social disadvantage. It commented, "Free school meal entitlement currently provides a reliable indication of the relative concentration of children at risk of poor education outcomes due to social deprivation".

Evidence shows that socio-economic background is the strongest factor impacting on pupils' attainment here. The link between underachievement and socio-economic background, as measured by FSME is stronger here than in other OECD countries.

Whilst the proportion of FSME school leavers achieving 5+ GCSEs or equivalent, including GCSEs in English and maths has been increasing in recent years, almost twice the proportion of school leavers not FSME achieve at this level - 34.1% compared to 67.9%. I am determined to take action to break this link.

I believe that a good education, which leads to coherent, recognised qualifications, is the most effective means to breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage.

This is why, in line with the recommendations of the review panel, I will be making additional funding available for social deprivation, targeted specifically at those schools with the highest proportions of FSME pupils. I recognise the particular challenges which children from deprived backgrounds encounter in accessing and participating in education.

The social deprivation element of funding going to schools reinforces my determination and commitment to direct funding to those young people in most need regardless of ability.

However, I want to be sure that this extra money is being used effectively and schools will need to provide detailed plans of what outcomes, the children this money is targeted at, can expect. Robust accountability systems will therefore need to be in place.

This funding is necessary if we are to deliver our Programme for Government commitment to tackle disadvantage and break the gap in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities.

Woodlands Speech and Language Unit

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Education to outline the rationale behind the planned closure of the Woodlands Speech and Language Unit.

(AQO 4731/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: In taking the decision in relation to the Woodlands Speech and Language unit I have had to consider the best long-term solution for children with speech and language needs in the area.

It is evident that the Woodlands facility has served children well. However the Speech and Language provision that Woodlands Special Unit provides was delivered under the management of a special school and was not in line the policy of Inclusion as set out in legislation in the Education (NI) Order 1996.

The new arrangements will provide increased and more localised provision for the future based on a tried and tested model which fully complies with the legislation.

I firmly believe that the key to success for the proposed changes will be a managed transition to the new arrangements to ensure that quality provision is in place before any change is put in place at Woodlands. That way parents can be confident and assured that their children will receive appropriate education to meet their needs.

For that reason I modified the proposals for the new provision to commence from September 2014 rather than 2013. This will allow sufficient time to ensure all the necessary steps have been taken to get the new units up and running.

Children currently enrolled at the Woodlands Unit will, if necessary and in line with parental wishes, be able to complete the 2 year period in the Unit. However, should any parent wish to avail of a place in the new units before the 2 year period is over, then I have asked the WELB to give these children priority when allocating places in the new units.

The new arrangements will provide increased contact with and support for mainstream teachers in the 3 primary schools - Ebrington, St Anne's and Ballykelly Primary Schools.

This has not been an easy decision however I believe it is in the best interest of children who will need this service in the future.

Protecting Children and Young People

Mr Beggs asked the Minister of Education how his Department, and its Arm's Length Bodies, assist in empowering and protecting children and young people.

(AQO 4732/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: I am committed to protecting and educating our children and young people in how to keep safe. My Department undertakes and supports a number of initiatives in this regard including strands of the Revised curriculum, the 'iMatter' Programme, the independent school based counselling service and support for the NSPCC learning package of training, development and support for schools and funding to support looked after children in education.

My Department also funds the Sure Start Programme which supports children from the top 20% of disadvantaged areas. The project offers support to parents of children under the age of 4.

E-learning

Ms Fearon asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of the benefits of E-Learning in schools.

(AQO 4733/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: E-learning is now an accepted method for teaching and learning in our schools across all Areas of Learning.

The use of technology complements work by the classroom teacher and I would see a key benefit of such learning in the opportunities it gives pupils to help them become independent learners. It provides all pupils, regardless of what school they attend, their background or geographical location, with opportunities to learn that we could not have imagined 20 years ago. E-learning enhances and individualises the pupil's educational experience, helping them to enjoy learning and improve their performance and thereby raise overall standards.

Online, pupils can, in their own time, make considered contributions which they may not have had the confidence to do in an open discussion in the classroom situation. It also provides flexibility for students with different learning styles and it is widely accepted that the use of technology to learn can have a positive result in terms of engaging learners in difficult to reach groups.

E-learning can take place inside and outside the classroom so its accessibility is a key advantage for pupils. C2k is responsible for providing a fully managed ICT service for all grant-aided schools which includes PCs and laptops, e-mail and secure access to the Internet. The latest contract will bring in many new Digital Technology services for pupils and teachers, available anytime and anywhere via the Education Cloud.

Using technology to learn also helps our pupils develop the ICT skills which are so necessary for our knowledge-based economy, skills that are transferable to other areas of their lives.

Looked After Children

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Education how many pupils are looked after children.

(AQW 26856/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The October 2012 school census information indicated that there were a total of 1,425 looked after children in schools.

Privately Obtained and Funded Diagnoses

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education whether a privately obtained and funded diagnosis of a child's learning condition is recognised by the Southern Education and Library Board; and if not, why this is the case, given that it would be in the best interests of the child and would save departmental funding.

(AQW 26900/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: The Southern Education and Library Board has advised that it takes account of all information provided to it, including private reports, as part of the referral process to the board's Educational Psychology Service. A private report will not, however, be the sole basis for referral.

Occupational Therapist Reports

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Education whether an occupational therapist report counts towards, or is it taken into consideration in, a school's decision to statement a child; and if so, when in the process these reports are considered.

(AQW 26918/11-15)

Mr O'Dowd: It is normal practice for education and library boards to give due consideration to reports from allied health professionals, such as occupational therapists, during their assessments at Stage 3 (non-statutory) and Stage 4 (statutory) of the Code of Practice on the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs.

Department for Employment and Learning

Youth Employment Scheme

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the success of the Youth Employment Scheme to date.

(AQW 26192/11-15)

Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning): The Youth Employment Scheme, a voluntary programme for young unemployed people was formally launched on 2 July 2012. From that date until 27 September 2013, almost 1900 employers had signed agreements to participate in the scheme, offering over 4200 opportunities. To date, 2090 young people have taken up an opportunity and of these, 661 commenced full time employment.

I am pleased that the Youth Employment Scheme has been successfully implemented, and is now well integrated with the full range of provision offered by my Department to help young people acquire essential work experience and skills.

While the scheme is proving to be particularly successful in generating opportunities, a Post Implementation Review of the YES recommended some revisions to further increase uptake by young people. These enhancements were introduced on 30 September 2013 and the impact of the changes will be reviewed in twelve months. The revisions include the payment of a Benefit Based Training Allowance to participants on work experience, some modifications to restrictions on the eligible job growth sectors and engaging Steps to Work Lead Contractors to source and deliver training within the Skills Development placements.

Higher Education Colleges and Institutions: Environmental Adjustments

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 25524/11-15, (i) what is the Department's definition of (a) mental illness; (b) learning disability; (c) special needs; and (d) conditions requiring reasonable environmental adjustment; and (ii) whether these definitions apply across all further and higher education colleges and institutions.

(AQW 26194/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department adheres to the definition laid down by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and The Equality Act 2010, which define a person with disabilities as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. I can advise that further education colleges and higher education institutions also adhere to the same definitions.

In discharging their functions, all bodies bound by this legislation, including further education colleges and higher education institutions, consider the effects of any impairment, rather than the underlying condition itself. This ensures that the needs of all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are identified and addressed in an appropriate way.

Part-Time Work: 16-24 Year Olds

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what work his Department is doing to encourage 16-24 year olds to undertake part-time work, in an effort to improve skills and work experience.

(AQW 26241/11-15)

Dr Farry: As Minister for Employment and Learning, I have introduced a comprehensive range of initiatives to address youth unemployment in Northern Ireland. My primary aim is to equip young people with the necessary employability skills to enable them to move into full time sustainable employment.

While young unemployed people are expected to seek full time employment, I appreciate that due to individual circumstances some young people may need to limit the number of hours they can work. These young people will be assisted by Employment Service staff to find suitable employment or avail of the programmes on offer. The Department's job vacancy website clearly identifies vacancies that are classified as part time (there are currently 600 being advertised) to assist jobseekers interested in securing part time employment.

Young people unable to find full time employment in their chosen field are encouraged to apply for suitable part time employment with the view to securing full time employment in the longer term.

Being able to demonstrate employability skills is key to securing employment, and Employment Service Advisers in JobCentres and Jobs & Benefits offices and the Careers Service staff routinely discuss with young people how they can improve their prospects of securing employment by availing, where appropriate, of the programmes offered by my Department. A subsidy under the Steps to Work Programme is available to employers willing to employ 18-24 year olds who have been long term unemployed.

In 2012, in direct response to the economic downturn, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed and introduced a new range of measures, including the Youth Employment Scheme. The focus of the Youth Employment Scheme is early intervention for young people aged 18 to 24 and aims to help this group gain experience, acquire new skills and find employment. The Youth Employment Scheme engages directly with employers who are interested in assisting and supporting young people by helping remove barriers to finding and retaining employment.

In addition my Department has developed and leads on the Executive's cross-departmental strategy 'Pathways to Success' for addressing the needs of young people who are not in employment, education and training (NEET). As part of the Strategy, I introduced the Collaboration and Innovation Fund to help unemployed 16 – 24 year old young people who have a diverse range of employability needs.

Training in Life and Social Skills and Independence Strategies

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning has he given any consideration to funding the delivery of the pilot of a two year accredited course on training in life and social skills and independence strategies for 19 year olds leaving special needs education, developed and facilitated by experienced staff at Willowbank Ltd, in Dungannon and South Tyrone,

(AQW 26242/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department currently offers accredited provision on training in life and social skills and independence strategies for 19 year olds leaving special needs education, across a range of its services and programmes in order to help people make progress in or towards employment.

Whilst my Department has not been approached with regard to Willowbank Ltd's two year accredited course, where external services are required, they will normally be taken forward on a competitive tendering basis, in line with public sector procurement standards.

Courses to Assist Young People Seeking Employment

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail all the courses his Department provides to assist young people seeking employment.

(AQW 26282/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department provides a range of programmes and services to assist people who are unemployed to find and sustain employment.

Steps to Work is my Department's main adult return to work programme which provides participants with the opportunity to achieve a qualification through the provision of Short Accredited Training Courses or a work related vocational qualification. All qualifications delivered must be on the Register of Regulated Qualifications. Assistance is also available within Steps to Work to those participants who have been assessed as having essential skills needs to undertake an approved Essential Skills qualification in literacy, numeracy and ICT.

My Department's Disability Employment Service also provides work based support and assistance for people with a disability of all ages. The range of specialist services aimed at helping people move into and stay in work include:

- Work Connect is a new specialist disability programme, designed to help recipients of Incapacity Benefit and Employment Support Allowance to overcome barriers to employment, improve their employability and, where possible, find and keep suitable employment;
- Access to Work (NI) is a flexible programme designed to help employees and employers overcome employment related obstacles faced by people with disabilities. It can help with a wide variety of supports, primarily through financial assistance for Communication Support at Interview, Special Aids and Equipment, Adaptations to Premises, Support Worker and Travel to Work payments;
- Workable is a programme that provides specialist in-work support to enable people with disabilities to work in a wide variety of jobs. This direct support package is provided by local disability organisations and includes training for the employer and other employees, a dedicated job coach for the candidate, mentoring support and specialist training as necessary.

The Disability Employment Service also funds residential training opportunities at Parkanaur College, near Dungannon, for people with significant disabilities where their needs can not be met by mainstream Further Education College provision. The College provides vocational training courses in Business Administration/IT, Catering, Upholstery and Horticulture.

In addition, my Department's Youth Employment Scheme provides early and intensive intervention by Employment Service staff with young people, aged 18 to 24 years old. It is a voluntary scheme offered to clients in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance and aims to connect the young person with the labour market at the earliest opportunity by equipping them with the tools and skills to compete for jobs, sustain employment and progress in their employment.

The scheme comprises several elements:

- Employment Service Advisers will provide a diagnostic, evidence-based work readiness assessment, including the development of basic "job search" skills such as CV building, application writing, interviewing skills etc;

- opportunities to experience the world of work will be offered through a voluntary Work Experience Programme lasting 3 to 8 weeks. Young people will be given opportunities to further develop employability skills and allow them to trial particular types of work;
- young people will also be offered further careers advice from a qualified Careers Adviser, where appropriate, to identify possible further training opportunities;
- a longer work experience opportunity including skills training is also available where young people will be able to obtain additional relevant qualifications during a 6 month period of work experience.
- My Department's Training for Success Programme is designed for young people aged 16 - 17 (up to 24 years for those who qualify under extended eligibility) and provides training to give them the tools and skills they need to secure employment. This training provides young people with relevant qualifications as well as the required personal and behavioural skills to progress into work.

My Department is also responsible for ApprenticeshipsNI a programme that offers training to 16 year olds and over across a wide range of apprenticeships. This training provides young people with relevant qualifications as well as the required personal and behavioural skills to progress into work.

Departmental Strategies, Development Plans and Implementation Plans

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail how many; (i) strategies; (ii) development plans; and (iii) implementation plans exist within his Department; and to outline the number of recommendations in each.

(AQW 26325/11-15)

Dr Farry: There are currently 13 strategies within my Department. These include strategies already implemented but which remain in place, internal strategies and those with an external focus, and one draft strategy. Together, these strategies contain a total of 233 recommendations, action points or projects.

The Department has 10 implementation plans, comprising 197 recommendations or actions. There are no 'development plans'.

The Department also contributes to the development and delivery of a significant number of wide-ranging inter-Departmental strategies and related action plans, for which other Departments are in the lead. These range from OFMDFM's Delivering Social Change agenda, which encompasses various strategies and action plans to address social inclusion and Section 75 issues, to the Bamford strategy/action plan, which seeks to address the wider societal needs of those with health issues.

The "On Board PLP" Course

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 25702/11-15, to provide the specific date a decision was taken to offer the "On Board PLP" course for the 2013/14 academic year; and to clarify how and through which agencies, schools, etc this course was advertised or made known publicly, in particular to those with a relevant interest.

(AQW 26381/11-15)

Dr Farry: Each further education college is responsible for determining its own curriculum and associated provision. Consequently, my Department does not hold the information, requested by the member. I have referred the question to the Director of South West College, who will respond, directly, to the Member.

Post 19 Transitions Officers

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 25702/11-15, to detail when the Post 19 Transitions Officers for the area involved were informed of the availability of this course.

(AQW 26467/11-15)

Dr Farry: Each further education college is responsible for planning the delivery of all provision. This incorporates liaising with key stakeholders, including Transitions Officers, as appropriate. Consequently, my Department does not hold the information requested by the member. I have referred the question to the Director of South West College, who will respond, directly, to the member.

South West Regional College: Affected Schools

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW25524/11-15, to detail the (i) dates of all meetings between the South West Regional College and the affected schools; (ii) reasons for the meetings; and (iii) requests made and concerns raised by the schools, during the last two academic years.

(AQW 26532/11-15)

Dr Farry: Each further education college is responsible for managing its own engagement and communications with local schools. Consequently, my Department does not hold the information, requested by the member. I have referred the question to the Director of South West College, who will respond, directly, to the Member.

Youth Employment Scheme

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, pursuant to AQW 25743/11-15, to detail how these figures compare with other constituencies.

(AQW 26536/11-15)

Dr Farry: The comparative figures in relation to the Youth Employment Scheme are outlined in the attached table. This information is collated on a local office rather than constituency basis and reflects the position from the launch of the scheme until 27 September 2013.

| Constituency | Served by Offices | Employer Agreements Signed | Opportunities Available | Young People taking up Placement | Young People Securing Subsidised Employment |
|--------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| North Antrim | Ballymena Ballymoney | 152 | 223 | 110 | 36 |
| South Antrim | Antrim Newtownabbey | 115 | 187 | 84 | 19 |
| East Antrim | Larne Carrickfergus | 91 | 143 | 75 | 14 |
| East L'Derry | Coleraine Limavady | 265 | 308 | 197 | 45 |
| Foyle | Foyle Lisnagelvin | 683 | 740 | 415 | 96 |

| Constituency | Served by Offices | Employer Agreements Signed | Opportunities Available | Young People taking up Placement | Young People Securing Subsidised Employment |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|--|
| West Tyrone | Strabane Omagh | 118 | 135 | 97 | 45 |
| Fermanagh & South Tyrone | Enniskillen Dungannon | 156 | 200 | 102 | 49 |
| Mid Ulster | Magherafelt Cookstown | 100 | 126 | 67 | 27 |
| Newry & Armagh | Newry Armagh | 123 | 304 | 94 | 26 |
| Upper Bann | Lurgan Portadown Banbridge | 278 | 423 | 214 | 58 |
| South Down | Kilkeel Newcastle Downpatrick | 144 | 188 | 72 | 17 |
| Lagan Valley | Lisburn Ballynahinch | 124 | 203 | 103 | 23 |
| Strangford | Newtownards | 56 | 102 | 47 | 13 |
| North Down | Bangor | 88 | 104 | 68 | 23 |
| Belfast North | North Belfast | 40 | 109 | 32 | 10 |
| Belfast East | Holywood Road | 40 | 88 | 42 | 10 |
| Belfast South | Knockbreda Shaftesbury Square | 122 | 327 | 86 | 17 |
| Belfast West | Falls Andersonstown Shankill | 95 | 331 | 185 | 11 |
| Total | | 2790 | 4241 | 2090 | 539 |

Apprenticeship Opportunities

Ms McGahan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning, in relation to departmental correspondence ref: COR/081/13, to detail any plans he has to ensure that 18 year old A- level students have the same opportunities as 16 year olds when accessing apprenticeships.

(AQW 26540/11-15)

Dr Farry: The ApprenticeshipsNI programme is an employer-led provision, with employers creating apprenticeship positions and recruiting suitable individuals as apprentices in line with future business needs.

My Department funds the 'off-the-job' training element of an apprenticeship through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. ApprenticeshipsNI aims to provide participants with the opportunity to take part in a Level 2/Level 3 Apprenticeship where the apprentice, in paid employment from day one, works towards achieving an industry-approved Level 2/Level 3 Apprenticeship Framework.

The same level of funding is available for apprentices aged both 16 and 18 years old as, for apprentices aged 16 to 24 years old, my Department funds 100% of training costs across all of the 148 frameworks available through ApprenticeshipsNI and provides an Employer Incentive payment on achievement.

Finally, as the member will be aware, in February, I announced a major review of my Department's apprenticeship policy. This review, which is all encompassing in nature, is progressing as planned and I will be reporting its findings later in the autumn.

Students Who Have Enrolled on Undergraduate Degree Courses

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of students, who have enrolled in the first year of an undergraduate degree course, from (i) Northern Ireland; (ii) the rest of the United Kingdom; and (iii) the Republic of Ireland.

(AQW 26675/11-15)

Dr Farry: The number of students who enrolled in the first year of an undergraduate degree course in 2011/12 from Northern Ireland, the rest of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland is detailed in the table overleaf.

| Country of Domicile | Number of Enrolments in NI undergraduate degree course |
|----------------------------|---|
| Northern Ireland | 13,836 |
| Great Britain | 369 |
| Republic of Ireland | 1,118 |

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency

Notes:

- 1) It should be noted that the above information relates to enrolments in Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions and is based on full time and part time first degree undergraduate enrolments for 2011/12.

NEETs: South Antrim

Ms Brown asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many people between 16 and 25 years-old in South Antrim are not in education, employment or training.

(AQO 4747/11-15)

Dr Farry: In gauging the number of young people not in full-time education, employment or training, my Department uses the Labour Force Survey. The Labour Force Survey estimates are derived from a sample survey for Northern Ireland overall and it is not possible to disaggregate the figures further.

Claimant count figures represent a further source of information, in other words the number of those claiming Job Seekers Allowance. Figures for the South Antrim Parliamentary Constituency area for August 2013 show that there were 635 claimants aged 24 and under.

My Department has introduced a number of new initiatives to help address youth unemployment, which include provision in South Antrim.

I secured substantial additional funding to implement the 'Pathways to Success' strategy and the 'Youth Employment Scheme'. With a total budget of more than £25 million, the 'Pathways to Success' strategy comprises a three tier package aimed at helping young people aged 16 to 18 years old, particularly those facing barriers to participation, and assisting unemployed young people aged 18-24 more generally. Strands include: a Collaboration and Innovation fund; a Community Family Support Programme; the Local Employment Intermediary Service; a Learner Access Engagement pilot programme; and an Educational Maintenance Allowance.

In addition I introduced the Youth Employment Scheme to offer a new range of measures to address youth unemployment in Northern Ireland. Officials have been marketing the Youth Employment Scheme in the South Antrim area through a series of promotional events and press releases.

Learning Opportunities

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the provision of learning for people with a disability that is delivered by further and higher education institutions.

(AQO 4742/11-15)

Dr Farry: It is my desire to provide excellent educational opportunities for all students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and make the necessary financial support available for these students, so that they can succeed with their studies.

I recently asked my Department to collate information relating to all available further education (FE) provision for students aged 19 and over, with disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

That information has shown that the six further FE colleges continue to provide a wide range of courses for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, from Pre-Entry and Entry Level to Level 2.

I have also increased the amount of ring-fenced financial support available for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities studying in FE, from £1.5 million to £2 million per annum.

Pre-Entry Training Support Referral is available for school leavers with a disability enrolling on Training for Success; this is to ensure that support needs are identified and measures put in place to address these as soon as possible after commencement of training.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities can avail of provision in higher education institutions and can access support through the Disabled Students Allowance. This funding is to help students taking a higher education course to pay for the extra costs, which they may incur as a direct result of a disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty.

Daycare Facility: Magee

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether his Department has granted permission for the University of Ulster to change the use of the daycare facility building, built using European funds, at the Magee campus.

(AQO 4740/11-15)

Dr Farry: The University of Ulster, like all other universities, is an autonomous body. As such, responsibility for the management of services and decisions relating to University buildings is a matter for the senior management of the University. The University has taken a decision that it wants to change the use of the buildings formerly used to provide daycare facilities at its Magee campus.

A condition of the grant from the European Regional Development Fund was that the building would be used for the purpose for which the grant was made for a period of at least 20 years. Since the University has closed the crèche after only 12 years, my Department has decided to exercise its right to reclaim a portion of the European Union grant initially provided to establish the daycare facilities.

ICT Action Plan

Mr McQuillan asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the ICT Action Plan.
(AQO 4741/11-15)

Dr Farry: ICT is a priority sector for my Department. In June 2012 I published an Action Plan to address the specific skills issues within the sector. Implementation of the short, medium and long term actions contained in the plan is having a positive impact on the skills shortages in the sector.

Applications to IT-related degrees at our local universities have risen by over 24% in the last year alone and new initiatives continue to be taken forward.

Last month, I announced new pilot academies in Data Analytics and Cloud Technology which will offer training and work placement opportunities to 34 participants. A second cohort of the successful Public/Private ICT Apprenticeship scheme is in motion, with around 50 places available. A further cohort of over 100 students has enrolled on MSc courses for non-IT graduates in our local universities.

Furthermore, a new 'Software and Systems Development' A level has been introduced in Northern Ireland.

Another significant development is the arrangement between e-skills UK, Sentinus and Momentum to raise the awareness and attractiveness of the ICT sector across all levels of education – from primary school right through to university.

I also recently attended a Digital Summit, organised by Momentum, the IT trade association in Northern Ireland. The Summit was extremely positive, attracting involvement from all the stakeholders involved in the ICT sector, including a number of my Ministerial colleagues, to address the issues of access to skills, access to funds and access to markets.

The Summit provided an open forum to discuss the skills requirements of the sector and all stakeholders endorsed the progress being made as a result of the implementation of the ICT Action Plan.

I have committed to consider recommendations discussed at the Summit and ensure the ICT Action Plan is responsive to the needs of the sector.

Zero-Hour Contracts

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what research has been carried out to ascertain the number of people on zero hour contracts.
(AQO 4743/11-15)

Dr Farry: There is currently no Northern Ireland-specific research on the number of people on zero-hours contracts. The only available data is provided through the UK Labour Force Survey, and the Northern Ireland sample is statistically too small to offer a reliable estimate of the number of zero-hours contracts.

There is also no definitive assessment of the number of workers on zero-hours contracts at a UK level. The Labour Force Survey estimates that there are around 250,000 workers on zero-hours contracts in the UK as a whole, whilst the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development provides separate analysis that the number could be up to one million.

I have therefore asked my officials to commission new research, to establish a more reliable estimate of the number of workers on zero-hours contracts and to identify the merits and demerits of using these types of contracts. The purpose of the research is to provide the Department with a more informed understanding of whether there is a need to introduce protections for workers on such contracts.

Priority Skills Achievement

Mr Byrne asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of how Regional Colleges are performing in terms of priority skills achievement.

(AQO 4744/11-15)

Dr Farry: Statistical analysis for the last two years for which full-year data is available indicates that the regional colleges are performing well in terms of priority skills retention and achievement rates. In the 2011/12 academic year retention and achievement rates were 91% and 87% respectively.

My Department's further education policy has been developed to ensure that colleges have a strong focus on provision that supports the economy, while enhancing social cohesion and advancing individuals' skills and learning.

However, around 98% of the Department's funding to the further education sector was for provision leading to qualifications that are on the regulated qualifications frameworks. Also, the content of professional and technical vocational qualifications on the Qualifications and Credit Framework has been informed by the needs of employers across all sectors.

College enrolments and rates of learner retention, achievement and success are scrutinised through College Development Planning meetings. These take place annually between the Department and individual college Chairs and Directors. These annual meetings also set a range of curriculum targets for further education colleges, including provision that is in Northern Ireland's priority economic sectors.

UCAS

Mr Maskey asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any recent discussions he has had with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service and the Central Applications Office.

(AQO 4745/11-15)

Dr Farry: My Department's statisticians and economists are in regular contact with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service regarding statistical outputs, data sources, definitions and timetables. The Department has also organised visits to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service for training purposes within the last year.

Discussions are ongoing between the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment and the Irish Universities Association in relation to the recognition of A-levels. I have also noted the review of A-levels and GCSEs commissioned by Minister O'Dowd and the consequent issue of mutual recognition of qualifications.

The Graduating to Success project team, leading on cross-border mobility, plans to address this issue through discussions with the Irish Universities Association, the Central Applications Office and the Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions.

Inward Investment

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for his assessment of the current skills and training programmes in meeting the requirements of potential inward investors.

(AQO 4746/11-15)

Dr Farry: The recent 1,000 jobs announcement by Stream Global Services is a prime example of how my Department's Assured Skills programme, working in partnership with Invest NI ensures that we make the best possible proposition to potential investors. The programme delivers not only a boost to employment but also our local skills base. The Assured Skills programme is now a critical part of any offer made.

The programme leverages all of my responsibilities, including the Employment Service, the higher and further education sectors and our skills and training programmes, with a view to guaranteeing a

potential investor that the skills they need to support a growing business can be found in Northern Ireland.

This is achieved firstly by helping companies to find the employees with the right skills for their business and arranging the design of bespoke training if the skills are not readily available.

Following employment, my Department can also help with up-skilling staff through Assured Skills, working with companies to establish what their deficit is and, if necessary, designing a customised solution to meet the need.

In addition, Assured Skills anticipates future needs of inward investors: for example, further education and university lecturers and graduates have been trained in skills of interest to potential investors.

Also, under Assured Skills, we have created academies as a short term intervention to respond to identified needs.

All this activity has meant that, just three years into the programme, Assured Skills has already supported the creation of almost 2,000 jobs across nine projects, with funding of £3.07 million committed from my Department.

Set alongside complementary support from Invest Northern Ireland, I am confident that the joint efforts of Invest Northern Ireland and my Department, through Assured Skills, make Northern Ireland a very attractive location for investment.

BA (Hons) Air Transport

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to explain the apparent difference between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK in the funding of the BA (Hons) Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training degree course to the detriment of Northern Ireland students.

(AQO 4748/11-15)

Dr Farry: As the member will know Higher Education is a devolved matter and therefore Northern Ireland policy will vary in a number of areas compared to the rest of the United Kingdom, examples being, reduced tuition fees and differing rates of maintenance support. However, in relation to the three year Bachelor of Arts Honours Air Transport with Commercial Pilot Training degree course, student financial support for Northern Ireland students is in fact broadly similar in terms of tuition fee loans and maintenance support to that offered to students from Great Britain to attend the course in England. The support offered cannot therefore be considered disadvantageous to Northern Ireland students.

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Funding Provided by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr Moutray asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount of funding provided by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to (i) AV Browne Group; and (ii) Duffy Rafferty Communications since 2010.

(AQW 25362/11-15)

Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment): The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has contracts in place with AV Browne Group and Duffy Rafferty Communications to provide specialist services.

Annual gross spend figures are as follows:

| | Year: | Amount: |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| AV Browne Group | 2009/10 | £ 5,415,301 |
| | 2010/11 | £ 4,634,022 |
| | 2011/12 | £ 5,775,091 |
| | 2012/13 | £ 4,676,793 |
| Sub Total: | | £20,501,207 |
| Duffy Rafferty Communications | 2009/10 | £ 130,337 |
| | 2010/11 | £ 142,270 |
| | 2011/12 | £ 156,601 |
| | 2012/13 | £ 188,085 |
| Sub Total: | | £ 617,293 |
| Total: | | £21,118,500 |

Helen's Tower and Somme Museum

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether funding will be made available for the promotion of the Helen's Tower and Somme Museum site in North Down.

(AQW 25554/11-15)

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 experiences motivate our key customer segments which have been identified through substantial research.

As part of NITB's campaign recruitment, all accommodation organisations listed on our database, which includes Helen's Tower, are contacted three times per year and encouraged to provide offers to support the campaigns. However, neither Helen's Tower nor The Somme Heritage Centre has contacted NITB directly for promotion and marketing support for their sites. Both products are currently promoted on NITB's consumer website www.discovernorthernireland.com.

I would encourage the marketing co-ordinator for Helen's Tower and The Somme Heritage Centre to make contact with the Northern Ireland Tourist Board to brief them on what experiences these products can provide for NITB's best prospect visitor segments.

Economic Development and Job Creation

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the potential savings to be made through an all-island approach to economic development and job creation.

(AQW 25799/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department works with agencies in the Republic of Ireland where there is a benefit in doing so.

Indeed, Invest NI engages directly with Enterprise Ireland in specific operational areas such as innovation and to explore the potential for cross sectoral engagement in areas such as skills development, construction and agri-food.

In addition, InterTradeIreland estimates that it has engaged with over 25,000 SMEs who have utilised the body's business information and advice services, and over 5,000 businesses have taken part in all-island programmes. Through this, it is estimated that more than £650 million worth of trade and business development has been generated, supporting 3,000 jobs as a result of participating on InterTradeIreland programmes.

However, it must be recognised that there are limitations to the co-operation we can have, particularly given that Invest NI are IDA Ireland are in direct competition for inward investment projects.

Joint Promotion of Labour Activation Measures

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the potential savings to be made through the implementation of joint promotion of labour activation measures tailored to specific sectoral needs and potential growth areas.

(AQW 25801/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Member's question relates to labour training, which is not the responsibility of my Department.

Local InvestNI Offices

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what measures are in place to ensure that the overall approach taken by, and the products and services available from, local InvestNI offices are standardised.

(AQW 25828/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's network of Regional Offices provide local contact points across Northern Ireland for individuals and businesses seeking to access Invest NI products and services in the local area. These products and services are available across Northern Ireland, and delivered in a consistent manner.

The overall management, communication and training of Invest NI's Regional Office staff is centralised so as to ensure consistency of approach. Invest NI has a range of standardised criteria and processes in place for the delivery of these products, and this also ensures consistency of approach.

Renewal Costs of Intellectual Property

Mr B McCrea asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of whether it would be beneficial to provide support for renewal costs of intellectual property.

(AQW 25829/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest Northern Ireland provides an extensive range of advisory and financial support services to SMEs on the protection and exploitation of Intellectual Property. This includes support for up to 50% of the initial costs of patent or trade mark registrations in the UK and internationally. These initial costs can be significant e.g. £1,500 for UK, £3,500 for Europe and £2,500 for the US.

Invest NI also provides a range of Intellectual Property advice services including IP Information packs, free of charge patent and trademark searches and free intellectual asset audits.

The annual cost of renewing a UK patent currently varies from £70 in year 5 to £170 in year 10 and £600 in year 20.

It is a commercial decision for each individual or company to decide whether or not to renew a patent each year and providing financial support on these relatively small annual payments would not be justifiable.

It is also worth highlighting that the introduction of the UK Patent Box arrangements this year enables companies to benefit from a lower rate of Corporation Tax on profits earned after 1 April 2013 from patented inventions.

North South Unit of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the level and outcome of her engagement with the North South Unit of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

(AQW 25860/11-15)

Mrs Foster: There is ongoing engagement between my officials and their counterparts in the North South Unit of the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Ireland in relation to the development and implementation of the European Interreg IV Programme and InterTradeIreland.

Since 2008 my Department has provided funding of over £17million towards 16 Interreg enterprise projects that have also been supported by the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.

As co-sponsor Department for InterTradeIreland, along with the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, Ireland, my officials also have regular and ongoing contact with the North South Unit, on a range of issues specific to the Body, including financial, operational and policy matters. This engagement also includes formal oversight and liaison meetings.

I also attend Trade and Business Development sectoral meetings hosted by the North South Ministerial Council. The Minister for the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation also attends these meetings.

Cruise Ships in Belfast and Londonderry

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the number of cruise ships that have docked in (i) Belfast; and (ii) Londonderry, in each year between from 2007 to 2012.

(AQW 25869/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The following figures have been supplied by Visit Belfast & the Visitor & Convention Bureau in Londonderry:

| Year: | Belfast: | Londonderry: | Total: |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|
| 2007 | 31 | 8 | 39 |
| 2008 | 39 | 2 | 41 |
| 2009 | 36 | 4 | 40 |
| 2010 | 35 | 4 | 39 |
| 2011 | 32 | - | 32 |
| 2012 | 45 | 7 | 52 |
| Total: | 218 | 25 | 243 |

North/South and East/West Arrangements

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail how many meetings have been held (i) at ministerial level; and (ii) at official level with counterparts in the (a) rest of the UK; and (b) Republic of Ireland, since May 2007, including under the aegis of the north/south or east/west arrangements.

(AQW 25961/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Since 2007 there have been one hundred and forty six North South Ministerial Council meetings, including twelve in Plenary and seven in Institutional format, which have been attended by Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive.

There have been twenty eight meetings under the aegis of the British - Irish Council attended by Ministers, including twelve at Summit level.

My Department cannot provide information on other bi-lateral meetings which have taken place outside the remit of the NSMC or BIC involving myself or DETI officials due to disproportionate costs.

Subsidies for Renewable Energy Production

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the amount paid in subsidies for renewable energy production, in each of the last three financial years.

(AQW 26140/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Support for renewable electricity generation is provided under the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) in the form of Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation Certificates (NIROCs). As the NIRO is a market-based support mechanism, the actual value of a NIROC to a generator will depend on the supply and demand for NIROCs during a given obligation period, and the individual arrangements reached between generators and the supplier or other person to whom they sell their NIROCs. Table 1 sets out the approximate value of NIROCs issued in each of the last three financial years. Totals for the all three Renewables Obligations (NIRO, Renewables Obligation Scotland and Renewables Obligation England & Wales) are provided in brackets.

TABLE 1

| Year | NIROCs issued* | ROC value (buyout price plus 10%) | Total |
|---------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2010-11 | 787,050 (24,884,608) | £40.68 | £32,017,194 (£1,012,305,853) |
| 2011-12 | 1,239,132 (34,753,771) | £42.55 | £52,725,066 (£1,556,273,865) |
| 2012-13 | 1,234,773 (44,243,905) | £44.78 | £55,293,134 (£1,981,242,065) |

* Source: Ofgem RO Annual Reports and Ofgem ROC Register

A total of £470,000 was paid out or accrued by DETI in 2012/13 (the first year of operation) for renewable heat production under the Renewable Heat Premium Payment scheme and the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive.

Entrepreneurship Development Scheme

Mr Byrne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline any plans his Department have to promote and develop small business enterprise courses as part of a wider entrepreneurship development scheme within the Small and Medium Sized Enterprise sector.

(AQW 26155/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI's Regional Start Initiative is an existing small business enterprise programme focussed on encouraging potential entrepreneurs to produce a business plan as one of the key early steps to starting a business and moving into self employment. The programme is currently operational and is available across all of Northern Ireland.

As part of the Regional Start Initiative we offer entrepreneurs:

- An Initial Assessment Meeting (One-to One)

- Business Planning Workshops (Group, maximum 6 hours)
- Financial Business Planning (One-to-One, minimum 3 hours)

In addition, Invest NI provides advice and financial support to start ups and first time exporters through programmes such as Propel and the Social Entrepreneurship Programme.

Councils are also developing a wide range of enterprise programmes, with support from Invest NI under the LED Measure of European Competitiveness Funding. During the past three years, Invest NI has co-funded more than 70 enterprise related programmes and initiatives with Councils across Northern Ireland.

Invest NI continues to review and refresh its approaches to enterprise development, based on feedback from customers, and following reviews of best practice.

The Department for Employment and Learning's Success Through Skills: Transforming Futures Strategy, and the Northern Ireland Economic Strategy focuses on the rebalancing and rebuilding of the Northern Ireland economy highlighting the importance of developing managers to achieve this. A range of fully funded management and leadership programmes are offered across all levels (first line, middle and senior) to Northern Ireland companies and social enterprises. Work is also being developed specifically to support micro-businesses.

Broadband Provision in County Tyrone

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the improvements made to broadband provision in the (i) Greencastle; (ii) Glenhull; (iii) Broughderg; and (iv) Mountfield areas of Co. Tyrone; and whether any more work will be undertaken in these areas to further improve broadband coverage.

(AQW 26264/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has made significant public investment over the last 4 years aimed at increasing the reach and improving the quality of broadband services across Northern Ireland.

This investment included the Next Generation Broadband Project which, in conjunction with BT, upgraded a total of 1265 street cabinets across Northern Ireland, including 80 in the West Tyrone Area with fibre-to-the-cabinet technology (FTTC), thus significantly improving broadband services across the region. This investment, coupled with BT's own investment, makes Northern Ireland a leader in telecoms infrastructure not only within the UK, but across Europe.

Through the Northern Ireland Broadband Fund, my Department has also encouraged the deployment of fixed wireless services across mainly rural areas of Northern Ireland. Both North West Electronics (NWE) and NET1 have coverage in the West Tyrone area.

A satellite broadband service is also available under DETI's contract with Onwave Ltd. Onwave offers a range of broadband solutions providing up to 20 Megabits per second satellite services.

As you are aware, my Department has initiated the Northern Ireland Broadband Improvement Project (NIBIP), which aims to provide a 2Mbps broadband service to virtually all premises in Northern Ireland and 24Mbps superfast broadband to 90% of premises by 2015.

It is intended that this project will move to the procurement stage in early October, with a contract expected to be signed by the end of the year and implementation completed by March 2015.

This project will benefit a number of rural areas within Northern Ireland including rural West Tyrone.

Operating Licences: Compliance Plans

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to Condition 12 of the operating licences for Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI), to detail where the Compliance Plans, that outline the steps being taken or to be taken by the

respective licensee to meet the requirements of that condition for NIE and SONI, were published, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 26316/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Handling of the Compliance Plans is a matter for the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation, not my Department.

Pursuant to my response to AQW 25208/11-15, I wish to advise that the Utility Regulator has clarified that compliance plans are published if and when amendments to a compliance plan are made and not on an annual basis. The Regulator has also advised that there have been no updated compliance plans published for either licensee in the last five years.

System Operator for Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assurances has she obtained, and from whom, regarding jobs at the System Operator for Northern Ireland (SONI) as well as the maintenance of the SONI identity, in the same respect as assurances she obtained on jobs at Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) and maintenance of the identity of NIE; and to detail how many meetings she has had with ESB and Eirgrid in relation to this.

(AQW 26317/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I refer to AQW 25211 11/15 in which I indicated that the SONI licence requires that the business has adequate financial and other resources to conduct its operations. I am informed that SONI's published and publicly available accounts show an increase in the number of its employees from 73 in September 2009 (the first set of accounts filed following its acquisition by EirGrid) to 106 (as per the most recent filed accounts dated 30 September 2012).

In relation to meetings, I refer to my response to AQW 25210 11/15.

EirGrid Board Members

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation the appointment of the EirGrid Board Members from Northern Ireland, to detail (i) the input she had in the appointment; (ii) whether the decision was only taken by the relevant Irish Government Minister; and (iii) the selection process and criteria used for the appointment.

(AQW 26318/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I had no involvement in the process.

Transmission System Operator Business

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, now that the Transmission System Operator Business in Northern Ireland is fully under the control of the Eirgrid Executive Directors based in Dublin and the Eirgrid Group Board has embarked on a strategy of full integration with the goal of a seamless all-Ireland Transmission System Operator Business, for her assessment of whether the Strategy is positive for Northern Ireland.

(AQW 26319/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I refer to my response to AQW 25202 11/15 and AQW 25208 11/15.

System Operator for Northern Ireland Transmission System Operator Licence

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether the monitoring of the Northern Ireland Electricity Transmission and Distribution licences and the System Operator for Northern Ireland Transmission System Operator licence, with respect to specific conditions relating to provision of undertakings by the ultimate owners to ensure the independence of decision making and

availability of resources to conduct their business, is reported publically, and if so, (i) where; and (ii) by what process.

(AQW 26320/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The monitoring of electricity licence obligations is a matter for the Utility Regulator.

Broadband Provision in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on the progress of broadband provision in North Down.

(AQW 26332/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Further to my response to AQW 25075/11-15, the 2nd consultation on the Northern Ireland Broadband Project (NIBIP) has recently been completed.

The results are currently being analysed, to ensure that any intervention complies with strict State Aid rules.

It is intended that this project will move to the procurement stage in early October, with a contract expected to be signed by the end of the year and completion expected by March 2015.

This project will benefit a number of areas across Northern Ireland, including the North Down area.

Gas Storage Facilities in Islandmagee

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, in relation to the development of gas storage facilities in Islandmagee, to detail (i) the parties that are involved in the development; and (ii) the projected cost of the project for local consumers.

(AQW 26386/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The project is being developed by Islandmagee Storage Ltd, currently owned by InfraStrata UK Limited, together with Moyle Energy Investments Limited, a subsidiary of Mutual Energy Limited. In addition, BP Gas Marketing Ltd. has an option to take a holding in the project.

The project is a commercial venture and should not result in any increase in costs for consumers, rather it should benefit all consumers by enhancing security of supply and providing additional gas at times of high gas demand.

Gas Storage Facilities in Islandmagee

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the viability of the proposed gas storage project at Islandmagee, given that the Centrica has recently pulled out of plans to develop two large gas storage projects in Great Britain blaming lack of government subsidies and weak economics.

(AQW 26389/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The Islandmagee gas storage project is being developed as a commercial venture, without government subsidy. The developers of the project are continuing to work towards obtaining the necessary consents and regulatory arrangements for the project.

There may however be potential for such projects to benefit from EU funding under the EU Infrastructure Regulation as a Project of Common Interest.

Gas Storage Facilities in Islandmagee

Mrs Cochrane asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether it is viable to pursue gas storage in Islandmagee and gas fracking in Co. Fermanagh, which could also be viewed as a form of gas storage.

(AQW 26390/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Irrespective of any proposals for shale gas development in Co. Fermanagh, a gas storage facility at Islandmagee would provide enhanced security of gas supply for Northern Ireland in the event of a disruption in the supply of gas and provide additional gas at times of peak demand.

Tap Water in Catering Establishments

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether there are any plans for legislation that would guarantee tap water being available in catering establishments.

(AQW 26401/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department has no plans to introduce legislation that would guarantee tap water being available in catering establishments.

InvestNI: Local Businesses

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what steps InvestNI is taking to drive energy efficiency in local businesses.

(AQW 26422/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI offers a range of support to drive business energy efficiency and assist the management of energy costs including technical advice, energy efficiency audits, and project management support to help implement effective cost saving opportunities.

Invest NI can also provide financial assistance to Large Energy Users that bring forward proposals for capital expenditure on equipment that will make a significant impact on energy efficiency. In terms of smaller companies, Invest NI funds council initiatives to assist small businesses to undertake a variety of energy efficient projects.

Invest NI provides the funding for the Energy Efficiency Loan Fund which is delivered on its behalf by the Carbon Trust and offers interest-free loans of up to £400,000 to enable businesses to install more energy efficient equipment. It has along with Manufacturing Northern Ireland and Carbon Trust also recently launched 'Energy Independence', aimed at helping companies improve energy efficiency and consider adopting renewable energy technologies.

Subsidies for Biomass

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of whether subsidies for biomass disincentivises energy efficiency; and if so, what measures can be taken to combat this.

(AQW 26425/11-15)

Mrs Foster: My Department is very keen to promote energy efficiency alongside incentives for renewable heat technologies, such as biomass, as it is widely recognised that energy efficiency measures can be the most cost effective method for reducing energy bills. Indeed my Department has sought to promote positive energy efficiency behaviours through the EnergyWise campaign.

In designing the domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) DETI has included energy efficiency assumptions that will ensure that the tariffs are most appropriate and most beneficial for those that have already carried out energy efficiency improvements in their homes. In addition, by proposing to 'deem' payments there is a further incentive for those installing biomass under the future domestic RHI to be as efficient as possible. In addition, the existing Renewable Heat Premium Payment (RHPP) scheme does however have prescriptive eligibility requirements regarding loft and cavity wall insulation.

Again, within the existing RHI for commercial premises it is assumed that the installation of a biomass boiler, or another renewable technology, would be the final action taken by a business seeking to become 'low-carbon', with the costs involved in installing renewable heating much greater than those involved with simple energy efficiency measures

InvestNI: Game of Thrones

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail (i) how much InvestNI provided in grants to attract Game of Thrones; (ii) the estimated economic benefit of Game of Thrones; (iii) which body calculates the estimated economic benefit; and (iv) the method used to calculate the economic benefit.

(AQW 26428/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI offers a range of support to drive business energy efficiency and assist the management of energy costs including technical advice, energy efficiency audits, and project management support to help implement effective cost saving opportunities.

Invest NI can also provide financial assistance to Large Energy Users that bring forward proposals for capital expenditure on equipment that will make a significant impact on energy efficiency. In terms of smaller companies, Invest NI funds council initiatives to assist small businesses to undertake a variety of energy efficient projects.

Invest NI provides the funding for the Energy Efficiency Loan Fund which is delivered on its behalf by the Carbon Trust and offers interest-free loans of up to £400,000 to enable businesses to install more energy efficient equipment. It has along with Manufacturing Northern Ireland and Carbon Trust also recently launched 'Energy Independence', aimed at helping companies improve energy efficiency and consider adopting renewable energy technologies.

- i. Invest NI, through its funding support to the Northern Ireland Screen Commission (NI Screen), has provided £10.9million of financial assistance to Home Box Office (HBO). This funding has helped to secure the pilot episode of HBO's Game of Thrones in 2009 and the first four series.
- ii. The estimated economic impact of Game of Thrones, as measured by Gross Value Added and employment, is expected to exceed £80million. This includes all expenditure generated in the local economy such as wages and salaries of Northern Ireland resident cast and crew, hotels, facilities hire, transport hire, construction costs, etc. Over the period 2009-2013, Game of Thrones has created 941 Full Time Equivalent jobs. It should be noted that this figure does not include those employed on shorter term daily contracts.

The full economic benefit of Game of Thrones is much greater when coupled with the wider and regional benefits that have been derived to date. These wider benefits include increasing the overall reputation of the Northern Ireland Screen Industry on the national and international stage; helping to attract new Foreign Direct Investment (FDI); development of new film tourism opportunities; increase in NI's skills capacity; wider supply chain benefits (e.g. airlines, restaurants, etc).

- iii. The economic benefit has been assessed independently by external appraisers including KPMG, Deloitte and Cogent Management Consultants. Typically, this is undertaken as a element of the interim and final economic evaluation of NI Screen's four year funding cycle.
- iv. The method used to calculate economic benefit is compliant with:
 - The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government, HM Treasury, 2003;
 - The Northern Ireland Guide to Expenditure Appraisal and Evaluation, DFP, 2009;
 - The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation; and
 - Invest NI Economic Appraisal Methodology (EAM) Guidance.

Closure of Visitor Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Community or Amenity Facilities

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has any evidence of a growing trend in councils of closing visitor attractions, leisure facilities, community or amenity facilities that were initially jointly funded by Government and/or European funding provided on a three year

sustainability basis; and if any funded activities are under pressure from closure or additional funding requirements.

(AQW 26444/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Neither my Department nor The Northern Ireland Tourist Board has any specific evidence of a growing trend in councils of closing visitor attractions, leisure facilities, community or amenity facilities that were initially jointly funded by Government and/or European funding provided on a three year sustainability basis.

The closure of council facilities is a matter for each individual council.

Closure of Exploris

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment, following the decision by Ards Borough Council to defer the closure of Exploris for two months, to outline her Department's plans to assist in securing the facilities.

(AQW 26535/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Ards Borough Council has owned and operated Exploris since 1987. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) has provided a total of £1,841,777 of financial support to Exploris over the period for capital, marketing and other schemes.

While not in a position to provide revenue funding for Exploris, NITB recognises the importance of the Aquarium as a major tourist attraction in the Strangford Lough area and would encourage Ards Borough Council to try to find a suitable solution to keep this facility operational.

NITB and Invest Northern Ireland are currently exploring options for other support, if any exists, that they may be in a position to offer Ards Borough Council in support of Exploris.

Small Scale Generation Projects

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the ongoing work between her Department, Northern Ireland Electricity and the Utility Regulator to address the shortcomings being experienced by successful applications of small scale generation projects that are unable to connect to the grid.

(AQW 26548/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I am aware that the increasing amount of small scale renewable electricity generation is placing a strain on the distribution network and that NIE has been in discussions with the Utility Regulator to identify a solution to the problem. My Department has observer status on the Utility Regulator-led Renewables Grid Liaison Group, which also includes representation from NIE and industry. The Group is exploring solutions which are within NIE's licence requirements and that minimise the cost to the consumer.

New Social Enterprise Projects

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how much funding has been set aside for new social enterprise projects in the next two years.

(AQW 26549/11-15)

Mrs Foster: DETI leads, on behalf of the Executive, on the development of social economy policy for Northern Ireland. This is taken forward through a cross departmental Social Economy Policy Group (SEPG) which includes representatives from several Executive departments which will be delivering their own social enterprise projects.

In October 2012, DETI appointed Social Enterprise Northern Ireland to design, manage and deliver a Social Economy Work Programme (SEWP), for up to a maximum of three years. The main objective of the SEWP is to develop and implement a programme of initiatives to enable the continued growth of a sustainable social economy sector.

DETI's contribution to the SEWP is £150,000 per annum for up to three years. This will be the key mechanism for DETI's support for the sector moving forward.

In addition Invest Northern Ireland has two programmes that aim to support new social enterprise projects. The Social Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) supports the development of social enterprise start ups across Northern Ireland and the Social Enterprise Franchise Programme is a pilot programme to assist both potential franchisees and franchisors to take forward new business opportunities. Invest NI funding to these two programmes is £1.578 million until March 2015.

DETI/Invest Northern Ireland is also working in partnership with the Department for Social Development (DSD) to deliver the Social Enterprise Incubation Hubs (SEIH) signature project within the Delivering Social Change (DSC) initiative. This is the development of up to 11 social enterprise hubs with support for a two year period from 2014 at a cost of £4 million.

Hydraulic Fracturing in Co. Fermanagh

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail who granted Tamboran a licence to carry out hydraulic fracturing on land owned by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in Co. Fermanagh.

(AQW 26568/11-15)

Mrs Foster: No Licence has been awarded in Northern Ireland for hydraulic fracturing. DETI awarded Petroleum Licence PL2/10 to Tamboran Resources Limited on 1 April 2011 for an initial 5-year term. The license area covers part of County Fermanagh.

Hydraulic Fracturing in Co. Fermanagh

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to detail the location and ownership of the land that is included in the licence that has been granted for hydraulic fracturing in Co. Fermanagh.

(AQW 26569/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I refer the member to the answer I gave to AQW 26568, which explained that there are no licences granted for hydraulic fracturing in Northern Ireland.

Hydraulic Fracturing Licences

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether any further hydraulic fracturing licences have been applied for, and granted to, companies covering forests.

(AQW 26570/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I would refer the member to the answers I gave to AQW 26568 and AQW 26569 which he also submitted. My Department does not grant licences for hydraulic fracturing. DETI has awarded one Petroleum Licence, PL2/10, in County Fermanagh, where the intention of the Licensee is to explore for shale gas. No other applications for Petroleum Licences in which the target would be shale gas have been received.

Giro d'Italia 2014

Mr Hazzard asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the recent announcement that the route of the Giro d'Italia 2014 will not include the Mourne.

(AQW 26571/11-15)

Mrs Foster: RCS Sport, the event owners, have the ultimate say in where any stage of the race route goes. Shadetree Sports, as the local organiser of the Big Start, have been consulting with RCS on the potential stage routes since the very beginning of the bid process.

Above all else, this is a professional sporting event and sporting considerations have to be paramount during the decision making process.

Road races and time trials require different types of road to fit the disciplines whilst the nature of the road closures, which an event of this size has, also comes into play in a critical manner.

You will understand that there are many areas of the country that are not included and it would be impossible for the event to go through every area of Northern Ireland so that everybody has the race passing through their locality.

The route that will be announced on Monday 7 October 2013 in Milan, Italy is the agreed route that RCS Sport and all of the partners in Northern Ireland have agreed on. A lot of work has gone into getting these stages right from a Giro d'Italia point of view. When an event comes this far away from its home base, we must take care to look after their interests and ensure the central sporting considerations of the race are met.

Maintaining Electricity Supplies in Winter Conditions

Mr McNarry asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what preparations have been made for potential difficult winter conditions in relation to maintaining electricity supplies.

(AQW 26645/11-15)

Mrs Foster: The annual Winter Outlook for 2013-2014 published on 20 August 2013 on the SONI and EirGrid websites clearly indicates that there should be sufficient generation capacity this winter to ensure an appropriate level of security of electricity supply is maintained in Northern Ireland.

DETI keeps in close contact with SONI throughout the year, which includes an ongoing review on resilience, and is due to meet with the Northern Ireland gas, electricity, and oil sectors over the next two months for the annual pre-winter planning reviews.

Green Investment Bank

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what funding opportunities, through the Green Investment Bank, can be progressed to the benefit of companies in North Down.

(AQW 26704/11-15)

Mrs Foster: I would refer the Member to the reply I gave to AQW 26257/11-15

InvestNI: Stream Global Services

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment why InvestNI awarded £3 million of public money to Stream Global Services to locate in Belfast when the company has reduced its services in the North West over the last number of years.

(AQW 26724/11-15)

Mrs Foster: Invest NI offered LBM Direct Marketing £2,879,700 of support towards the creation of 993 new jobs, which when fully staffed will deliver £14million of wages and salaries into the Northern Ireland economy. This support was offered under the Jobs Fund which was set up to create jobs quickly, and as of this week almost 600 of the 993 posts are filled.

LBM Direct Marketing was acquired by Stream in February 2013. Stream decided it would continue with LBM's planned investment in Belfast.

Department of the Environment

Dilapidated Buildings, Neglected Sites and Defective Properties

Mr Storey asked the Minister of the Environment to explain the rationale behind his Department's change in policy from funding and tackling dereliction to taking enforcement action in relation to dilapidated buildings, neglected sites and defective properties.

(AQW 26035/11-15)

Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment): There has not been a change in policy.

The Department's Dereliction Intervention Funding Programme, is intended to assist councils to remove and reduce the impact of eyesores in a limited number of townscape sites and/or when significant public events are impending. This has the twin benefits of reducing blight spread, and providing a more aesthetically pleasing environment for visitors and local residents. In the main it is of a cosmetic nature and can be of more short term impact.

However, I am aware that some aspects of the current legislation dealing with dilapidated buildings, neglected sites and defective properties in Northern Ireland may need to be strengthened to enable district councils to tackle problems in this area more effectively. I have, therefore, initiated a work programme within the Department to consider the current legislation and to bring forward proposals to, if appropriate, strengthen that legislation. Any proposals to change the legislation would be subject to full public consultation before any final decisions on the way forward are made.

I would see any change in legislation as complementing the Dereliction Intervention Scheme and assisting councils in tackling dilapidated and neglected sites.

Regulation 10 of the Planning (Environmental Impact) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment, in relation to planning application E/2013/0093/F, why it took two months from the receipt of the application for his Department to decide that it required EIA screening; and whether this decision was as a result of concerns raised by objectors over his Department's failure to carry out an EIA determination in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Planning (Environmental Impact) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012.

(AQW 26038/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Committee for the Environment's report identified 12 recommendations for implementation by the Department. These contain legislative, policy, regulatory and enforcement proposals which may require amendments of legislation or policy and will in some cases require consultation with the tyre sector. The recommendations impose short, medium and long term actions upon the Department.

Two of the recommendations relate to improving waste data for tyre arisings in Northern Ireland. NIEA is currently reviewing its data collection and collation systems for controlled wastes, including waste tyres. This will require additional resources and the development and enhancement of databases.

The Committee has also recommended that NIEA recruit additional enforcement staff. A recruitment programme is ongoing and the Agency hopes to have new staff shortly. The Environmental Crime Unit in NIEA has already recruited a number of staff and these are now in post. The aim will be to provide more robust monitoring and auditing of the waste tyre sector and enforcement of offenders.

A further recommendation requires the review and updating of waste tyre exemptions. The Agency is looking at all registered exemptions and this will include waste tyre activities.

The Committee has asked that the Department investigate the Registered Waste Carrier and Duty of Care legislation with the view to implementing an electronic system of compliance. There is presently a UK wide project in relation to an electronic Duty of Care system (eDOC) which is being tested by

industry. NIEA has also recently revised its Relevant Convictions Policy. The Department intends to shortly introduce further legal requirements for Duty of Care and Waste Carriers.

The Committee considered alternative uses and new technologies as part of its Used Tyre inquiry. A recommendation in the report is the production of clear application forms and guidance for End of Waste and that these applications should be processed promptly. The Agency has set up a Policy Team to implement this recommendation.

The Committee listed several recommendations requesting the Department consider an all island producer responsibility mechanism for waste tyres. The Department is waiting for the outcome of the ROI review of its PR scheme before it progresses this recommendation. The Committee also suggested an interim compliance measure. The NIEA has been liaising with the tyre retailer association to progress this recommendation.

Waste That Should be Recycled, Landfilled and Incinerated

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail his departmental targets for the percentage of total waste that should be (i) recycled; (ii) landfilled; and (iii) incinerated by 2020.

(AQW 26040/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's soon to be published revised Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland "Delivering Resource Efficiency" sets out targets and actions aimed at reducing our reliance on landfill by reducing the amount of waste we generate and recycling and recovering a larger proportion. The Strategy reflects both European and National targets and specific commitments in the NI Executive's Programme for Government 2011-2015. It does not contain an overall target for the percentage of all NI waste to be recycled, landfilled, or incinerated.

Specific Strategy targets for recycling are as follows:

- To achieve a recycling rate (including preparing for re-use) of 45% by 2015;
- To achieve a recycling rate (include preparation for re-use) of 50% household waste by 2020;
- To achieve a recycling rate of 60% (including preparing for re-use) of Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste by 2020;
- To achieve a recovery rate (including preparing for re-use, recycling and other material recovery of 70% for all non-hazardous construction and demolition waste by 2020;
- To achieve an overall recovery rate of 79% and overall recycling rate of 72.7% of packaging by 2017;
- To achieve all the recovery and recycling targets for all categories of EEE as set out in the recast WEEE Directive; and
- To achieve an overall re-use, recycling and recovery rate for end of life vehicles of 95% by 2015.

Specific Strategy targets for landfill are as follows:

- To landfill no more than 220,000 tonnes of biodegradable Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste by 2020 (under the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowances Scheme (NILAS))
- To meet the Article 5 Landfill Directive target of landfilling no more than 429,000 tonnes of biodegradable municipal waste by 2020.

The Strategy does not contain targets for the incineration of waste. However, the Department supports efficient energy recovery from residual waste through incineration in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Road Safety for Cyclists

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment, given the increase in the number of cyclists using rural roads, what plans he has to enhance road safety for cyclists.

(AQW 26043/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes.

I believe that reducing further all deaths and serious injuries on our roads, with the ultimate ambition of 'Vision Zero', where any death is unacceptable, is an important and achievable objective.

Between 2008 and 2012, six cyclists died on our roads. So far this year three cyclists have died. In 2012, 55 cyclists were seriously injured, an increase from 36 in 2003. The rate of Pedal Cyclist deaths and serious injuries per 100 million kilometers cycled in 2011, the latest figures available, was 77, an increase of 28% on the 2004-2008 baseline of 60.

Drivers are responsible for the majority of collisions, with the main causes being speeding, drink driving and inattention on our roads. Changing the attitudes and behaviours of drivers is therefore the most effective way of protecting all road users and our campaigns concentrate on changing such behaviours. The Road Safety Strategy recognises cyclists as a vulnerable road user group and includes a range of actions that relate to cyclists' safety.

In October 2011, the Department launched the 'Be Cycle Aware' campaign to remind drivers and cyclists to pay attention when sharing the road. This campaign consists of two radio messages and bus back posters.

In May 2012, a campaign was launched to encourage road users to 'respect everyone's journey'. The important safety messages to drivers will benefit all vulnerable road user groups, including cyclists.

In September 2012, a campaign was launched, focusing on wider road user responsibility, urging all road users to take responsibility for their actions on the road. The television, press and online campaign includes an injured cyclist saying "I was cycling in the bike lane. The driver said the sun was in his eyes."

A further campaign, launched on 24 April 2013, invites everyone to 'Share the Road to Zero'. This is aimed at all road user groups – cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers and passengers and, indeed, focuses heavily on cyclists in the opening scenes. The aim is to get every road user to take personal responsibility for helping to prevent deaths on Northern Ireland's roads. The social media aspect of this campaign provides appropriately targeted road safety messages to subscribers. This can be found at www.sharetheroadtozero.com

A 'Cycling Skills & Cycling Safety' guide, developed jointly by DOE and DRD, is available in hard copy and online and provides information on the benefits of cycling, on basic safety requirements and on the rules of the road.

The Cycling Proficiency Scheme is offered by the DOE Road Safety Education Officer Service to every primary school in Northern Ireland. Over 530 Primary Schools participate in the scheme each year, with approximately 8,365 children benefiting from the scheme annually.

Rules 204 to 218 in the Highway Code provide advice on how drivers should treat vulnerable road users, including cyclists, with extra care and attention. Advice specifically for cyclists can be found in Rules 59-82.

Given a rise in cyclist casualties, the Department is currently analysing available data and has commissioned qualitative research to help inform consideration of potential new educational activity around cyclist safety.

I recognise the continuing challenges of reducing casualties on our roads, and will take forward further actions as appropriate from this analysis and research.

Level of Disposal of Reuseable Bags

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment to outline the research or evidence base that determined the level of disposal of reuseable bags; and the evidence gathered to attribute levels of disposal by consumers to the cost of bags.

(AQW 26062/11-15)

Mr Durkan: From the outset, the Department's initial modelling work confirmed that the carrier bag levy needed to be extended to low cost reusable bags, to maximise environmental benefits. Otherwise, the relatively low price of low cost reusable bags would lead some people to treat them as single use bags - and discard them prematurely. Since low cost reusable bags are usually of a higher gauge, this would cause even greater harm than discarded single use bags.

The Department had predicted that the implementation of the levy on single use bags would generate around a 70% increase in sales of low cost reusable bags. Increased sales of such bags is both expected and welcomed – but only provided that customers actively reuse such bags to their full potential.

In Wales, data provided by 5 large retailers suggest that sales of low cost reusable bags have increased by 120-130%. Anecdotal evidence presented to the Department suggests that the same trends are occurring in Northern Ireland. However, a recent local survey shows that only 56% of shoppers in Northern Ireland regularly reuse their carrier bags – suggesting that there is significant room for improvement in shopping behaviour.

I believe that this information reinforces the rationale for extending the levy to low cost reusable bags, in line with original policy direction. I should also point out that the legislation will still give retailers the freedom to operate a bag-for-life policy, replacing worn-out plastic reusable bags free of charge. This should help reinforce positive environmental behaviour.

It is abundantly clear that, in Northern Ireland, the 5 pence levy has significantly reduced sales of new single use bags. In the same way, an increase in the price of new low cost reusable bags should help reduce unnecessary purchases of these bags. This should help prevent a scenario in which large numbers of new reusable bags are purchased and discarded prematurely.

I believe that by extending the levy to reusable bags costing under 20 pence and maintaining the option for retailers to operate a bag-for-life policy, we can drive up the frequency with which all carrier bags are reused, build on the success of the single use carrier bag levy and maximise the overall environmental benefit.

Highway Code: Cyclists

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what is the legal enforceability of the Highway Code as it pertains to measures to protect cyclists.

(AQW 26063/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has a statutory responsibility under Article 51 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 to promote road safety and specifically to make available the Highway Code. The Highway Code reflects current Northern Ireland legislation but has no power in itself to change or introduce any legislation. It does, however, provide rules, techniques and advice essential for all road users. A bicycle is legally a vehicle and a cyclist is a driver, so therefore a cyclist is required to obey all the standard rules of the road.

Many of the rules in the Highway Code are legal requirements, and if you disobey these rules you are committing a criminal offence. You may be fined, given penalty points on your licence or be disqualified from driving. In the most serious cases you may be sent to prison. Such rules are identified by the use of the words 'MUST/MUST NOT'. Each of these rules includes an abbreviated reference to the legislation which creates the offence – an explanation of the abbreviations can be found on page 123 of the Code.

Article 51(6) of the 1995 Order provides that while failure to comply with any provision of the Code will not, in itself, cause a person to be prosecuted, the Highway Code may be used in evidence in any court proceedings under road traffic legislation (listed on page 123) to establish or to negative any liability. This includes rules that use advisory wording such as ‘should/should not’ or ‘do/do not’.

This wording is used throughout the Highway Code including the sections which pertain specifically to cyclists. The first of these sections contains ‘Rules for Cyclists’ and includes information on issues such as appropriate clothing and lighting as well as advice when cycling on cycle routes, cycle tracks, cycle lanes and bus lanes. The correct procedures to be followed at road junctions, roundabouts and crossing the road are also covered alongside other important safety requirements (Rules 59 to 82).

The Code also makes it very clear that the most vulnerable road users are pedestrians, particularly children, older or disabled people, cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. Advice on how drivers should treat vulnerable road users, including cyclists, is covered in Rules 204 to 218 of the Code.

A further section entitled ‘You and your bicycle’ considers some of the factors that will help make sure that you feel confident of your ability to ride safely on the road. This advice can be found in Annex 1 of the Code (page 118).

The rules, techniques and advice contained in the Highway Code for Northern Ireland are there to help us all to use the roads both safely and legally. There is no doubt, if all road users know and follow this advice then many collisions would be avoided and the Road to Zero road deaths would be advanced.

Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment when he will amend the Environmental Impact Assessment regulations to comply with the Court of Justice of the European Union decision on case number C-50/09.

(AQW 26098/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The decision in Case c-50/09 – (Commission v Ireland) and a related UK Court of Appeal judgment in SAVE Britain’s Heritage v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and Lancaster City Council, which concluded that demolition works come within the scope of the EIA Directive, were implemented in September 2012 by an amendment to the Department’s Direction on Demolition and Development and to the Planning (General Development) Order (NI) 1993 (“the GDO”).

The changes to the Department’s Direction brought the demolition of all buildings with some minor exceptions under planning control. To ensure that the planning system was not overburdened with unnecessary planning applications for the demolition of relatively insignificant buildings the Department also introduced permitted development rights for the demolition of buildings. However, by virtue of an earlier amendment to the GDO made by the Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 1999 these were only granted up to the point where demolition reached the EIA threshold so that permitted development rights would not be granted where the proposal required environmental scrutiny under the EIA regulations.

Following the consolidation and updating of the EIA Regulations in 2012, my Department gave consideration to the status of the earlier amendment to the GDO made under the 1999 EIA Regulations. To clarify and confirm the position and to reiterate the extent of permitted development rights, including demolition, in respect of EIA requirements, a further amendment was made to the GDO, which came into operation on 30th August 2013. The inserted provision provides that the GDO cannot grant planning permission for development falling within the scope of the EIA Regulations unless the Department of the Environment has determined that the proposed development is not EIA development.

Aarhus Convention

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment when Northern Ireland will sign the Aarhus Convention.
(AQW 26099/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Aarhus Convention was ratified on a UK-wide basis on 24 February 2005 and, in line with the Convention's procedures, became a full party to the Convention 90 days after this date, in May 2005. Northern Ireland, is, therefore, already 'signed up' to the Convention and has complied with its requirements by transposing and implementing the relevant EU legislation.

Habitat Regulations

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment when he will amend the Habitat regulations to comply with The Court of Justice of the European Union decision on case number 256/11.

(AQW 26106/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The court judgement in question (Sweetman V An Bord Pleanala) concerned the interpretation of Article 6 of the Habitats Directive as applied to the process by which the Irish Planning Board reached its decision to give approval to a road scheme, part of which was planned to cross a Special Area of Conservation. It did not concern any legal lacuna in the relevant Irish transposing legislation. The Department does not consider that there are any legislative implications arising from this case, therefore amending regulations are not required.

Waste to Energy Incineration

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to outline his Department's strategy or plan for the capacity of local waste to energy incineration.

(AQW 26128/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department's soon to be published revised Waste Management Strategy for Northern Ireland "Delivering Resource Efficiency" sets out targets and actions aimed at reducing the amount of waste we generate and recycling and recovering a larger proportion to reduce our reliance on landfill. It reflects both European and National targets and specific commitments in the NI Executive's Programme for Government 2011-2015. The Strategy recognises that efficient energy recovery from residual waste in accordance with the waste hierarchy, whether through a cement kiln, incinerator or gasifier, can contribute to meeting NI's non-fossil fuel obligations and Government policies on renewable energy, as well as meeting landfill diversion targets.

The Department's priority is to secure a reasonable level of assurance of compliance with landfill diversion targets for 2020. It is for each Waste Management Group to determine the optimum scale of their proposed facilities in order to meet their councils' landfill diversion targets whilst maximising recycling in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Single-Use Carrier Bag Levy

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of the Environment how his Department plans to use the single-use carrier bag levy returns for local businesses.

(AQW 26132/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Now that the first quarter carrier bag levy returns have been received, I will announce plans for the use of the levy funds in the next few weeks.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Douglas asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the Review of Public Administration which is due to become operational in 2015.

(AQO 4609/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Local Government Reform programme remains on target for 1 April 2015. The new councils will be equipped with a tested, robust and comprehensive legislative and operational framework.

Earlier today the Local Government Bill was introduced into the Assembly. This is a major step in the legislative process that will make local government reform a reality and will provide the legislative framework necessary to give effect to the Executive's decisions on the future shape of local government.

The regulations which introduced the severance scheme for councillors came into operation on 1 August 2013. The main components of the scheme include a minimum eligibility period of 12 years (cumulatively), graduated yearly payments to ensure that those with longer periods of service are treated fairly and proportionately, and a cap on individual payments of £35,000.

A Commencement Order, which will bring the boundaries of the 11 new local government districts into effect for the purposes of holding the next local government elections and to allow the new councils to prepare an annual budget and strike a rate for the 2015/16 financial year, will be made by the end of September.

Ten statutory transition committees have been established to drive convergence between the merging councils and also prepare for the new incoming councils operating in shadow form next year. I have written to Belfast City Council about their nominations to a Belfast Statutory Transition Committee, which has not yet formed. I have also written to some councils where there are issues around proportional representation. The work of the new committees includes corporate, financial and business planning and also the appointment of chief executives to lead the change management process. The Department has issued guidance to the statutory committees, particularly to provide operational advice and direction to enable them to discharge their duties. Their work is monitored by the Regional Transition Committee, which I Chair.

The funding package of £47.8 million agreed by the Executive is intended to meet costs associated with various elements of the transition process, including up to £30 million to support rates convergence in the early years of the new councils.

Councils will operate in shadow form for a period of time; i.e. from the date of the elections to the new district councils in May 2014, until the date when those councils assumed full powers and responsibilities in April 2015. A newly elected council, acting in shadow form, will have the statutory authority and democratic mandate to make policy decisions that will shape the direction of the new council before it becomes fully operational.

Review of Public Administration

Mr Dickson asked the Minister of the Environment what correspondence he has had with the Northern Ireland Office regarding the proposed date for elections to the new district councils.

(AQO 4610/11-15)

Mr Durkan: My Department has been working closely with the Northern Ireland Office in relation to arrangements for the next local government election, including the proposal to bring forward the date of the election to 2014. Moving the date of the election will allow for a transitional period in advance of the eleven new councils taking up their full range of powers and responsibilities.

I understand that an Order in Council is to be laid at Westminster in early October which will include provision for the election to take place on 22 May 2014, subject to Parliament's approval of the legislation.

Road Safety Media Campaigns

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has any plans to launch new road safety media campaigns, in particular for rural roads.

(AQW 26175/11-15)

Mr Durkan: One of my Department's key responsibilities is to work towards further reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads each year.

My Department has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes.

I believe that reducing further all deaths and serious injuries on our roads, with the ultimate ambition of 'Vision Zero', where any death is unacceptable, is an important and achievable objective.

The main causes of road casualties continue to be speeding, drink driving, inattention on our roads and failure to wear a seatbelt. Therefore, through its public information campaigns, my Department works towards encouraging all road users to be aware of their vulnerability, their responsibilities towards themselves and other road users, to influence their attitudes and behaviours when using, or thinking or using, the roads anywhere in Northern Ireland.

While most collisions occur on urban roads (roads with a speed limit of 40 mph or less) most road deaths and serious injuries happen on rural roads (roads with a speed limit of above 40 mph, excluding motorways and dual carriageways). Over the five years between 2008 and 2012, over 59% of injury collisions took place on urban roads; however, 71% of fatalities and 52% of serious injuries occurred on rural roads.

Collisions on such roads tend to be severe and randomly distributed, making specific measures difficult. However, if we are further to reduce deaths and serious injuries on Northern Ireland's roads, continuing improvements in safety on rural roads will be a vital component of this. There is therefore a significant focus in the Road Safety Strategy on rural roads, with almost every DOE road safety campaign referring heavily to rural roads, many dramatising tragic consequences characteristic of collisions on rural roads.

The Department's most recent campaign, launched on 24 April 2013, invites everyone to 'Share the Road to Zero'. This is aimed at all road user groups – cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers and passengers, and highlights rural problems, such as not knowing what is around the corner, and a key scene focuses on a horse rider. The aim is to get every road user to take personal responsibility for helping to prevent deaths anywhere on Northern Ireland's roads. The social media aspect of this campaign can be found at www.sharetheroadtozero.com

Any future campaigns will support this ambition of zero road deaths. For instance, my Department is launching a new seatbelt wearing campaign on 10th October 2013. Its key point will be the importance of wearing a seatbelt on every journey. There will be reference to both urban and rural scenes, with the main message underpinned by issues that are particularly pertinent to rural collisions.

I recognise the continuing challenges of reducing casualties on our roads, and will take forward further actions as appropriate from analysis and research.

Road Traffic Fines

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of the Environment whether the revenue obtained from road traffic fines is taken by Westminster.

(AQW 26217/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The functions of vehicle licensing, vehicle registration and vehicle licensing enforcement are Excepted matters and are not therefore devolved to the NI Assembly. The Driver and Vehicle Agency (DVA) carries out these functions in Northern Ireland on behalf of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) based in Swansea and in doing so collects penalties and fines in relation to non-payment of car tax. All related monies collected by DVA, including fines and penalties, are paid over to DVLA.

Exploris Aquarium

Mr Wells asked the Minister of the Environment what impact the proposed closure of the Exploris Aquarium, Portaferry will have on the rescue and rehabilitation of seals.

(AQW 26245/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Seals are a protected species under the Wildlife Order (NI) 1985 and the European Habitats Directive, and we have a responsibility to ensure that the population levels do not fall below favourable conservation status. We achieve this by monitoring population numbers, protecting their habitats, introducing legislation to prohibit disturbance and or damage to seals and their breeding grounds and by carrying out appropriate assessments of plans and programmes that may impact on the seals and their habitats.

I should point out that my Department has no statutory responsibility for carrying out individual seal pup rescues or for their rehabilitation which is primarily an animal welfare issue. However, on occasions when contacted directly by members of the public, departmental officials have assisted with rescues and onward transfer to Exploris.

I would however be concerned that with the proposed closure of Exploris there would no longer be a facility for rescue and rehabilitation. I regard the seal pup sanctuary as an integral part of Exploris and consequently any deliberations on the future of Exploris must take account of this facility.

You will be interested to know that I have raised the future of Exploris at the Executive Committee for discussion.

Dog Fouling Offences

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what was the average (i) fixed penalty; and (ii) court fine for dog fouling offences, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 26255/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department obtains statistical information on fixed penalty notices on an annual basis and this relates to financial years rather than calendar years.

In the 2010/11 and 2011/12 years the rate of fixed penalty for dog fouling offences was £50. This amount could not be varied.

During the 2012/13 year two councils (Belfast and Newtownabbey) used new powers under Clean Neighbourhoods legislation to deal with dog-fouling problems. These powers allow councils to set the rate of fixed penalty between £50 and £80. In both cases the rate was set at £80. The rate of fixed penalty for the other 24 councils in the 2012/13 year stayed at £50.

The average fine imposed by courts for dog fouling offences in each of the last three financial years is as follows:

| | |
|---------|-----|
| 2010/11 | £50 |
| 2011/12 | £72 |
| 2012/13 | £45 |

Disposal of Waste Tyres

Mr Weir asked the Minister of the Environment what progress has been made on the implementation of the Committee for the Environment's report recommendations on the disposal of waste tyres.

(AQW 26256/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Committee for the Environment's report identified 12 recommendations for implementation by the Department. These contain legislative, policy, regulatory and enforcement proposals which may require amendments of legislation or policy and will in some cases require consultation with the tyre sector. The recommendations impose short, medium and long term actions upon the Department.

Two of the recommendations relate to improving waste data for tyre arisings in Northern Ireland. NIEA is currently reviewing its data collection and collation systems for controlled wastes, including waste tyres. This will require additional resources and the development and enhancement of databases.

The Committee has also recommended that NIEA recruit additional enforcement staff . A recruitment programme is ongoing and the Agency hopes to have new staff shortly. The Environmental Crime Unit in NIEA has already recruited a number of staff and these are now in post. The aim will be to provide more robust monitoring and auditing of the waste tyre sector and enforcement of offenders.

A further recommendation requires the review and updating of waste tyre exemptions. The Agency is looking at all registered exemptions and this will include waste tyre activities.

The Committee has asked that the Department investigate the Registered Waste Carrier and Duty of Care legislation with the view to implementing an electronic system of compliance. There is presently a UK wide project in relation to an electronic Duty of Care system (eDOC) which is being tested by industry. NIEA has also recently revised its Relevant Convictions Policy. The Department intends to shortly introduce further legal requirements for Duty of Care and Waste Carriers.

The Committee considered alternative uses and new technologies as part of its Used Tyre inquiry. A recommendation in the report is the production of clear application forms and guidance for End of Waste and that these applications should be processed promptly. The Agency has set up a Policy Team to implement this recommendation.

The Committee listed several recommendations requesting the Department consider an all island producer responsibility mechanism for waste tyres. The Department is waiting for the outcome of the ROI review of its PR scheme before it progresses this recommendation. The Committee also suggested an interim compliance measure. The NIEA has been liaising with the tyre retailer association to progress this recommendation.

Retrospective Planning Application at Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment why no action was taken between the time of the first retrospective planning application at Mobouy Road and Spring 2012.

(AQW 26287/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Following the discovery of the major illegal landfill site at Mobouy Road outside Derry my predecessor provided a Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on Tuesday 16 July providing background to the matter and setting out the actions he had taken to address the issues arising.

One of these was to appoint an expert external reviewer to carry out an independent review into what transpired in relation to the waste facility at the Campsie site and to identify any failures that might have occurred in the regulation of the site in respect of any sectors of central government, including what DOE did around this facility and more generally. The expert reviewer was asked to provide a report to the Environment Minister not later than Thursday 31 October 2013.

As the Question asked in this instance appears to relate to matters that will be considered by and reported on by the expert reviewer, I will wish to receive and consider his report and recommendations before commenting on any specific aspects of my Department's previous management of issues relevant to the site, including monitoring of the site and interventions by the DOE over the relevant period.

Water Quality Testing: Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail the instances of water quality testing which have occurred at the aquifer in the vicinity of Mobouy Road.

(AQW 26288/11-15)

Mr Durkan: During the course of the criminal investigation by the Environmental Crime Unit a number of liquid samples were taken from the body of the waste. These form part of the evidence in this case and it is not possible to give further information on this as the matter remains the subject of a live investigation. Groundwater monitoring has been conducted in and around the closed landfill site by the operators as a condition of their licence.

Illegal Dump at Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment what regulations are in place for his Department to recover the costs of the clean-up of contaminated land from the original owner of the Mobouy Road site in the event that the land is sold to a small company.

(AQW 26289/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Provision is made for “clean up costs” under the Waste and Contaminated Land (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 (the 1997 Order). Under Article 5C of the 1997 Order where a person is convicted of depositing or disposing of controlled waste a compensation order may be sought for costs incurred by the Department or others in removing waste from the land and/or taking other steps to eliminate or reduce the consequences of the deposit or disposal.

Under the Environmental Liability (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 provisions are made for cost recovery where an operator fails to comply with a statutory notice. (There are a number of different statutory notices which may be issued in specific circumstances). In the event of an operator failing to comply with a statutory notice, the operator is liable for any reasonable costs incurred by the Department in taking reasonable action to discharge its duty.

Hightown Waste Incinerator

Mr Kinahan asked the Minister of the Environment whether he has been briefed by ARC21 on the projected final cost of the Hightown Waste Incinerator project; and at what cost his Department will determine that the project is not value for money.

(AQW 26297/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department is not party to any of the procurements being taken forward by the Waste Management Groups, and is not therefore party to the commercially confidential details of the arc21 project. Management of the project is a matter for arc21 and its constituent councils to determine in line with their governance arrangements.

The Department will not therefore be in a position to offer any substantive comment on either the cost or the value for money of the arc21 project until it has received a complete Appointment Business Case from arc21.

Driver and Vehicle Agency: Coleraine

Mr McKay asked the Minister of the Environment whether he plans to ask the British Government to withdraw their consultation on the future of jobs at the Driver and Vehicle Agency in Coleraine, based on the comments made by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport.

(AQW 26313/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The consultation documents published by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Swansea contained an unfounded, outrageous and offensive comment that implied that staff in DVA could be guilty of being biased, on religious grounds, in the delivery of services to customers.

I have made it abundantly clear to Stephen Hammond, the relevant Minister in London, that this slur on the staff in DVA was totally unacceptable, impugning as it did the reputation of staff who have demonstrated the very highest standards of customer service.

Mr Hammond has assured me that there was no intention to imply that anyone in DVA has been, or would be, biased and, while I find it difficult to interpret the comment in any other way, I accept that its inclusion has been acknowledged by the Minister as wholly erroneous. I also note that Mr Hammond apologised to staff in DVA in response to a question in the House of Commons on 11 September 2013.

There has been a very robust, concerted response to the DVLA consultation on the future of vehicle licensing services with cross-party support to oppose the proposal to centralise services in Swansea. It is imperative that we build on the impetus that has been created by this united opposition to these

ill-conceived proposals to remove local services and jobs and to seek to ensure that the matter is reconsidered and the services and jobs retained in Northern Ireland.

I have spoken to staff in DVA and the end to the uncertainty and the removal of this threat to their jobs is essential. I will continue to focus my efforts on bringing this matter to a quick and satisfactory conclusion. I am meeting Stephen Hammond at the beginning of November to set out in person the very strong case for keeping vehicle licensing work with DVA.

Arc21 Procurement

Mr G Kelly asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of whether the current arc21 procurement will provide best value for money for ratepayers.

(AQW 26327/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Department is not party to any of the procurements being taken forward by the Waste Management Groups, and is not therefore party to the commercially confidential details of the arc21 project. Management of the project is a matter for arc21 and its constituent councils to determine in line with their governance arrangements.

The Department will not therefore be in a position to offer any substantive comment on either the cost or the value for money of the arc21 project until it has received a complete Appointment Business Case from arc21 that has the full support of its Joint Committee.

Japanese Knotweed

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of the Environment whether there has been an increase in Japanese Knotweed in the last three years.

(AQW 26349/11-15)

Mr Durkan: The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) have actively encouraged the reporting of invasive species such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) through the Invasive Species Ireland Project which they jointly initiated in partnership with the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dublin in 2006. The project has worked closely with the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC) in Waterford to establish the National Invasive Species Database (NISD) for the island of Ireland.

In the last three years 143 records of Japanese knotweed in Northern Ireland have been received through the database. Whilst this figure may give the perception that Japanese knotweed is expanding its range in Northern Ireland I have been advised by officials from NIEA this is not a true reflection of the situation as the majority of these records submitted will be for long established areas of growth which have been recorded as a direct result of increased awareness of Japanese knotweed.

I have been advised by officials in NIEA that whilst it is not possible to accurately quantify the abundance of Japanese knotweed it is their opinion that in the past three years there has been an overall reduction in the occurrence of Japanese knotweed in Northern Ireland. This opinion is based on the number of factors including a significant increase in the number of queries seeking advice with regards to control of Japanese knotweed, an increase in funding being provided by NIEA for catchment scale and community led control projects, an increase in training provided by NIEA to councils and local community groups; and finally an increase in the number of private companies now offering Japanese knotweed control in Northern Ireland.

Driver and Vehicle Agency

Mr McElduff asked the Minister of the Environment whether the Driver and Vehicle Agency takes into account extenuating circumstances or uses its discretion to waive fines which are imposed on licence holders with respect to SORN (Statutory Off Road Notification) notices, and if so, to detail the number of fines which have been waived in each of the last four years.

(AQW 26358/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Continuous Registration (CR), which was introduced in 2003, makes the registered keeper of a vehicle responsible for ensuring that, at all times, it is either licensed or has a current statutory off road notification (SORN) in place. The automatic issue of a CR penalty is prompted by the failure of a vehicle keeper to take action on the expiry of a vehicle licence or SORN notice. It is not possible to provide the number of CR penalties that relate specifically to the failure to renew a SORN declaration.

The CR penalty letter invites the recipient to notify the Agency if there are exceptional circumstances to be considered and many customers have done so. Each case is considered on its own merit and fines have been waived on the basis of the information or evidence provided, in particular where it is proven that no offence has been committed, or in extenuating circumstances.

It is not possible to provide the number of CR penalties that were closed due to the acceptance of mitigating circumstances as this information is not held.

Energy from Waste Plant

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment for his assessment of arc21/Becon's choice of site at the Hightown Quarry for its proposed Energy from Waste plant, given its proximity to the Ballyutoag Road site where a similar Energy from Waste proposal was refused.

(AQW 26362/11-15)

Mr Durkan: There have been ongoing pre application discussions between the Department, arc 21 and key statutory consultees; however, no formal planning application for a Waste Treatment Facility at Hightown Quarry has been received by DOE Planning and it would not be appropriate for me to comment in advance of a formal application being considered by the Department.

If an application is received, it will be advertised and assessed against relevant planning policy and legislation and all other relevant planning considerations including public the views of consultees and elected representatives.

Illegal Dump at Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment whether his Department has made an assessment of how much it will cost to clean up the illegal dump at Mobouy Road, and if so, to provide details.

(AQW 26364/11-15)

Mr Durkan: Any assessment my officials have made of clean up costs at this stage of their investigations into the activities around Mobouy Road would be very much a preliminary one. A full and final cost will be dependent on a range of factors which have not yet been concluded. These include issues such as the full extent of contamination of the substrate surrounding the waste mass, the final volumes that may need removed and the most appropriate measures needed to control pollution of the environment in the interim period. It is not possible at this juncture to give an accurate estimate of the final cost of dealing with the waste in the Mobouy area.

Aquifers in the Vicinity of Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of the Environment to detail when water quality testing was completed in aquifers in the vicinity of Mobouy Road, in each of the last ten years.

(AQW 26365/11-15)

Mr Durkan: A formal regional groundwater monitoring network has been in existence in Northern Ireland since 2000. None of these monitoring boreholes are currently close to the Mobouy Road site with the nearest over 4km away. In the current financial year, NIEA will be procuring the installation of suitable boreholes at the waste site on the Mobouy Road to further support groundwater quality testing to inform a hydrogeological risk assessment for this site.

Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan

Mrs Hale asked the Minister of the Environment for an update on the adoption and completion of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, including the timescale.

(AQW 26630/11-15)

Mr Durkan: After extensive assessment of the recommendations made by the Planning Appeals Commission, my Department recently submitted BMAP to the Department for Regional Development (DRD) for assessment of the Plan against the Regional Development Strategy (RDS). I expect DRD's consideration to be completed by 16 October and subject to the Plan being awarded a Certificate of General Conformity, preparations for publication will commence and are expected to take 3 – 4 months. Once completed, I plan to adopt BMAP at the earliest opportunity.

Department of Finance and Personnel

Special EU Progamme Body: 2013 Spending Targets

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what the review of cash forecasts from Peace III projects shows in terms of projected underspend; (ii) what are Special EU Progamme Body's 2013 spending targets; and (iii) whether they are likely to be achieved.

(AQW 26220/11-15)

Mr Hamilton (The Minister of Finance and Personnel): There is no projected underspend from PEACE III in 2013. The SEUPB 2013 cumulative spending target of €193,133,276 has been fully achieved, as of 30 September 2013.

Programme for Government 2011/15: Public Procurement Contracts

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how the implementation of social clauses in public procurement contracts compares to the Programme for Government 2011/15 target.

(AQW 26246/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Programme for Government target for all public contracts to contain social clauses is being implemented. There are a number of standard clauses which should be included in all contracts addressing issues such as health and safety and equality. Departments are free to go beyond this where scope exists by, for example, specifying work and training placements. Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) will shortly publish further guidance on integrating social clauses into contracts once endorsed by Ministers.

Joined Up Purchasing Between Public Bodies

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what targets are in place to increase joined up purchasing between public bodies.

(AQW 26248/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The target for Collaborative Procurement in the 2012 to 2015 Procurement Board Strategic Plan is to reduce the expenditure on the following categories of goods and services by £30m:

- Energy
- ICT Commodities
- Telecoms/Networking Equipment
- Print
- Professional Services
- Advertising
- Fleet
- Travel
- Postal Services

Public Procurement Policy

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) at what stage during the development of public procurement policy small business are represented; and (ii) by whom
(AQW 26293/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Central Procurement Directorate interacts with a wide body of stakeholders when developing public procurement policy. These include regular meetings of the business and construction industry forums both of which have representation from the small business sector through bodies such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the Federation of Master Builders. Other Forum members will, in promoting the views of their industry sector as a whole, also represent the views of small businesses. A list of the members of each forum is attached at Annex A.

ANNEX A

BIFNI MEMBERS:

Central Procurement Directorate, Department of Finance and Personnel

- NI Housing Executive
- Translink
- Southern Education & Library Board
- Sales Institute of Ireland, Northern Branch
- Institute of Directors
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Confederation of British Industry - NI
- Management Consultancies Association
- Law Society of Northern Ireland
- Strategic Investment Board
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Chartered Accountants Ireland - Ulster Society
- Momentum (TextHelp Systems Ltd)
- Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)
- Business in the Community
- NI Council of Voluntary Action
- NI Water
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Translink
- Institute of Directors
- Chartered Management Institute & Institute of Consulting
- Social Enterprise NI
- InvestNI
- BioBusiness Ltd
- Business Services Organisation Procurement and Logistics Services (BSO PaLS) CIFNI MEMBERS:

Suppliers College

- Construction Industry Group Executive Secretary Contractors College
- Contractors College
- Specialist Contractors College
- Professionals Council
- Construction Industry Group of Northern Ireland
- Federation of Master Builders
- Trade Unions
- NI Housing Executive
- Central Procurement Directorate, Department of Finance and Personnel
- Roads Service
- NI Water
- Health Estates Investment Group
- Translink
- Department of Education
- Department of Employment & Learning
- Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
- Department for Social Development Social Housing
- Department of Culture, Arts & Leisure

- Strategic Investment Board
- Secretary Professionals Council
- Limavady Borough Council
- Procurement Board Member

Public Procurement Contracts

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to outline in each of the last 5 years (i) the number of local firms in receipt of public procurement contracts; (ii) the value of contracts awarded to local firms; (iii) the number of Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in receipt of public procurement contracts; (iv) the value of contracts awarded to SMEs; (v) the total number of public procurement contracts; and (vi) the total value of public procurement contracts.

(AQW 26298/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: CPD extracts statistics on public procurement activity from the eSourcingNI public procurement portal supplemented by information from Centres of Procurement Expertise (CoPEs).

The eSourcing portal was introduced on a phased basis and data in respect of all CoPEs is available only since April 2010. Data on the value of contracts awarded to local firms has not been collected but will now be obtained.

The information reported by CoPEs is provided in the following table:

| | 2010 - 2011 | 2011 - 2012 |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| The number of contracts awarded to local firms. | 2028 | 2988 |
| The number of contracts awarded to SMEs. | 2017 | 3027 |
| The value of contracts awarded to SMEs. | £533m | £598m |
| The total number of public procurement contracts. | 2618 | 3802 |
| The total value of public procurement contracts. | £1.4bn | £1.1bn |

Public Procurement: Spend

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for his Department's estimation of the amount of public procurement spend which remains in the local economy.

(AQW 26300/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: There are no figures available to estimate the amount of public procurement spend which remains in the local economy. This would require details of the supply chain relating to public contracts the reporting of which would impose a significant burden on suppliers.

Centralised Procurement and Delivery Agency

Mrs Overend asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel what consideration he has given to the creation a centralised procurement and delivery agency.

(AQW 26303/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The Central Procurement Directorate (CPD) was set up by the Executive as part of Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy. It is a centralised purchasing body under the Public Contract Regulations and provides a centralised professional procurement service to Northern Ireland departments through two Centres of Procurement Expertise - one for the procurement of supplies and services and one for construction projects.

As part of my reform agenda I intend to consider this issue.

Cycle to Work Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail how many members of staff in each department have availed of the cycle to work scheme in each year since its introduction.

(AQW 26376/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: The information requested is detailed in the table below.

| Department | 2012 (2) | 2013 (3) | Total |
|---------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| DARD | 51 | 35 | 86 |
| DOE | 112 | 62 | 174 |
| DEL | 34 | 32 | 66 |
| DFP | 88 | 59 | 147 |
| DSD | 119 | 118 | 237 |
| DHSSPS | 13 | 5 | 18 |
| DRD | 128 | 43 | 171 |
| DCAL | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| DE | 14 | 5 | 19 |
| DETI | 8 | 8 | 16 |
| DOJ (1) | 54 | 112 | 166 |
| OFMDFM | 6 | 17 | 23 |
| PPS | 2 | 13 | 15 |
| Totals | 638 | 518 | 1156 |

(1) including NI Prison Service, Youth Justice Agency and NI Courts & Tribunal Service

(2) from launch of scheme in June 2012

(3) to 19th September 2013

British High Speed Rail Project

Mr McKay asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel if he has raised the issue of potential Barnett consequential arising from the British High Speed Rail Project with the Treasury.

(AQW 26379/11-15)

Mr Hamilton: My position on the High Speed Rail project is that if this project is to be funded from additional Capital DEL allocations to the Department for Transport in England, then there should be Barnett consequentials for Northern Ireland. This has indeed been the case in the past where additional rail investment in England has resulted in Barnett allocations for Northern Ireland.

The High Speed Rail Project is not expected to commence until 2017 at the earliest, with the first phase to open in 2026. My officials are therefore monitoring the position closely and, if necessary, I will be making representation to HM Treasury Ministers as part of the next UK Spending Review to ensure that Northern Ireland receive all Barnett consequentials rightfully due to us.

Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Tyrone County Hospital: Consultant Geriatrician

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action has been taken by the Western Health and Social Care Trust to replace the consultant geriatrician who retired from his post in Tyrone County Hospital in August 2013.

(AQW 26172/11-15)

Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety): The Western HSC Trust intends to recruit a permanent consultant as soon as possible to fill the vacant consultant post in geriatrics. The recruitment process is underway and I understand the job description for the post has been approved by the Royal College of Physicians.

System of Transparency

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to (i) introduce a system of transparency regarding the staffing levels in each ward in hospitals, similar to that in operation in the Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust and; (ii) extend such a system to fire and ambulance services.

(AQW 26174/11-15)

Mr Poots: There are no plans to introduce a system of transparency regarding staffing levels similar to that in operation in the Salford Royal NHS Foundation Trust in the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Trusts should already have mechanisms in place to identify any shortfalls in staffing levels and be able to take appropriate action to ensure the delivery of safe and effective care. If additional staff are required Trusts are expected to prioritise their resources to meet that requirement.

I have an accountability mechanism in place through which these issues can be raised with commissioners and with my department. Trusts are able to highlight risks through this process.

A wide stakeholder group, facilitated by NIPEC is already developing workforce tools in specific areas, beginning with medicine and surgery and moving swiftly into community and extending to all areas over the next 3 years.

Herceptin Clinical Trial

Mr Cree asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the statistical findings to date of the world-wide Herceptin Clinical Trial, that was introduced in 2002/03, on HER2 positive breast cancer patients attending the Belfast City Hospital.

(AQW 26198/11-15)

Mr Poots: Belfast City Hospital treated 12 patients on the original HERA study sponsored by Roche which started back in 2003. The study was a randomised three arm multi-centre comparison of Herceptin versus no Herceptin in women with HER2-positive primary breast cancer who had completed adjuvant chemotherapy. Any patient who was randomised initially to receive standard treatment on trial rather than Herceptin subsequently received Herceptin, once positive results were disclosed by Roche. Of the 12 patients recruited to the study, 5 are deceased and 7 remain on annual follow up.

There was also a follow on study called O'HERA which was an observational study exploring cardiac events in HER 2 women treated with Herceptin. A total of 37 patients who had received Herceptin consented to participate in this trial.

Drugs for Rare Diseases

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how drugs for patients diagnosed with a rare disease are funded.

(AQW 26205/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer AQWs 26205 and 26206/11-15 together.

All NICE-approved drugs for rare diseases are either recurrently funded or available via a cost-per-case mechanism. Where a treatment (including drugs) falls outside the range of services normally commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), clinicians can access it for their patient through the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process by demonstrating clinical exceptionality. Each IFR sent to the Board must be supported by the relevant Trust manager and clinical director. In view of the funding available through the IFR process, there are no plans to establish a ring-fenced rare diseases drugs fund for Northern Ireland.

Drugs for Rare Diseases

Mr Gardiner asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will create a ring-fenced rare diseases drugs fund, similar to the £21 million orphan drugs fund in Scotland.

(AQW 26206/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer AQWs 26205 and 26206/11-15 together.

All NICE-approved drugs for rare diseases are either recurrently funded or available via a cost-per-case mechanism. Where a treatment (including drugs) falls outside the range of services normally commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), clinicians can access it for their patient through the Individual Funding Request (IFR) process by demonstrating clinical exceptionality. Each IFR sent to the Board must be supported by the relevant Trust manager and clinical director. In view of the funding available through the IFR process, there are no plans to establish a ring-fenced rare diseases drugs fund for Northern Ireland.

Boards of Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr Elliott asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether appointment procedures for the Boards of Health and Social Care Trusts allow (i) service users; and (ii) the general public to apply to join the Board; and how many Board members in each Trust are designated as coming from these groups.

(AQW 26219/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Health and Social Services Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1994; and the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Services Trust (Establishment) Order (Northern Ireland) 1995, indicate the number of members to be appointed to each Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust. The Membership and Procedures regulations do not designate specific categories of member to the Boards of HSC Trusts. Therefore “service users” and “members of the general public” can apply to join the Board of the six HSC Trusts, through an open and transparent public appointment competition. As there are no designated groups of members appointed to HSC Trusts, the Department is unable to provide you with the number of Board members who come from the designated groups cited in your question.

Altnagelvin Hospital: Recent Fire

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what impact the recent fire at Altnagelvin Hospital has had on surgical waiting times.

(AQW 26271/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by the Western Health and Social Care Trust that the Trust's Business Continuity arrangements ensured that those patients whose procedures were cancelled during the week, in which the fire occurred, i.e. 23 November 2012, were rescheduled as quickly as possible,

with the exception of the orthopaedic speciality, and as a result this had no material impact on waiting times in most specialities.

The orthopaedic ward was relocated to a ward with a reduced bed complement while work was underway to refurbish an alternative ward. Consequently the Commissioning Plan (CP) target for elective orthopaedics is currently not being met. The refurbished ward space became available to the service on 2 August 2013. The service increased elective beds incrementally from 5 August until reaching full bed numbers on 9 September 2013. The Trust is aiming to meet the CP target by end of March 2014 and continues to use the independent sector to reduce waiting times.

South West Acute Hospital and Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the use of agency staff in the (i) South West Acute Hospital; and (ii) Altnagelvin Hospital, in each of the last three years.
(AQW 26304/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Department monitors expenditure on agency staff by Health and Social Care Trust on a bi-annual basis and the reports are published on the Departmental internet site at:

http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hrd/workforce_planning/wpu-monitoring.htm

The information is presented by occupational family and by HSC Trust, rather than by individual hospital. The information below has been provided by the Western HSC Trust.

ALTNAGELVIN HOSPITAL

| Period | Expenditure on Agency staff (including medical locums) |
|---------------|---|
| 2010/11 | £4.9m |
| 2011/12 | £4.3m |
| 2012/13 | £4.4m |

SOUTH WEST ACUTE HOSPITAL (OPENED 21ST JUNE 2012)

| aPeriod | Expenditure on Agency staff (including medical locums) |
|----------------|---|
| 2010/11 | nil |
| 2011/12 | £1.8m (part year) |
| 2012/13 | £2.7m |

Vacancies for Permanent and Locum Doctors

Mr Hussey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in each Health and Social Care Trust, (i) how vacancies for permanent and locum doctors are advertised; (ii) how many positions have been advertised over the last three years; (iii) how many interviews were held (iv) how many interviews were held on a Saturday; and (v) how many planned interviews were then withdrawn.

(AQW 26305/11-15)

Mr Poots:

- (i): All HSC Trusts indicated that they normally advertise for these positions in the Belfast Telegraph, the HSCrecruit website, and the British Medical Journal. In addition, the Western HSC Trust and the Northern HSC Trust indicated they used other outlets such as the Irish Medical Times for hard to fill vacancies.
- (ii) to (v):

The information provided by each HSC Trust is set out in the table below:

| | South Eastern | Western | Northern | Southern | Belfast |
|---|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| (ii) Number of positions advertised in last 3 years | 292 | 397 | 226 | 251 | 331 |
| (iii) Number of interviews held | 259 | 211 | 112 | 151 | 259 |
| (iv) Number of interviews held on a Saturday | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | occasionally |
| (v) Number of planned interviews withdrawn | 1 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 |

Condition Management Programme

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to the effect that worklessness has on people's health and wellbeing, to outline his intentions, of entering into a joint agreement with the Department for Employment and Learning, to secure the future funding of the Condition Management Programme from March 2014 onwards.

(AQW 26321/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer these questions together.

I am aware of the contribution that has been made by the Condition Management Programme (CMP) in supporting people with long term conditions to return to or enter the workplace. The Condition Management Programme is funded and managed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). The Programme is delivered, on behalf of DEL, by Health and Social Care Trusts.

I met with the Minister for Employment and Learning in February 2013 to discuss his Department's proposals in respect of the future of the Condition Management Programme, including revised potential funding arrangements.

DHSSPS officials have since consulted with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Trusts to obtain their views on DEL's proposals.

Based on these discussions, my officials are currently considering options for responding to the proposals from the Department for Employment and Learning in relation to the future of the Condition Management Programme. I expect to receive an assessment of these options in the near future.

Until then it would be inappropriate of me to comment on future funding arrangements.

2013 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, whether he plans to update the Assembly on his Department's progress towards implementing the 2013 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on fertility.

(AQW 26335/11-15)

Mr Poots: The applicability of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on fertility to Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland is currently being considered by my Department and a decision on this will be reached as soon as possible.

I do not routinely update the Assembly on the implementation of NICE guidance; therefore I have no plan to do so with this guideline. My Departmental website indicates when guidance is endorsed as

applicable in Northern Ireland and the HSC Board produces an annual report on the commissioning and implementation monitoring of NICE guidance.

Cycles of IVF

Ms P Bradley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what steps he is taking to ensure that infertile couples are able to receive three full cycles of IVF, as recommended by the 2013 National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guideline on fertility.

(AQW 26336/11-15)

Mr Poots: Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland aspires to provide three cycles of treatment as recommended by NICE, however, available resources make this unachievable. Currently we provide one publicly funded treatment to those who meet the Northern Ireland criteria and, from 1 April 2012, one frozen embryo transfer (FET) is also offered to new referrals who meet the clinical criteria.

It is recognised that some regions across the UK provide a greater number of treatment cycles than the available resources currently permit in Northern Ireland. Access criteria in Northern Ireland, which were developed following public consultations in 2006 and 2009, are however wider than in some other regions of the UK, e.g. offering treatment to couples who already have a child, thus allowing more people to avail of publicly funded treatment. To increase the number of individual treatments provided within current funding could limit the number of women who could access the service.

Work Undertaken by Department: Dementia

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the work his Department is undertaking for those affected by dementia.

(AQW 26337/11-15)

Mr Poots: I published a Dementia Strategy for Northern Ireland in November 2011. The Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Public Health Agency(PHA) jointly lead the Dementia Strategy Implementation Group, which includes people with dementia and their carers, to oversee implementation of the Dementia Strategy and its recommendations.

The group has drawn up an Action Plan which is used to report progress. The action plan contains 45 initiatives which are being progressed under the themes of Reducing the Risk or Delaying the Onset of Dementia, Raising Awareness, Promoting Early Assessment and Diagnosis, Supporting People with Dementia and Supporting Carers.

The last progress report from the Group was received in June 2013. It detailed continued progress on the majority of recommendations within the action plan. The next progress report is due in December.

To date the HSCB has identified £2m recurrent funding to help with the implementation of the strategy. In addition, the PHA in partnership with Atlantic Philanthropies has secured £2m between 2014 and 2017 for research into dementia.

Children with Special Needs in Nursery Schools

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why the Northern Health and Social Care Trust has cut funding for children with special needs in nursery schools.

(AQW 26341/11-15)

Mr Poots: I am advised by the Northern Trust that it has not applied any reduction to funding for children with special needs attending nursery schools.

The Trust has indicated its commitment, through commissioning arrangements with the HSC Board, to providing core services, such as social work, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, children's community nursing, dentistry, dietetics, orthoptics and public health nursing, to children with special needs.

Bangor Community Hospital: Staff

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many staff are employed by Bangor Community Hospital.

(AQW 26342/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is provided in the table below.

STAFF IN POST AT BANGOR HOSPITAL AT OCTOBER 2013

| Grade | Headcount |
|---|-----------|
| Acute Nurse/Specialist Nurse/Health Visitor/District Nurse/Nurse Manager | 39 |
| Acute Nurse Support | 11 |
| Admin & Clerical | 10 |
| Facilities | 10 |
| Social worker/Allied Health Professional/Allied Health Profession Support | 16 |
| Total | 86 |

Source: South Eastern HSC Trust

Bangor Community Hospital

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he plans to extend the services currently offered by Bangor Community Hospital.

(AQW 26343/11-15)

Mr Poots: The South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has advised that, following recent refurbishment, it plans to co-locate the Continence, Family Planning and the Sexual Health Services in a new area on the ground floor of Bangor Community Hospital called the Connor Suite which will improve confidentiality for service-users.

The original hospital building has also been significantly refurbished to provide additional office space for services currently located in sub-standard accommodation beside Bangor Health Centre.

The Trust has assured me that Bangor Community Hospital will continue to form an essential part of its estate for the foreseeable future.

Causeway Hospital: Maternity Services

Mr Campbell asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether maternity services that are currently provided to residents from Limavady at Altnagelvin Hospital, will be offered at the Causeway Hospital.

(AQW 26348/11-15)

Mr Poots: Any future reconfiguration of maternity services is a matter for the Health and Social Care Board as Commissioner of Services, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland 2012-2018, which was published in July 2012.

Currently, although Limavady lies within the boundaries of the Western Health and Social Care Trust, women from Limavady may choose to have their babies delivered in the Northern Trust's Causeway Hospital rather than in Altnagelvin Area Hospital.

Loane House, South Tyrone Hospital

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many patients have been sent from Southern Health and Social Care Trust hospitals to Loane House, South Tyrone Hospital, in each of the last twelve months.

(AQW 26380/11-15)

Mr Poots: There were 402 admissions to Loane House, South Tyrone Hospital from other hospitals in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust during the period 1st September 2012 – 31st August 2013.

The table below shows the number of admissions to Loane House, South Tyrone from other hospitals in the Southern HSC Trust, for each of the last twelve months available.

| Month | Number of admissions from a SHSCT hospital |
|--------------|--|
| Sep-12 | 28 |
| Oct-12 | 41 |
| Nov-12 | 42 |
| Dec-12 | 34 |
| Jan-13 | 32 |
| Feb-13 | 38 |
| Mar-13 | 40 |
| Apr-13 | 32 |
| May-13 | 35 |
| Jun-13 | 23 |
| Jul-13 | 33 |
| Aug-13 | 24 |
| Total | 402 |

Source: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Proposed Catheterization Laboratory Facility at the Ulster Hospital

Mr Dunne asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the proposed catheterization laboratory facility at the Ulster Hospital.

(AQW 26403/11-15)

Mr Poots: Since October 2011 the South Eastern Trust has had arrangements in place for catheterisation laboratory procedures at the Ulster Hospital through the use of a mobile laboratory unit. In January 2013, the Trust started undertaking procedures from the newly refurbished Cardiac Procedures Room in the main part of the hospital allowing for more procedures to be undertaken. This service has improved patient care and has contributed significantly to patient flow at the hospital.

The Trust has plans to introduce a primary interventional angiography service (PCI) in the future. However this is subject to the outcome of the Health and Social Care Board's review of catheterisation labs across Northern Ireland. Primary PCI, which is a 24/7 emergency stenting service, was launched recently and is delivered from the Belfast Trust for the eastern part of the region, including the South Eastern Trust area.

Unused Prescription Drugs

Mr McCallister asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what is the total cost of ordered but uncollected prescription drugs for the period 01 April 2012 to 31 March 2013.

(AQW 26406/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome: Ovarian Cancer

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many women in the last three years, who were initially diagnosed with Irritable Bowel Syndrome, have been subsequently discovered to have ovarian cancer.

(AQW 26436/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information requested is not available.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to introduce automatic referrals for all women with Irritable Bowel Syndrome type symptoms for a CA125 blood test.

(AQW 26437/11-15)

Mr Poots: NICE guidelines state that if a patient aged 50 or over presents with symptoms that could suggest irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) in the last 12 months the GP should test for CA125. NICE Guidance for Referral of Suspect Cancer, including Ovarian Cancer, has now been rolled out across Northern Ireland. The HSCB issued guidance to all General Practitioners on 30th November 2012 advising them that the NICE Referral Criteria for Suspect Cancer is now applicable in Northern Ireland.

The PHA and the HSCB are currently working closely with GPs and specialists from across all 5 Trusts to develop an agreed management pathway for patients suspected of having ovarian cancer. The aim of the pathway is to ensure that all patients presenting with symptoms or signs of ovarian cancer are swiftly investigated and are able to access specialist cancer care rapidly. The referral pathway will reflect the evidence based approach as set out in NICE guidance and the NICE quality standards for ovarian cancer.

Work is also underway to explore the piloting of an electronic referral template by GPs for suspect ovarian cancer.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Surgery

Mr Wells asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when he will make a final decision on the future of paediatric congenital cardiac surgery.

(AQW 26446/11-15)

Mr Poots: NICS reports figures annually to the Equality Commission on all recruitment activity, including for temporary staff. These figures are available as part of the NICS Annual Report on Recruitment for 2012. This is in the public domain and is available on the NICS recruitment web-site at

<https://irecruit-ext.hrconnect.nigov.net/pages/content.aspx?Page=annual-reports>

Condition Management Programme

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in light of the implications that worklessness has on the health and well being of the population, what plans he has to enter into a joint agreement with the Department for Employment and Learning to secure the future funding of the Condition Management Programme from March 2014.

(AQW 26450/11-15)

Mr Poots: I propose to answer these questions together.

I am aware of the contribution that has been made by the Condition Management Programme (CMP) in supporting people with long term conditions to return to or enter the workplace. The Condition Management Programme is funded and managed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL). The Programme is delivered, on behalf of DEL, by Health and Social Care Trusts.

I met with the Minister for Employment and Learning in February 2013 to discuss his Department's proposals in respect of the future of the Condition Management Programme, including revised potential funding arrangements.

DHSSPS officials have since consulted with colleagues in the Health and Social Care Board, Public Health Agency and Health and Social Care Trusts to obtain their views on DEL's proposals.

Based on these discussions, my officials are currently considering options for responding to the proposals from the Department for Employment and Learning in relation to the future of the Condition Management Programme. I expect to receive an assessment of these options in the near future.

Until then it would be inappropriate of me to comment on future funding arrangements.

Maternity Strategy for Northern Ireland

Mrs McKeitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how his Department is implementing A Maternity Strategy for Northern Ireland 2012-2018.

(AQW 26469/11-15)

Mr Poots: A Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland 2012-2018, which was published in July 2012, gives women, health service commissioners and policy makers a clear pathway for maternity services in Northern Ireland from preconceptual care through to postnatal care and contains 22 objectives.

The Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency are leading on the implementation of the Strategy through the Regional Maternity Commissioning Service Team, which is co-chaired by a lead officer from both organisations. A Maternity Strategy Project Manager has recently been appointed and an action plan is being drawn up to detail work already completed and to implement the outcomes and objectives of the Strategy.

Oakridge Social Education Centre, Dungannon

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the progress of the proposed new build for Oakridge Social Education Centre, Dungannon.

(AQW 26472/11-15)

Mr Poots: The Southern Trust is currently revising its business case for submission to DHSSPS later this month.

Upon receipt, the business case will need to be assessed and approved by my Department and by the Department of Finance and Personnel. Once business case approval is received, the timing of the project will be considered as part of the prioritisation exercise within the available budget.

Cost of Missed Appointments

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the cost to the Health Service of missed appointments in each of the last three years, broken down by Health and Social Care Trust.

(AQW 26480/11-15)

Mr Poots: The cost of a hospital appointment being missed is not available and can only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Transport to Attend Hospital Appointments

Mr Storey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will extend the refund available to older people, who are in receipt of pension credit, for the use of public transport to attend hospital appointments to those who have to make use of private taxis to complete part or all of their journey.

(AQW 26482/11-15)

Mr Poots: Under the Hospital Travel Costs Scheme, people who are in receipt of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit can be reimbursed for their travel costs to and from hospital for health service appointments and treatment. Travel costs are normally calculated on the basis of the cheapest form of public transport available to the patient. Patients travelling by private car may claim the lesser of the estimated cost of fuel used or the equivalent public transport rate.

The Hospital Travel Costs Scheme recognises that in cases, where there is no alternative, patients may have to use a taxi or volunteer car service for the whole or part of the journey – for example where patients have restricted mobility or public transport is not available for all or part of the journey. In such exceptional cases, these costs will be reimbursed in full. There are no plans to extend this discretionary element to all patients in receipt of pension credit.

Maternity Units: Consultant-Led; Midwife-Led

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the location of each (i) consultant-led; and (ii) midwife-led maternity unit.

(AQW 26504/11-15)

Mr Poots: The location of each consultant-led and midwifery-led maternity unit in Northern Ireland is given in the table below.

| Trust | Midwifery-Led Unit | Consultant-Led Unit |
|---------------|--|--|
| Belfast | Mater Hospital | Royal Jubilee Maternity Hospital |
| Northern | None | Antrim Area Hospital Causeway Hospital |
| South Eastern | Ulster Hospital Downe Hospital Lagan Valley Hospital | Ulster Hospital |
| Southern | Craigavon Area Hospital | Craigavon Area Hospital Daisy Hill Hospital |
| Western | Altnagelvin Hospital South West Area Hospital (SWAH) | Altnagelvin Hospital SWAH |

Births: Consultant-Led; Midwife-Led; Homebirths

Mrs McKeivitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the benefits and risks associated with (i) births at consultant-led maternity units; (ii) births at midwife-led maternity units; and (iii) homebirths.

(AQW 26505/11-15)

Mr Poots: The benefits and risks of place of birth will be individual to each woman, and should be discussed with her during her pregnancy.

Consultant led maternity units are able to provide care for women and babies who need extra care which includes the availability of epidural pain relief, delivery by caesarian section or assisted delivery using forceps or ventouse.

Midwife led units tend to use a more active birth approach incorporating aids to support labour and birth such as birthing balls and water pools, but can also provide drugs such as morphine if women request it. Women who give birth in a midwifery unit have significantly higher rates of normal birth with fewer interventions, including substantially fewer intrapartum caesarean sections, than women who planned birth in an obstetric unit. They also tend to have a higher breastfeeding rate and recount a more positive birth experience.

Home births allow families to have the comfort of familiar surroundings. Pain relief such as morphine and waterbirth are available but epidurals and delivery by caesarean section are not. There appears to be an increased risk of an adverse outcome for first babies born at home, but not for second or subsequent babies. Again there is a higher rate of breastfeeding and women report a positive birth experience following home birth.

Children Admitted to Hospital with Alcohol Related Problems

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many children have been admitted to hospital in each Health and Social Care Trust area for alcohol related problems, over the last three years.

(AQW 26531/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of admissions to acute hospitals, for children aged 15 and under with an alcohol-related condition over the last three years, is detailed in the table below.

| HSC Trusts | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Belfast | 14 | 17 | 19 |
| Northern | 6 | 12 | 12 |
| South Eastern | 17 | 10 | 6 |
| Southern | 10 | 16 | 8 |
| Western | 13 | 7 | 7 |
| Total | 60 | 62 | 52 |

Source: Hospital Inpatient System

Note:

Discharges are used as an approximation for admissions.

Alcohol-related conditions have been searched for as the primary diagnosis only.

Children have been assumed to be those aged 15 years and under.

People Diagnosed with Bowel Cancer

Mr Spratt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people are diagnosed with bowel cancer.

(AQW 26591/11-15)

Mr Poots: The following table includes information regarding the number of new cases of bowel cancer (ICD-10* C18-21) diagnosed in each year between 2007 and 2011 in Northern Ireland.

| Year | Number of Cases |
|------|-----------------|
| 2007 | 1,173 |

| Year | Number of Cases |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 2008 | 1,118 |
| 2009 | 1,115 |
| 2010 | 1,199 |
| 2011 | 1,224 |

Source: Northern Ireland Cancer Registry

* For a listing and explanation of ICD-10 codes see International Classification of Diseases for Oncology, 3rd Edition, World Health Organisation, Geneva, 2000. For an explanation of ICD-10 codes see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ICD-10_codes.

Police, Fire and Prison Training College at Desertcreat

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the reasons for the delay in agreeing the Business Case for the Police, Fire and Prison Training College at Desertcreat; and to list the preferred bidders for the project.

(AQW 26850/11-15)

Mr Poots: The business case for the Northern Ireland Community Safety College was originally approved in 2011 and work began at that time. The costs for this project increased considerably since initial approval. This necessitated an addendum to the business case to be developed and approved by all parties (the Departments and the three services) as well as the Department of Finance and Personnel. Given the scale of the cost increase, it was essential that the required time was taken to review the costs to reduce as far as possible without compromising quality and to ensure that the revised business case reflects these costs. This process is nearing completion. The preferred bidder has not yet been appointed.

Redundancy/Early Retirement

Mr Mitchel McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to outline the process for voluntary redundancy and early retirement for which a bid was included in the October Monitoring Round.

(AQQ 4757/11-15)

Mr Poots: HSC Trusts have commenced a process of liaising with staff to identify those individuals, whose roles may be affected by the transformational change envisaged by Transforming Your Care (TYC), who may wish to avail of voluntary redundancy and voluntary early retirement (VR/VER) in 2013/14. A lead-in time of around 6 months is anticipated to identify these personnel and for individual personal terms to be agreed using information available to them from HSC Pensions.

DHSSPS: Funding

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to compare the level of additional funding his Department has received, since May 2011, to that set out in the 2011-15 Budget.

(AQQ 4756/11-15)

Mr Poots: The total additional funding received since May 2011 in relation to current expenditure amounts to £87.6m. This has been used to support the reform agenda under Transforming Your Care, to address backlogs in Elective Care waiting times and to invest in other priority front-line services, such as family/childcare, specialist drugs and unscheduled care.

A further £139.5m has also been received since May 2011 in relation to capital expenditure, which largely reflects the re-allocation of A5 monies and which has been used to support the implementation of TYC, progress a range of infrastructure projects and invest in critical medical equipment.

Care Packages in Health and Social Care Trusts

Mr P Ramsey asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what proportion of care packages in each Health and Social Care Trust are based on, or contain, a 15-minute element.

(AQW 26863/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available in the format requested.

Children in Care

Ms McCorley asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he will provide guidance and clarification to social care workers in residential care facilities on protecting children and young people from leaving premises and placing themselves in a vulnerable position.

(AQO 4752/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 4, 13 and 15 together, as they relate to the issue of protecting children and young people at risk from child sexual exploitation.

All of the Trusts and their residential homes have a clearly understood duty to safeguard the children and young people in their care under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The 1995 Order does not specify actions to be taken in the event of a child leaving the premises but guidance on this issue is provided in Volume 4 of the Regulations and Guidance to the 1995 Order.

Also, Regional guidance for social care workers and police officers was issued jointly by the Health and Social Care Board and PSNI initially in 2009 and was updated in April 2011 and again in May 2012. The guidance specifically deals with the management of children missing from residential care.

I have announced an Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation which will, amongst other issues, examine the effectiveness of measures to secure the safety and wellbeing of children in care, including those at risk of CSE.

My officials routinely engage in discussions with Department of Education Officials in relation to many issues with a joint interest. Most recently officials from both departments have had discussions about the introduction of leaflets in relation to child sexual exploitation into schools and the mechanisms for doing this.

Also, I invited Minister O'Dowd, to a Ministerial Summit on child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland, which I hosted jointly with the Minister of Justice, David Ford on 10 September 2013. Unfortunately diary pressures prevented the Minister from attending. More recently, I wrote to the Education Minister to seek his agreement to participation by the Education and Training Inspectorate in the independent expert-led Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. Members are aware that the Inquiry will be facilitated and supported by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority working jointly with the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland.

In terms of the question relating to accountability, the Inquiry into child sexual exploitation is intended to develop our understanding of the scale of the problem, which in turn will influence how we respond to it. I intend to place the emphasis of the Inquiry on the identification of what, in future, needs to be done to prevent child sexual exploitation, tackle it where it is occurring and effectively disrupt the activities of those engaging in sexually exploitative behaviours.

In the course of establishing what action needs to be taken in the future, the Inquiry will need to undertake an assessment of what is happening now to prevent, tackle and disrupt the sexual exploitation of children in Northern Ireland, consider the adequacy or otherwise of those arrangements and deliver its findings. When the Inquiry reports, every agency to which the findings relate, will need to determine what action should be taken as a result. This may require holding individuals or organisations to account. If this is the case, it will be done by way of established accountability mechanisms.

Complaints

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many complaints have been made against the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board over the last three years.

(AQO 4758/11-15)

Mr Poots: The number of complaints that have been made against the Health and Social Care Trusts and the Health and Social Care Board in the years 2010/11, 2011/12 and 2012/13 is:

| | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| HSCB | 9 | 14 | 11 |
| HSC TRUSTS | | | |
| Belfast | 1,855 | 2,122 | 2,113 |
| Northern | 697 | 862 | 856 |
| South Eastern | 1,182 | 1,172 | 1,459 |
| Southern | 777 | 764 | 839 |
| Western | 450 | 467 | 591 |
| NIAS | 92 | 98 | 140 |
| Total | 5,062 | 5,499 | 6,009 |

Suicide Prevention

Ms Ruane asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what capacity building can be offered to groups providing suicide prevention and awareness services when dealing with new procurement processes.

(AQO 4759/11-15)

Mr Poots: The new procurement process is being developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA) taking into account concerns from community-based service providers over the current practice of rolling forward contracts on an annual basis. Providers have indicated that this makes longer term planning and delivery of services difficult, and that potential new service providers tend to be excluded from funding.

The Public Health Agency recognises that groups may not be familiar with the new procurement processes and has committed to informing all interested parties about how the tender process will operate. Within the confines of EU procurement law, and with regard to its obligations to act transparently and treat all bidders equally, the Agency will answer any questions it receives regarding the process.

Mental Health

Mr Clarke asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what level of need exists, among former members of the security services, for psychological support and mental health interventions.

(AQO 4760/11-15)

Mr Poots: The information is not available in the format requested.

But, as a general principle, ex service personnel returning to Northern Ireland have equal access to mainstream Primary Care and Mental Health services as the rest of the population. This is underpinned

by a specific protocol for delivering health and social care services to members of the armed forces, their families and veterans. This was published by my Department in 2009.

My Department also established an Armed Forces Liaison Forum in 2009. This Forum provides a regular opportunity forum for Departmental officials, the HSC, representatives from the Defence Medical Services and veterans' organisations to discuss health and social care issues of mutual interest. Mental health is a standing item on the Forum's agenda.

I recently met an ex service personnel organisation which has a particular interest in mental health issues. Further work will be carried out in relation to the needs of veterans who have significant mental health conditions.

Meanwhile, the HSC Board continues to develop the range and capacity of psychological therapy services in line with the Strategy published by my Department in 2010. It recently provided an additional £1M to further develop these interventions in primary care.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Mr Craig asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what discussions he and his departmental officials have had with their counterparts in the Department of Education on child sexual exploitation.

(AQO 4761/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 4, 13 and 15 together, as they relate to the issue of protecting children and young people at risk from child sexual exploitation.

All of the Trusts and their residential homes have a clearly understood duty to safeguard the children and young people in their care under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The 1995 Order does not specify actions to be taken in the event of a child leaving the premises but guidance on this issue is provided in Volume 4 of the Regulations and Guidance to the 1995 Order.

Also, Regional guidance for social care workers and police officers was issued jointly by the Health and Social Care Board and PSNI initially in 2009 and was updated in April 2011 and again in May 2012. The guidance specifically deals with the management of children missing from residential care.

I have announced an Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation which will, amongst other issues, examine the effectiveness of measures to secure the safety and wellbeing of children in care, including those at risk of CSE.

My officials routinely engage in discussions with Department of Education Officials in relation to many issues with a joint interest. Most recently officials from both departments have had discussions about the introduction of leaflets in relation to child sexual exploitation into schools and the mechanisms for doing this.

Also, I invited Minister O'Dowd, to a Ministerial Summit on child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland, which I hosted jointly with the Minister of Justice, David Ford on 10 September 2013. Unfortunately diary pressures prevented the Minister from attending. More recently, I wrote to the Education Minister to seek his agreement to participation by the Education and Training Inspectorate in the independent expert-led Inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. Members are aware that the Inquiry will be facilitated and supported by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority working jointly with the Criminal Justice Inspectorate Northern Ireland.

In terms of the question relating to accountability, the Inquiry into child sexual exploitation is intended to develop our understanding of the scale of the problem, which in turn will influence how we respond to it. I intend to place the emphasis of the Inquiry on the identification of what, in future, needs to be done to prevent child sexual exploitation, tackle it where it is occurring and effectively disrupt the activities of those engaging in sexually exploitative behaviours.

In the course of establishing what action needs to be taken in the future, the Inquiry will need to undertake an assessment of what is happening now to prevent, tackle and disrupt the sexual

exploitation of children in Northern Ireland, consider the adequacy or otherwise of those arrangements and deliver its findings. When the Inquiry reports, every agency to which the findings relate, will need to determine what action should be taken as a result. This may require holding individuals or organisations to account. If this is the case, it will be done by way of established accountability mechanisms.

Early Intervention Fund

Mr Ó hOisín asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update, including the timeline, on the Early Intervention Fund.

(AQO 4762/11-15)

Mr Poots: I wrote to a number of Ministerial colleagues in relation to the establishment of an Early Intervention Fund earlier this year. There is broad agreement that early intervention is vital to improving outcomes for children and families across Northern Ireland. The relevant Ministers have expressed support for the creation of a Fund, which will be delivered as part of the Delivering Social Change Programme.

I expect the proposal to be agreed by Departments in the coming weeks. We are also in discussions with philanthropy about a potential contribution to the Fund. I expect the Fund to be in place by the start of the next financial year.

Child Sexual Exploitation

Ms Maeve McLaughlin asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how accountability mechanisms will be incorporated into the inquiry into child sexual exploitation.

(AQO 4763/11-15)

Mr Poots: Mr Speaker, with your permission, I will answer questions 4, 13 and 15 together, as they relate to the issue of protecting children and young people at risk from child sexual exploitation.

All of the Trusts and their residential homes have a clearly understood duty to safeguard the children and young people in their care under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The 1995 Order does not specify actions to be taken in the event of a child leaving the premises but guidance on this issue is provided in Volume 4 of the Regulations and Guidance to the 1995 Order.

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Department of Justice

Northern Ireland Prison Service: Administrative Error

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 22900/11-15, to detail (i) if this was an administrative error transcribed from a handwritten or typed document; (ii) who or what grade of staff completed the application form; (iii) who or what grade of staff transcribed it; (iv) what interviews were carried out with Mr Noel Parker in relation to his application and if he was content with this explanation as provided by Northern Ireland Prison Service, given the differentiation between the written words in question.

(AQW 24552/11-15)

Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice): NIPS has advised that an internal investigation will be conducted into the temporary leave application and risk assessment process of Mr Parker in 2008. The Member will be informed of the outcome of the investigation.

Investigation into the Monitoring of Frank Massey

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether there are plans to order an investigation into the monitoring of Frank Massey whilst subject to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order, which was breached four times, in particular (i) to establish how he was able retain a mobile phone and computer given his previous convictions; (ii) how he was able to set up a false Facebook account, enabling him have unlawful contact with children; (iii) how these breaches were able to occur so soon after his release from a custodial sentence for the possession of indecent images of children; and (iv) which agencies were responsible for the monitoring.

(AQW 25726/11-15)

Mr Ford: There are no plans to order an investigation in this case. Mr Massey was monitored in accordance with agreed multi-agency public protection procedures and the breaches of the Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPPO) were quickly identified through effective supervision arrangements by the designated risk manager. The court subsequently revised the SOPPO to incorporate additional conditions aimed at further supporting the management of assessed risk.

Barnardo's Report on 'The Sexual Exploitation of Children and Young People in Northern Ireland'

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the statutory duty stipulated in Section 12 of the Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011, for his assessment of the actions the PSNI has taken since the publication of the Barnardo's Report 'The sexual exploitation of children and young people in Northern Ireland'.

(AQW 26054/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have been briefed on the actions that the PSNI has taken in relation to cases of Child Sexual Exploitation since its review of public protection in 2011.

The Minister for Health, Social Service and Public Safety and I have agreed to set up an independent expert-led Inquiry to consider the issue of child sexual exploitation. I will await the outcome of that inquiry before making an assessment of the actions that all those to whom the requirements of Section 12 of the Safeguarding Board (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 applies have taken, and are taking.

Monitoring Investigation

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the Terms of Reference in relation to any investigation being carried out regarding monitoring of David Paige, particularly on the handling of his residence and how he was able to leave his approved accommodation in Belfast to reside in Craigavon, without authorities being made aware.

(AQW 26091/11-15)

Mr Ford: The agencies responsible for operating the public protection arrangements agreed, at their June Strategic Management Board (SMB) meeting, to conduct a serious case review in this case. The terms of reference for the review, which are consistent with the SMB Manual of Practice, are:

- a To look at whether the agencies involved in the management of risk posed by an individual did all that could reasonably be expected of them to manage the assessed risks; and
- b Whether there are lessons to be learned about the effectiveness of the public protection arrangements.

Dangers of the Grooming of Children on the Internet

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the work his Department is doing to increase awareness of the dangers of the grooming of children on the internet.

(AQW 26116/11-15)

Mr Ford: In August 2013 the Department of Justice launched an education resource pack aimed at 14-17 year olds to raise awareness of a range of issues relating to human trafficking. The resource pack includes some material designed to explore issues of sexual exploitation and grooming, with a view to increasing young people's awareness of the dangers and giving them the tools to make safe choices within their own lives. The pack is available to all post primary schools in Northern Ireland.

The Youth Justice Agency is currently reviewing its 'Child Protection' policy in conjunction with the new Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) arrangements. The new policy, together with the staff training programme which will accompany its introduction, will include awareness raising for staff on the potential dangers for exploitation of children online. A policy to safeguard young people whilst they are using Agency stand-alone computers is already in place.

From 7 October 2013, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) will be a Command within the National Crime Agency (NCA). The CEOP Command will provide a centre of excellence for the protection of children from exploitation and sexual abuse both on and offline, and for the pursuit of offenders. The NCA will be represented on the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF).

The cyber crime sub group of the OCTF is working to raise awareness and understanding of the fast evolving areas of cyber crime and cyber enabled crime across the law enforcement sector. Individuals and businesses are encouraged to report incidents and work with the authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice and avoid others falling victim.

Initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of grooming children on the internet and other E-safety issues are also being delivered through the Policing and Community Safety Partnership (PCSP) network across Northern Ireland.

These include the Bee Safe project for primary 6 and 7 pupils, the Y-APP smart phone application for young people, the Youth Educated in Safety Project, and Internet Safety and Cyber Bullying dramas and workshops. Internet safety is also being highlighted with pupils during assembly talks delivered jointly by PCSP and PSNI; with Principals through the Schools Forum; and with parents at awareness evenings.

PCSP officers are working with PSNI and the Education and Library Board to develop a booklet on the consequences of social networking.

Other measures to promote internet safety, including advice on internet scams for older and vulnerable people and information on cyber crime and internet bullying for teachers and parents, are also being delivered through PCSPs and further initiatives are planned.

I am aware that PSNI is also engaged in work to raise awareness of internet safety.

Internet Safety

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice what work his Department is doing to promote internet safety.

(AQW 26117/11-15)

Mr Ford: In August 2013 the Department of Justice launched an education resource pack aimed at 14-17 year olds to raise awareness of a range of issues relating to human trafficking. The resource pack includes some material designed to explore issues of sexual exploitation and grooming, with a view to increasing young people's awareness of the dangers and giving them the tools to make safe choices within their own lives. The pack is available to all post primary schools in Northern Ireland.

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I am aware that PSNI is also engaged in work to raise awareness of internet safety.

Taxation Masters

Mr Agnew asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 22282/11-15, for an example of an advertisement where any such public hearing took place, or is to take place in the future.

(AQW 26148/11-15)

Mr Ford: Writs of provisional taxation assessments before the Taxing Master are posted on the notice board on the 7th Floor, Enforcement of Judgments Office (EJO), Bedford House, Bedford Street, Belfast on the morning of the hearing.

EJO officials are progressing list publication on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service website.

NI Forensic Services

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many cases are with the NI Forensic Services, and of these, how many have overdue results.

(AQW 26177/11-15)

Mr Ford: Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) has agreed target times with its main customers for the delivery of forensic reports. At 30 September 2013, there were 1357 open cases, with 1614 associated scientific reports pending. 124 of those reports were beyond their approved target date. None of these feature on the current PPS outstanding forensic listing as provided to FSNI. It is important to note that the number of outstanding reports will vary at any one point in time. As at 30 September 2013, 97% of all casework reports from 1 April 2013 were issued within the overall target times agreed with customers.

Sentences for Convictions of Sexual Assault of Women

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the sentences that can be imposed on those convicted of the sexual assault of a woman.

(AQW 26179/11-15)

Mr Ford: These offences, which are not gender specific, are contained in the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008. The offence of assault by penetration (section 6) carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Offences of sexual assault (section 7) carry maximum penalties of six months if tried summarily and ten years if tried on indictment. The offence of causing a person to engage in sexual activity without consent (section 8) carries a range of penalties up to life depending on the type of activity involved.

Sentences for Convictions of Rape

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to outline the sentences that can be imposed on those convicted of the rape of a woman.

(AQW 26180/11-15)

Mr Ford: Under section 5 of the Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008, the offence of rape, which is not gender specific, carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Case Published on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service Website

Mr McClarty asked the Minister of Justice on what date the case listed as Neutral Citation No [2013] NICTY 3 was first published on the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service website.

(AQW 26188/11-15)

Mr Ford: Neutral Citation No [2013] NICTY 3 was first published on the Northern Ireland Courts & Tribunals Service website on 16 July 2013.

Formal Review of Northern Ireland Prison Service Policy

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 24166/11-15, whether he plans to instigate a Formal Review of Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) policy as a matter of urgency given that he has stated in his answer that the safeguard of prisoners is “an extremely serious matter”, and the number of persons in the care of the NIPS committing acts of self harm continues to rise: and considering the recent concerns and criticisms by the Chief Executive: the Northern Ireland Association

for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NIACRO); the Prisoner Ombudsman, (in the Report into the Near Death of Mr C), and concerns and criticisms by other Agencies, to detail why he is delaying such a review and is only taking it forward as part of the Prison Service restructuring project and wider programme.

(AQW 26189/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to completing a formal review of its Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Policy, which will be taken forward in due course in consultation with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

Case Numbers 12/101428 and 13/009820 at Magherafelt Magistrates Court and Londonderry Crown Court

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to case numbers 12/101428 and 13/009820 at Magherafelt Magistrates Court and Londonderry Crown Court, whether these persons are illegal immigrants, and if so, whether they have been trafficked.

(AQW 26190/11-15)

Mr Ford: The defendants in these cases are not currently charged with immigration offences. The Police Service of Northern Ireland refer relevant cases to the UK Border Agency for investigation.

Prison Review Team Report of June 2009

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in relation to the comments made by Dr Tony Pearson in the Prison Review Team Report of June 2009 that the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) must operate a fair and efficient disciplinary system with zero tolerance for criminal offences, whether (i) the NIPS operates a zero tolerance system, and if not, to detail the rationale; and (ii) whether he will place a copy of NIPS policy and procedures pertaining to proper and effective handling of the alleged commission of criminal offences by all operational prison staff in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 26228/11-15)

Mr Ford: With regard to the handling of criminal offences in the Northern Ireland Prison Service the Professional Code of Conduct states the following:

- (i) Members of staff must report to their manager as soon as possible if they have been arrested, charged or convicted by a court of any criminal offence. Failure to do so may be considered to be a disciplinary matter;
- (ii) A criminal conviction, whether related to work or otherwise, may lead to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. The main considerations which the Manager will take into account in deciding what action is appropriate are whether the offence impairs the business of the Northern Ireland Prison Service, brings the Northern Ireland Prison Service or the staff member into disrepute, or makes the individual unsuitable for their type of work; and
- (iii) Where a member of staff is convicted of an offence and receives a custodial or suspended sentence or a Community Service Order as a result of a criminal conviction, their employment will automatically be terminated.

Copies of the new Professional Code of Conduct and the new Professional Code of Ethics have been placed in the Assembly Library.

Compromise Agreements

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 24971/11-15, whether he will review his answer and address points (i) and (iii) of the question which asks for a numerical reply, i.e., number of agreements and the total cost of such agreements, given that such information in no way violates any Section of the Data Protection Act 1998 and would help to fulfil the Executives pledge to provide “open and transparent government for the citizens of Northern Ireland”.

(AQW 26229/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am unable to provide any further information to that provided in my response to AQW/24971/11-15 as both the employer and employees entered into binding confidentiality agreements not to disclose the terms of those agreements, including the costs associated with the settlements.

Prison Reforms

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to outline the prison reforms that have been successfully implemented.

(AQW 26261/11-15)

Mr Ford: To date, nine recommendations have been approved as complete by the Prison Review Oversight Group, which I Chair. The Group provides oversight and scrutiny of the reform programme and includes a robust and challenging independent element.

The nine recommendations approved are:

- PRT 4 - Maintain and publish detailed routine data;
- PRT 6 - Role of Magilligan;
- PRT 12 - Healthcare governance arrangements;
- PRT 15 - Transfer of healthcare staff to SET;
- PRT 22 - Change management team;
- PRT 23 - Ministerial group;
- PRT 32 - Director of rehabilitation;
- PRT 34 - Safer society strategy; and
- PRT 38 - Under-18s to be moved from Hydebank

The Northern Ireland Prison Service is currently half way through the programme of reform, which will run until April 2015. A clear pathway for delivery has been developed to ensure all recommendations are implemented, with the remaining recommendations due to be completed at various stages over the next 18 months.

North/South and East/West Arrangements

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice to detail how many meetings have been held (i) at ministerial level; and (ii) at official level with counterparts in the (a) rest of the UK; and (b) Republic of Ireland, since May 2007, including under the aegis of the north/south or east/west arrangements.

(AQW 26275/11-15)

Mr Ford: Since April 2010, I have attended 2 meetings of the British Irish Council, 2 North South Ministerial Council plenary meetings and 6 meetings under the auspices of the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) on Co-operation on Criminal Justice Matters.

In addition, I have held a total of 74 formal meetings with Ministers of the UK Government, 5 meetings with Ministers of the Scottish Government, 7 with Ministers of the Irish Government and 2 Tri-laterals with Scottish and Irish Ministers.

My Department does not collate centrally information on bi-lateral meetings which have taken place at official level.

Female Prison Officers at Magilligan Prison

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice why he was not made aware that female prison officers at Magilligan Prison manage a sex offender wing on their own at night.

(AQW 26278/11-15)

Mr Ford: The detailing of NIPS staff, male or female, in any prison establishment is an operational matter for NIPS.

NIPS officials have advised that no member of staff is present on the wing on their own at night.

If an incident occurs that requires staff to enter the wing, an unlock team comprising of two Senior Officers and another member of staff will be deployed to that area within a short period of time.

Sex Offender Wing at Magilligan Prison

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice why he was not made aware that a sex offender wing for those aged over fifty at Magilligan Prison is not locked down at night.

(AQW 26279/11-15)

Mr Ford: The prisoner regime in place at Magilligan is an operational matter for the Senior Management at that prison.

The Older Prisoner Unit is locked securely and in line with operational procedures to ensure the secure confinement of prisoners in that area.

Maghaberry Prison Policy and Procedures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25425/11-15, why he will not place a copy of the local Maghaberry Prison policy and procedures pertaining to hot and cold debriefs, as referred to in Annex N of the Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy 2011, in the Assembly Library.

(AQW 26309/11-15)

Mr Ford: I will arrange for a copy of the hot and cold debrief procedures to be placed in the Library.

Parking Tickets in Private Car Parks

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to outline the legal standing and enforceability of parking tickets issued in private car parks.

(AQW 26334/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Department of Justice has an interest in private car parks insofar as anyone carrying out wheel clamping on private land must have a licence from the Security Industry Authority (SIA). This action is regulated due to public safety concerns. The Department has no responsibility for the issuing or enforceability of parking tickets.

Central Investigation Service

Mr Swann asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25629/11-15, to detail the two occasions when “the Northern Ireland Prison Service has used the services of the Central Investigation Service (CIS) in the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to carry out investigations”.

(AQW 26360/11-15)

Mr Ford: NIPS is unable to provide details of investigations as it is considered that this information constitutes and contains personal sensitive data relating to third parties of which you are not the data subject. To release this information would breach the first and second principles as set out in Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 1998. Specifically, it is considered that disclosure would represent unfair processing of the data by NIPS.

Employees of the Police Ombudsman's Office

Mr Maskey asked the Minister of Justice how many employees of the Police Ombudsman's office are former police officers with (i) the PSNI; and (ii) other policing bodies.

(AQW 26391/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am informed by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland that the number of employees who are former police officers with the PSNI is eight and other policing bodies is 18.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25020/11-15, given that 5.3 of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Code of Conduct and Discipline requires that discipline investigations for operational prison staff will normally be conducted by at least a Governor 5 or above and that no regulatory provision exists for the use of Northern Ireland Civil Service staff, to clarify what stipulation for future investigators will be in the new Code.

(AQW 26396/11-15)

Mr Ford: The new Northern Ireland Professional Code of Conduct, which came into effect on 9 September 2013, stipulates that where there is a suspicion that one or more persons may be involved in misconduct a Functional Head or the Senior Manager should refer the case to the Professional Standards Unit (PSU) for investigation. The Head of the PSU will then appoint an investigator.

A copy of the new Code has been placed in the Assembly library.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy 2011

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 24196/11-15 and AQW 23174/11-15, whether he will review his answer given the apparent seriousness of Mr C's condition together with the requirement of Annex N of the Northern Ireland Prison Service Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Policy 2011 that hot debriefs are to take place with all staff following any serious-harm injury event or a suicide.

(AQW 26398/11-15)

Mr Ford: I do not wish to review the responses provided to AQW24196/11-15 and AQW23174/11-15.

Uninsured Drivers

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions for driving without insurance in the (i) North Down; and (ii) Ards areas, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 26412/11-15)

Mr Ford: Uninsured driving is an offence under Article 90(4) of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. The information requested is not available for the last three years. The most recent three years for which the information requested is available are 2007 to 2009.

The table below lists the number of convictions in each of the Petty Session Districts in the Ards Court Division during those years.

Table 1: Number of convictions for driving without insurance in Ards Court Division by Petty Sessions Court, 2007 – 2009

| Year | Ards Court Division | | | |
|------|---------------------|------------|------|-------------|
| | Castlereagh | North Down | Down | Newtownards |
| 2007 | 20 | 199 | 208 | 228 |
| 2008 | Closed | 185 | 163 | 179 |
| 2009 | Closed | 168 | 181 | 190 |

Note:

1 Castlereagh Petty Sessions Court closed in September 2007 and moved to Newtownards Court.

- 2 Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.
- 3 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offence specified.

Emergency Allowance for Prison Officers

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the Emergency Allowance for prison officers.

(AQW 26414/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have referred the issue of the salaries paid to recent recruits to the independent Prison Service Pay Review Body for advice. The Pay Review Body is currently undertaking a comprehensive review of this issue and will report to me by December 2013.

Should the Pay Review Body conclude that it would be appropriate to pay an allowance, my Department will seek approval from the Department of Finance and Personnel for any additional payment in line with normal NICS pay policy.

Sentences: Knife Crime

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to introduce tougher sentences for knife crime.

(AQW 26460/11-15)

Mr Ford: Sentencing is a matter for the courts based on legislation that already provides stringent penalties for knife crime with a full range of sentencing options available for violent offences involving knives or offensive weapons up to and including life imprisonment. These are supported by a full suite of offences and penalties for the possession, manufacturing or sale of knives which in themselves can attract prison terms of up to 12 months in magistrates' courts or up to 4 years in the Crown Court. I have no plans to change this package of sentences at this stage though I continue to keep the legislative framework under review.

Combating the Drugs Trade

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice to detail what his Department is doing to combat the growing drugs trade, with particular reference to the increase in bad batches of drugs.

(AQW 26461/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Organised Crime Task Force, which I chair, has a drugs sub group devoted to combating drug trafficking. It comprises representatives from all the relevant law enforcement agencies as well as the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. It provides a forum for the sharing of information and discussion of the problems faced in the fight against drugs.

The Department of Justice is also working with others in a co-ordinated manner to assist with the delivery of the outcomes defined in the New Strategic Direction for Alcohol and Drugs 2011-16; the Northern Ireland Substance Misuse Strategy. This Strategy includes a number of priorities; one of which is to reduce the availability of illicit drugs, with particular attention to tackling the complex drug supply chain.

It is important to note that drugs are not classified as 'good' or 'bad' batches. It is not possible to have confidence in the composition of so called recreational drugs, or pharmaceutical drugs bought over the internet from abroad, as many are produced in an unregulated environment without appropriate checks or controls. The only way to avoid a so called "bad batch" is to avoid all such drugs.

Cases Reopened or Extended

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice how many cases the Police Ombudsman has reopened, or extended the twelve month time-limit, on the grounds of a complaint being deemed grave or

exceptional, or where there was a previous investigation but there is now new evidence, which was not reasonably available before and it is now considered that the complaint is grave or exceptional.

(AQW 26468/11-15)

Mr Ford: I am informed by the Office of the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland that their systems do not categorise information in a way which would allow them to automatically calculate the number of such cases.

However, a review of their caseload has revealed that the Police Ombudsman is currently dealing with over 230 cases arising from public complaints which have been deemed to be grave or exceptional. The great majority of these are matters arising from “the Troubles” between 1968 and 1998.

Court Defendants: Proceedings

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice to detail (i) the protocol, guidance or best practice policy that exists to ensure that court defendants, whether on the charge sheet, under PPS summons, on remand or convicted, are afforded respect and dignity whatever the circumstances of the alleged crime, previous record or conviction, whilst attending court proceedings; (ii) if this is adopted by all agencies under his departmental remit; and (iii) the accountability that exists for relevant agencies.

(AQW 26486/11-15)

Mr Ford: My Department's Corporate Plan for 2012 - 2015 sets out the corporate values that apply to all Department of Justice staff. These include upholding the principles of fairness and justice for all, a commitment to equality and diversity, being open and transparent and acting with professionalism and integrity.

Individual Agencies have a range of service standards that support these

commitments. For example the Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service has developed specific standards for court staff that include the requirement to treat everyone in court with respect and consider their individual concerns or needs. Similarly the Northern Ireland Prison Service through the Prisoner Escorting and Court Custody Service is responsible for ensuring that all defendants are treated with respect and dignity by applying Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons standards.

Compliance with service standards is the responsibility of each Agency with local managers responsible for monitoring adherence. Performance in these areas may also be subject to independent inspection or review by bodies such as Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons. Agencies also have well developed customer complaints procedures to ensure any issues can be addressed.

Convictions for Sexual Offences

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice whether he plans to introduce tougher sentences for those convicted for sexual offence.

(AQW 26487/11-15)

Mr Ford: The Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008 introduced a new legislative framework of sexual offences with a range of maximum penalties up to life imprisonment for the most serious offending behaviour. I have no plans at present to review the sentences available.

Anonymity Orders in Legal Cases

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice how many people in the adult court system have been granted anonymity orders where there is no nexus to any alleged victim, broken down by court division and nature of the alleged offences.

(AQW 26557/11-15)

Mr Ford: The following table includes details of adult defendants in live cases, with no connection to any alleged victim, who have been granted an anonymity or reporting restriction order.

The defendants are charged with a range of offences which include fraud, theft, immigration, manslaughter, distribution/possession of indecent images of child, making/possessing indecent images and drugs related offences.

| Division | Number of Defendants |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Belfast | 16 |
| Antrim | 2 |
| Fermanagh & Tyrone | 1 |
| Londonderry | 10 |

Note: Information is provided from the NICTS Integrated Court Operations System (ICOS) and is current at 2 October 2013.

Northern Ireland Prison Service Museum Collection

Mr Nesbitt asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25383/11-15, in relation to the Northern Ireland Prison Service Museum Collection, to detail (i) who he has met with; and (ii) when.
(AQW 26585/11-15)

Mr Ford: I have not met with any interested party to specifically discuss the Northern Ireland Prison Service (NIPS) Museum collection.

My officials in NIPS have engaged with a number of bodies including the Public Records Office (PRONI) and Prison Service Trust to identify how best to preserve and promote the artefacts.

Cases Moving Through the Court System

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 25622/11-15, whether he will consider this in cases where suspected drugs have been seized, given it could contribute to the reduction of prosecution costs and speed up such cases moving through the court system.
(AQW 26593/11-15)

Mr Ford: One of my priorities is to speed up the criminal justice system by tackling delay. A project team is already examining ways to improve the use of evidence in criminal cases, including improving forensic submission.

While I understand the intention of this proposal, and I am keen to take all possible measures to reduce delay, my assessment remains that it is unlikely to be consistent with our legal obligations in respect of the rights of the defendant as it could serve to diminish the presumption of innocence.

Supporting Prisoners at Risk Procedures

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice, in light of the Criminal Justice Inspection's Report on Hydebank Wood Health Prison Summary, specifically HP10 and the corresponding sections within the reports on Suicide & Self Harm in both the Women's Prison and Young Offenders Centre that criticises the implementation and handling of Supporting Prisoners at Risk procedures, whether they are fit for purpose; and review the manner in which Supporting Prisoners at Risk procedures operate.
(AQW 26597/11-15)

Mr Ford: Following the joint inspection in February 2013, steps have been taken to address shortcomings in the implementation of the Supporting Prisoners At Risk procedures at Hydebank Wood Prison and Young Offenders Centre, including improved multi-disciplinary care planning.

A safer custody continuous improvement plan is in place supported by an enhanced auditing and assurance programme, including robust management checks.

Whilst accepting the criticisms, it should also be noted that the Inspectorate also noted that self harm levels were low in Ash House and care planning improved and that the use of observation rooms and anti-ligature clothing in the Young Offenders Centre had reduced, with levels of self harm again, not high.

Granting of Firearms Licences

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister of Justice to clarify the legal position on the granting of firearms licences to people with epilepsy.

(AQW 26611/11-15)

Mr Ford: Under the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 2004 consideration of an individual's fitness to be granted to firearm certificate is a matter for the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland. The Chief Constable may seek medical reports to inform his decision making.

National Crime Agency

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice for his assessment of the effect the failure to implement the National Crime Agency on tackling (i) fuel smuggling; (ii) human trafficking; (iii) sectarian violence; and (iv) drugs offences.

(AQW 26625/11-15)

Mr Ford: The absence of agreement on the National Crime Agency's role in Northern Ireland in the devolved arena, means that the NCA will have a restricted role in Northern Ireland. I believe that we need a fully functioning NCA in Northern Ireland, which takes account of policing structures here. I am still seeking to secure the wider application with appropriate recognition of our unique policing architecture.

The impact will vary for the crimes highlighted, and the agencies here and I will seek to ensure the best outcome, recognising the legal and practical constraints.

Fuel smuggling and excise evasion are reserved matters, so the NCA's powers will extend to these.

PSNI human trafficking investigations will continue to be able to avail of the international reach and wider intelligence picture of the NCA, but the PSNI will not be able to draw on the direct operational support of the NCA in Northern Ireland, except where there are immigration offences. Civil recovery of assets related to trafficking will be restricted to cases where there are immigration offences.

'Sectarian violence' is not generally regarded as organised crime and it is, therefore, a matter for PSNI.

The NCA's operational role in respect of drugs offences will be restricted, for example, to the international importation of drugs where customs powers can be used.

The NCA's civil recovery powers in Northern Ireland do not provide the ability to pursue assets in other jurisdictions.

National Crime Agency

Mr Frew asked the Minister of Justice what effect the commencement of the National Crime Agency on 7 October 2013 will have on the ability of the PSNI to hold and confiscate proceeds of crime.

(AQW 26647/11-15)

Mr Ford: The creation of the National Crime Agency (NCA) has no impact on PSNI asset recovery powers. As of 7 October 2013, the police will still be able to seize criminal assets and the agencies here can pursue criminal confiscation.

The Serious Organised Crime Agency, however, was the lead agency on civil recovery. With its abolition, there is a serious gap in Northern Ireland in terms of the ability to use civil recovery powers to remove assets gained from offences in the devolved arena, such as armed robbery and human trafficking. That is because, in the absence of legislative consent by the Assembly, the NCA's work on civil recovery cases in Northern Ireland is limited to assets gained from crimes in the reserved and excepted fields.

Following a Supreme Court judgment, the NCA is also restricted to recovering assets located within Northern Ireland. The legislative consent of the Assembly is required to make the jurisdictional repair under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 which has been made to enable all other United Kingdom jurisdictions to target assets wherever they may be. These issues leave Northern Ireland more vulnerable to money launderers than Great Britain and Ireland.

I firmly believe that the NCA should be empowered to take on all civil recovery cases in Northern Ireland under additional local accountability safeguards and I will continue to work to achieve that.

Sale of the Lisnevin Site in Millisle

Mr Easton asked the Minister of Justice to detail the revenue his Department expects to generate from the sale of the Lisnevin site in Millisle.

(AQW 26681/11-15)

Mr Ford: The current plan for closure and vacating Millisle is predicated on the opening of the Northern Ireland Community Safety College. However, NIPS will shortly develop a business case that explores options for the early closure of the Prison Service College on the Millisle site.

If, subsequently a decision is taken to sell the site the potential value will not be known until the land is put up for sale on the open market.

National Crime Agency

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister of Justice for an estimate of the cost to the local economy of the failure to fully implement the National Crime Agency on 7 October 2013.

(AQW 26697/11-15)

Mr Ford: While there is likely to be some impact on the local economy, at this very early stage it is not possible to quantify the cost to the local economy of having the National Crime Agency (NCA) operating in Northern Ireland with limited powers. Naturally, I will be monitoring the impact of the restrictions on the NCA's role here.

Drugs Related Offences in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister of Justice to detail the number of convictions for drugs related offences in North Down, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 26706/11-15)

Mr Ford: The information requested is not available at levels below the Court Division in question (in this case, Ards Court Division). The most recent year for which information is available is 2009. Therefore, figures in relation to convictions for drugs related offences in the Ards Court Division for 2007, 2008 and 2009 have been provided.

NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS FOR DRUGS OFFENCES IN ARDS COURT DIVISION, 2007 – 2009

| Year | Convictions |
|-------------|--------------------|
| 2007 | 81 |
| 2008 | 99 |
| 2009 | 73 |

Note:

- 1 Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included.
- 2 The figures provided relate to convictions for all classifications of the offence specified.

Information on Convictions

Mr Allister asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 26218/11-15, to detail (i) why there is a time lag of over 3 years in relation to the availability of information on convictions; (ii) whether this is the case for all conviction statistics; and (iii) what steps are being taken to rectify the delay.

(AQW 26777/11-15)

Mr Ford: Information on convictions in all Courts in Northern Ireland is published by the Analytical Services Group (ASG) in my Department. Up until 2007, data on convictions were sourced from a Police Service of Northern Ireland system. Developments in data recording from 2007 onwards meant that this was no longer possible and the ASG encountered major technical difficulties in translating files from legacy systems, to produce sentencing information. This applied across all convictions data.

An alternative source for convictions data was identified for subsequent years. Data for 2007 and 2008 were made available to ASG for validation in 2011. Finalised convictions data for 2007 and 2008 were published in September 2012 and, for 2009, in September 2013.

Work to provide data from 2010 onwards is currently ongoing, with an aim that data for 2010 and 2011 will be available by spring 2014, data for 2012 by early summer 2014 and data for 2013 by end 2014. Once this is done, it is planned that conviction and prosecution data will be processed, fully validated and made available within six months after each year end.

District Judges and Deputy District Judges: Security

Lord Morrow asked the Minister of Justice whether (i) members of the judiciary, at all levels, continue to receive close protection security whilst travelling to and from court; and (ii) a review of this security is planned, in particular for District Judges and Deputy District Judges.

(AQW 26783/11-15)

Mr Ford: It is not appropriate to comment on judicial security arrangements.

Department for Regional Development

Illegal Landfill Site at Mobouy Road, Derry

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has vested, or intends to vest, any of the land comprising the illegal landfill site at Mobouy Road, Derry; and whether as a result, his Department has inherited, or risks inheriting, any public liability for the decontamination of this land.

(AQW 25176/11-15)

Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development): Only when my officials have completed their consideration of the issues raised during the public inquiry, will I be in a position to decide whether the road should proceed.

Belfast Public Bike Hire Scheme

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline (i) the safety issues that his Department has identified for cyclists using the route from Central Station to the Belfast City Centre; and (ii) how these will be addressed prior to the introduction of the Belfast Public Bike Hire Scheme.

(AQW 25260/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's Roads Service is aware of issues for cyclists using the route from Central Station to Belfast City Centre.

I would also advise the Member that I have recently instructed my officials to give increased and focused priority to the needs of cyclists, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport. To that end, I am establishing a new cycling unit to ensure cycling issues

and initiatives are progressed in a more coherent and coordinated manner across my Department, in partnership with local government, voluntary bodies, public transport operators and the health and education sectors.

On-Street Parking Restrictions in Joy Street, Belfast

Mr Copeland asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the on-street parking restrictions in Joy Street, Belfast.

(AQW 25515/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A map detailing all the parking restrictions in Joy Street, Belfast is available in the Assembly Library.

In summary, most of the junctions and some short lengths of road within Joy Street have been marked with double yellow line restrictions which prohibit parking at all times. The cul-de-sac portion off Ormeau Avenue is largely subjected to a single yellow line restriction prohibiting parking from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday inclusive. There are also short sections of street that have no parking restrictions.

Wales' Travel Legislation: Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there has been a study completed on Wales' travel legislation to ascertain what lessons can be learned for Northern Ireland, particularly in relation to cycling.

(AQW 25589/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Active Travel (Wales) Bill places a requirement on local authorities to continuously improve facilities and routes for walkers and cyclists and to prepare maps identifying current and potential future routes for their use. The Bill will also require new road schemes to consider the needs of pedestrians and cyclists at design stage.

My Department has developed an active travel strategy, which was published in Jan 2013 and can be found at <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/publications>. This strategy replicates the spirit of the Welsh Bill and demonstrates my commitment to provide safer roads for the vulnerable and build on the sustainable transport agenda.

Over the period 2003–2013, my Department has invested over £9 million on cycling infrastructure measures with a view to making traffic conditions more suitable for cyclists. This has included the provision of approximately 220 kilometres of cycle lanes. These cycle facilities are also included in the Department's maintenance regime and subject to regular inspections and remedial work, when appropriate.

The Department's budget for cycling measures for the current financial year is approximately £420,000, which is comparable to the level of spend in recent years.

The 2014/15 budget for cycling has yet to be finalised. However, it is anticipated the overall Capital budget will be similar to this financial year, in the region of £9 million, and the allocation to cycling will also reflect the same level of investment at approximately 5%.

My Department's Transport Policy Division has a budget which it uses to grant aid Local Authority Active Travel Demonstration projects, some of which have a cycling element.

In addition, I have instructed my officials to give increased and focused priority to the needs of cyclists, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport. I also asked for a new cycling unit to be established, to ensure the effective progress of a range of cycling initiatives.

Narrow Water/Carlingford Lough: Proposed Bridge

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development what involvement his Department has had on the proposed new bridge for Carlingford Lough.

(AQW 25606/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A project to construct a bridge at Narrow Water in Warrenpoint is being taken forward by Louth County Council in partnership with Newry and Mourne District Council. My Department has no direct involvement in the delivery of this scheme, however, legislation is required to deal with the impact of this bridge proposal on the Newry River, which is a public navigable waterway, as far as it relates to Northern Ireland. Consequently, my Department has a role in processing the necessary Bridge Orders.

Ballymena to Dunsilly Dual Carriageway

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Regional Development why the resurfacing works on the Ballymena to Dunsilly dual carriageway were scheduled to begin on 2 September 2013, when traffic was likely to be at its heaviest.

(AQW 25708/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: This scheme was one of five significant resurfacing schemes on the strategic road network, undertaken by my Department's Roads Service Northern Division. The commencement of these schemes was delayed due to the embargo on road works on all A class routes, imposed at the time of the G8 Summit.

Whilst four of the schemes were delivered within the July and August holiday period, there was insufficient time and capacity available to also complete the A26 Lisnevenagh Road within the same period.

Details of the average daily traffic flow on the A26 Lisnevenagh Road from April 2011 – September 2011 (inclusive), which is the most up to date figures currently available, are provided in the table below:

| Month | Average Vehicles |
|----------------|------------------|
| April | 31,128 |
| May | 30,973 |
| June | 30,794 |
| July | 29,880 |
| August | 32,849 |
| September | 29,822 |
| Average | 30,758 |

The A26 Lisnevenagh Road does not experience its heaviest traffic flows during September. Over the summer period, this road carries, on average, 30,750 vehicles per day, with the busiest month being August when flows are some 7% above average, whereas during both July and September flows are 3% less than average.

Cycle Lanes in District Council Areas

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total kilometres of cycle lanes in each district council area.

(AQW 25803/11-15)

Mr Kennedy:

| Council Area | Cycle Lane (km) |
|--|----------------------------|
| Antrim Borough Council | 14 |
| Ards Borough Council | 5.6 |
| Armagh City & District Council | 2.4 |
| Ballymena Borough Council | 10 |
| Ballymoney Borough Council | 2.6 |
| Banbridge District Council | 1.15 |
| Belfast City Council | 81.4 |
| Carrickfergus Borough Council | 3.35 |
| Castlereagh Borough Council | 35.67 |
| Coleraine Borough Council | 12.4 |
| Cookstown District Council | 3.1 |
| Craigavon Borough Council | 41.14 |
| Derry City | 16.9 |
| Down District Council | 7.5 |
| Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council | 2 |
| Fermanagh District Council | 4.6 |
| Larne Borough Council | 1.6 |
| Limavady Borough Council | 10 |
| Lisburn City Council | 31.4 |
| Magherafelt District Council | 2 |
| Moyle District Council | 1.2 |
| Newry & Mourne District Council | 35.3 |
| Newtownabbey Borough Council | 19.13 |
| North Down Borough Council | 20.76 |
| Omagh District Council | 11.4 |
| Strabane District Council | 2.4 |
| Total | 379.00 |

Details of the total kilometre-length of cycle lanes, in each District Council area, are shown in the table below:

Segregated Cycle Lanes

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has considered piloting the use of segregated cycle lanes using planters and armadillos, such as those that are being introduced in London.

(AQW 25875/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As the Member will be aware, I have recently instructed officials in my Department to give increased and focussed priority to the needs of cyclists, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport. I have also asked for a new cycling unit to be established, to ensure the effective progress of a range of cycling initiatives.

The new cycling unit, when established, will look at all options and in particular, the use planters and armadillos, such as those being introduced in London.

Translink Bus Routes

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how many bus routes have been suspended by Translink, in the last three years.

(AQW 25930/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Bus routes which have been withdrawn taking account of patronage and costs in the last 3 years is as follows:

| Year withdrawn | Ulsterbus Services |
|----------------|--|
| 2009 | 4A – Bloomfield Shopping Centre to Craigantlet |
| 2009 | 5C – Newtownards to Belfast via Craigantlet |
| 2011 | 296 – Omagh to Longford |
| 2013 | 356 – Ballyclare Town Service |
| 2013 | 359F – Larne Town Centre - Asda |
| Metro | |
| 2011 | 29B City Centre – Holywood Exchange via Forestside and Braniel |
| 2011 | 64A City Centre – Fairview Road via Downview and Abbeycentre |
| 2012 | 76 Newtownbreda Tesco – Carryduff |
| 2013-10-03 | 82A Poleglass - City Centre via Glen Road |

Translink has endeavoured to achieve efficiency savings with minimum impact on geographic network coverage and service provision. The majority of efficiencies in recent years have been achieved through a comprehensive range of timetable departure and frequency adjustments rather than service route withdrawals or suspensions. In cases where poor customer demand has made it necessary to withdraw a service, alternative service options have been adjusted and promoted, where possible, to minimise customer inconvenience.

Cycling and Pedestrian Green Ways.

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department plans to adopt derelict railway line routes to create cycling and pedestrian green ways.

(AQW 25966/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The scope for potential walking and cycling routes along abandoned railway lines and the mechanisms to develop them are matters which can be considered by the cross-departmental Active Travel Forum which is chaired by my officials and meets regularly to monitor the Active Travel Strategy. Most abandoned lines have been sold off into private ownership. Some have been transferred to other public bodies. The creation of cycling and pedestrian paths, therefore, would require negotiation of public rights of way.

My Department has co-operated previously with other partners to deliver walking and cycling routes along the former Belfast to Comber railway line and on the development of the Waterside Greenway Project, providing combined pedestrian and cycle facilities in Londonderry.

I would also advise the Member that I have recently instructed my officials to give increased and focused priority to the needs of cyclists, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport. To that end, I am establishing a new cycling unit to ensure cycling issues and initiatives are progressed in a more coherent and coordinated manner across my Department, in partnership with local government, voluntary bodies, public transport operators and the health and education sectors.

Advisory Cycle Lanes

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development pursuant to AQW 25216/11-15, to detail the advisory cycle lanes that he is considering designating as mandatory cycle lanes.

(AQW 25968/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I will ask the new Cycling Unit to review the point regarding advisory cycle lanes.

Advisory Cycle Lanes: Parking

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he plans to introduce a penalty for drivers who park in advisory cycle lanes, particularly during peak times.

(AQW 25969/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Advisory cycle lanes can be marked on the road without the need for accompanying legislation, and consequently a Penalty Charge Notice cannot be issued to a vehicle found parked in one.

Whenever possible, my Department does try to introduce advisory lanes where there are other parking restrictions in place such as clearway regulations, which, if contravened, would attract a Penalty Charge Notice. As you will appreciate, however, this is not always possible.

Craigagh View Estate, Cushendun: Roads

Mr McMullan asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department will take enforcement action under the Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980, to have the roads adopted in the Craigagh View estate, Cushendun.

(AQW 25978/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Craigagh View is an unfinished housing development in Knocknacarry. It has planning approval for 24 houses, of which 8 are complete. My Department has no immediate plans to take enforcement action, however, officials keep the situation under review and consider the available options.

New Cycling/Pedestrian Bridges

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development how many new cycling/pedestrian bridges are currently under consideration by his Department; and to detail the status of each one.

(AQW 26030/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of new cycling and/or pedestrian bridges currently under consideration by my Department, their current status and a brief description of each, are set out in the table below:

| Bridge Location | Current Status and Description |
|------------------------|--|
| Lagan Bridge, Belfast | At feasibility stage. Proposal for a cycle/pedestrian bridge over the River Lagan. |
| Strabane (Melvin) | Planning application submitted and economic appraisal currently with DSD for approval. This proposed pedestrian and cycle bridge is part-funded under my Department's Active Travel Programme. |

| Bridge Location | Current Status and Description |
|--|---|
| Strabane Town Centre | At preliminary design stage. Pedestrian and cycle bridge for which funding is dependent upon obtaining a funding partner. |
| Majors Bridge - A34 Maguiresbridge Road, Lisnaskea | At feasibility study stage. Proposal to widen or replace existing road bridge or provide additional structure to facilitate pedestrians and cyclists. |
| Milltown Bridge - U5053 Craigadick Road, Maghera | At feasibility study stage. Proposal to widen or replace existing road bridge and facilitate pedestrians and cyclists. |
| B47 Sixtowns Road, Straw, Draperstown | At feasibility study stage. Proposal to widen or replace existing road bridge or provide additional structure to facilitate pedestrians and cyclists. |
| Hunters Crescent/Strathroy, Omagh | Pedestrian and cycle bridge has been provided by Omagh District Council and will be adopted by Roads Service. |
| Drumragh Car Park/Back Market Place, Omagh | At design stage. Proposal for pedestrian and cycle bridge to be delivered by Omagh District Council and adopted by Roads Service. |

Free Parking Provision in Ballymoney

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has any plans to review the free parking provision in Ballymoney.

(AQW 26032/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You will be aware I announced a freeze on any further increase to car parking charges in early November 2012 for the remainder of the current budget period; that is, up until 2015. This announcement also provides for a freeze on the introduction of charges in existing Roads Service operated car parks during this period.

My Department operates 10 off-street car parks in Ballymoney, two of which are subject to charges. Church Street has 96 spaces with a tariff of 40p per hour and Castle Street has 117 spaces with a tariff of 20p per hour. The other eight car parks are free and collectively offer some 505 spaces which equates to 84% of all off-street spaces. I can confirm I have no plans to introduce charging at the eight free car parks.

There are also significant numbers of short-stay on-street parking spaces available within Ballymoney Town centre.

Park and Ride Facilities on the A26 from Ballymoney to Ballymena

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development what consideration his Department is giving to the introduction of park and ride facilities on the A26 from Ballymoney to Ballymena.

(AQW 26034/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Based on the number of cars parking at various points along the road, there is evidence of the need for a Park and Share/Ride car park along the Glarryford to Drones Road corridor.

I am pleased to confirm the proposed A26 Glarryford to A44 Drones Road dualling scheme will include the provision of a 50-100 space Park and Ride/Share facility that will be located adjacent to the Drumadoon Road junction.

Although funding for construction of the dualling scheme is not currently provided for in the current budget period, I will continue to press for funding.

Ballycarry Railway Station: Footpaths

Mr Dickson asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on road and footpath improvements in the vicinity of Ballycarry Railway Station.

(AQW 26075/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: A number of options have been considered for the provision of a footway over the bridge adjacent to Ballycarry Railway Station. The site is particularly constrained and it is difficult to find a solution that is deliverable, both in terms of practicality and value for money.

One of the options being considered was a footbridge, however, preliminary estimates indicated it would be very expensive to construct. Another option is to introduce traffic signals to control traffic to a single lane, freeing up space for footway provision on the bridge itself. This is more economically viable and has potential for further development, although it may interrupt the flow of traffic on the bridge and lead to some delays at peak periods.

My Department's officials have had preliminary discussions with their counterparts from Larne Borough Council regarding a number of issues relating to the development of the Gobbins Coastal Path project. These discussions have included consideration of pedestrian movements from Ballycarry Halt to the centre that will be constructed on the Middle Road. My officials will continue discussions with both Translink and Larne Borough Council to further consider the options available for infrastructure improvements, in the vicinity of Ballycarry Halt.

Council Areas: Bicycle Stands

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of bicycle stands that will be installed in each council area in the next three years.

(AQW 26103/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has plans to provide a number of cycle stands in the greater Belfast area as well as in some other Council areas in Northern Ireland. However, the exact number of stands and their location still has to be determined.

As the detailed budget for subsequent years has not been finalised, it is not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

I would remind the Member that information on completed and proposed schemes for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils.

In addition, the implementation of public realm and other development works by others, such as DSD, may include the provision of cycle hoops / stands.

Residents' Parking Schemes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the provision of residents' car parking schemes outside of Belfast.

(AQW 26107/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department are currently developing Residents' Parking Schemes for parts of the Lower Malone and Stranmillis areas of Belfast as well as discrete areas in Londonderry and Antrim. Along with scheme development, my Department is currently drafting the necessary subordinate legislation to facilitate schemes and aims to have the first schemes delivered during 2014.

Gransha Road Roundabout, Bangor

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the action being taken to ease traffic and pedestrian problems at the Gransha Road roundabout, Bangor.

(AQW 26108/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has commissioned consultants to examine possible options to improve pedestrian facilities at the roundabout. Officials expect this study to be completed within the next six months, when they will be in a better position to establish the best way forward.

I have asked Mr Bertie Ellison, Divisional Roads Manager, Roads Service Eastern Division, to advise you of the outcome.

Transport Facilities: Cycling

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what strategy is being pursued to integrate transport facilities, including cycling.

(AQW 26111/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I published the New Approach to Regional Transportation in March last year, which has at its core a strong focus on the integration of transport facilities. Through this document, I set out my commitment to an integrated, modern, reliable and environmentally efficient transportation network that meets the needs of communities and business. I believe the people of Northern Ireland deserve nothing less.

In publishing the Active Travel Strategy this year, I set out my ambition to put walking and cycling at the heart of our local transport arrangements, to encourage a healthier, less stressful and lower cost alternative to the car for many shorter daily journeys.

This was followed by my Department's publication of an Action Plan for Active Travel which covers the period up to 2015. The plan sets out initiatives and strategies that will be taken forward by government departments, local authorities and voluntary bodies to encourage more cycling and walking and less dependency on private cars.

The integration of cycling with public transport facilities and private car usage is an ambition which I am determined to realise. In line with this, officials in my Department have been taking forward work to develop a Transport Delivery Plan for the next Budget Period of 2015-19, which will include projects to encourage integrated transport facilities as well as help to achieve the strategic objectives of the Northern Ireland Executive.

Alongside this, I have established a new Cycling Unit within my Department, which will explore a number of issues including the integration of new and existing transport facilities with cycle-friendly measures.

Advisory Cycle Lanes

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the legal standing and enforceability of Advisory Cycle Lanes.

(AQW 26112/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Advisory cycle lanes are bounded by a broken white line and can be marked on the road without the need for accompanying legislation, and consequently a Penalty Charge Notice cannot be issued to a vehicle found parked in one.

Whenever possible, my Department does try to introduce advisory lanes where there are other parking restrictions in place such as clearway regulations, which, if contravened, would attract a Penalty Charge Notice. As you will appreciate, however, this is not always possible.

In addition, Rule 104 of the Highway Codes states "Do not drive or park in a cycle lane marked by a broken white line unless it is unavoidable" and, while failure to comply with this rule will not, in itself,

lead to a prosecution, The Highway Code may be used in evidence in any court proceedings under the Traffic Legislation to establish liability.

Responsibility for moving traffic offences rests with PSNI, who would be best placed to comment on whether driving in an advisory cycle lane constitutes an offence.

Motorists: Awareness Campaign

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he has considered introducing awareness measures for motorists similar to Transport for London's 'look out for cyclists when getting out' campaign.

(AQW 26113/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would remind the Member that the Department of the Environment has a statutory duty to promote road safety and, within the context of the Northern Ireland Road Safety Strategy, does this through a wide range of road safety education activities, including road safety public information campaigns and education programmes, which I am highly supportive of. My Department works closely with the Department of the Environment on matters of road safety, including in the Delivery Board for the Road Safety Strategy and on a number of joint activities such as the development of the Cycling Skills and Cycling Safety leaflet.

With regard to awareness measures, the 'Be Cycle Aware' campaign, which launched in October 2011 and is still ongoing, comprises radio and rear of bus advertisements reminding drivers and cyclists alike to pay attention when sharing the road.

In May 2012, a campaign was launched to encourage road users to 'respect everyone's journey'. The important safety messages to drivers will benefit all vulnerable road user groups, including cyclists.

In September 2012, a campaign was launched, focusing on wider road user responsibility, urging all road users to take responsibility for their actions on the road. The television, press and online campaign includes an injured cyclist saying "I was cycling in the bike lane. The driver said the sun was in his eyes".

A further campaign, launched on 24 April 2013, invites everyone to 'Share the Road to Zero'. It is aimed at all road user groups – cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, drivers and passengers and, indeed, focuses heavily on cyclists in the opening scenes. The aim is to get every road user to take personal responsibility for helping to prevent deaths on Northern Ireland's roads.

I understand that given a rise in cyclist casualties, the Department of the Environment is currently analysing available data and has commissioned qualitative research to help inform consideration of potential new educational activity around cyclist safety.

As the Member will be aware, I have recently instructed officials in my Department to give increased and focussed priority to the needs of cyclists, to encourage greater participation in this healthy and sustainable form of transport. I have also asked for a new cycling unit to be established, to ensure the effective progress of a range of cycling initiatives.

Residents' Parking Permits

Mr Girvan asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the provision of Residents' Parking Permits.

(AQW 26115/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Officials from my Department are currently developing Residents' Parking Schemes for parts of the Lower Malone and Stranmillis areas of Belfast as well as discrete areas in Londonderry and Antrim. Along with scheme development, my Department is currently drafting the necessary subordinate legislation to facilitate schemes, and aims to have the first schemes delivered sometime in 2014.

Roads Service Disposal of Waste Tarmac

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development how Roads Service dispose of waste Tarmac.
(AQW 26149/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Roads Service has arrangements with its current bituminous material suppliers for the supply of material and the collection of waste for recycling. Where the bituminous waste is significantly contaminated with topsoil and clay, it may be landfilled.

All waste is accompanied by a Controlled Waste Transfer Note, in accordance with the current Duty of Care Regulations.

Cycle Lanes in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the location and extent of the cycle lane provision in North Down.
(AQW 26168/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Details of locations and the extent of my Department's cycle lane provision in North Down are provided in the table below:

| | Location | Extent | Length (Km) |
|---|---------------------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | A2 Tillysburn to Holywood | Tillysburn Roundabout to Sullivan Place | 4.7 |
| 2 | Abbey Street, Bangor | Bus Station to Dufferin Avenue | 0.5 |
| 3 | Ballycrochan Road, Bangor | Donaghadee Road To Hawe Road | 2.8 |
| 4 | Bexley Road, Bangor | Ashbury Avenue to Gransha Road | 1.0 |
| 5 | Newtownards Road, Bangor | Abbey Street to Abbey Hill Drive | 0.9 |
| 6 | Silverbirch Road, Bangor | Ballycrochan Road to Ashbury Avenue | 1.9 |
| 7 | Crawfordsburn Road Bangor | Springhill Road to Station Road Carnalea | 1.7 |
| | | Total Length (Km) | 13.5 |

Cycle Lanes in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what proportion of the cycle lane provision in North Down has been provided within the last five years.
(AQW 26169/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department has completed seven cycle lane schemes, delivering 13.5 km of cycle lane in North Down, two of which were completed within the last five years, representing almost 20% of the total length provided:

- Newtownards Road, Bangor (0.9 Km); and
- Crawfordsburn Road, Bangor (1.7 Km).

Cycle Lanes in North Down

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development whether there are plans for the provision of new cycle lanes in North Down, and if so, to detail the location.
(AQW 26176/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would remind the Member that information on completed and proposed roads schemes, including the provision of new cycle lanes, for the current financial year can be found in Roads Service's

Spring and Autumn Reports to Councils. These reports can be accessed from my Department's internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/cinformationtype-results.htm?signpost=Customer+information&informationType=Roads+Service+reports+to+councils

The detailed budget for subsequent years has not yet been finalised therefore it is not possible to provide details of future works programmes at this time.

I can advise the Member there are cycle facilities along the A2 between Tillysburn Roundabout and the start of the slip road which leads to Holywood Exchange, although there are breaks in current provision for both pedestrians and cyclists along the full route to Holywood Exchange. I have asked my officials to investigate the feasibility of providing a complete link for pedestrians and cyclists along this stretch.

Quantity of Road Salt

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development if his Department has a sufficient quantity of road salt to deal with any severe weather problems this winter.

(AQW 26178/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: All of my Department's salt barns are at full capacity with stocks in excess of 70,000 tonnes with additional salt stock resilience of 38,100 tonnes held at six strategic locations.

The current Winter Service salt contract also provides for the supply of a further 15,000 tonnes per month from October 2013 to April 2014, if required.

Progress of the A8

Mr Hilditch asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the progress of the A8.

(AQW 26186/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am pleased to advise that construction of the 14km of dual carriageway on the A8, between Coleman's Corner Roundabout and Ballyrickard Road, is now 13 months into a 34 month programme and is currently on schedule to open to traffic by Spring 2015.

Bicycles on Public Transport

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether the new cycling unit in his Department will consider the use of bicycles on public transport.

(AQW 26230/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The use of bicycles on public transport is one of a number of cycling related issues that officials within my Department's new cycling unit will be giving consideration to, in conjunction with their counterparts in Translink.

Tonnage of Road Salt

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the total tonnage of road salt that will be available from 1 November 2013.

(AQW 26233/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is well prepared for the incoming winter season. All salt barns are at full capacity with stocks in excess of 70,000 tonnes with additional salt stock resilience of 38,100 tonnes held at six strategic locations.

The current Winter Service salt contract also provides for the supply of a further 15,000 tonnes per month from October 2013 to April 2014, if required.

Residents' Parking Schemes

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Regional Development how many Residents' Parking Schemes are under consideration in the urban areas of Coleraine.

(AQW 26235/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can confirm there is currently one residents' parking scheme under consideration within the urban areas of Coleraine, at Adelaide Avenue.

My officials have carried out some preliminary surveys of resident and non-resident parking demand, and further surveys are planned. These surveys will establish whether a Residents' Parking Zone can be established and also allow for preparatory work to be carried out in relation to the legislative requirements.

Legislation is currently being prepared for a scheme in Antrim and another in Londonderry, and it is envisaged these will be implemented and monitored for a short period of time to ensure the legislation is robust before other schemes are taken forward.

Street Lighting in Residential Areas

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 25528/11-15, to detail (i) the policy on updating street lighting in residential areas; and (ii) the date the decision was taken to remove street lighting on paths at the rear of residential properties.

(AQW 26236/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department's policy on updating street lighting in residential areas is that, when an old street lighting scheme has reached the end of its life, a new lighting system will be designed and installed in line with current standards and policies. Current policy states "those roads, footways and footpaths which only give rear access to properties, or are alternative routes to already lighted roads or footpath, will generally not be lit".

As stated in my response to AQW 25528/11-15, the policy in respect of lighting paths at the rear of residential properties has been in place since at least 1994.

Penalty Charge Notices

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development what powers of discretion traffic wardens have when issuing a Penalty Charge Notice.

(AQW 26262/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Traffic Attendants carry out their duties in accordance with my Department's Parking Enforcement Protocol, which can be accessed from the NI Direct internet site at the following web address:

http://www.drdni.gov.uk/index/freedom_of_information/customer_information/doc-details.htm?docid=8462

To ensure provision of a fair and consistent enforcement service, Traffic Attendants are not able to show any further discretion.

A5 Road Scheme: Cost

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the cost of the A5 road scheme not progressing to his Department.

(AQW 26280/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department and the Executive remain committed to the A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) project, which although delayed due to the court ruling, is still being progressed.

A5 Road Scheme: Landowners

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development how much compensation will be paid to land owners due to the A5 road scheme not progressing.

(AQW 26281/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department and the Executive remain committed to the A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) project which, although delayed due to the court ruling, is still being progressed.

With regard to compensation, less than half of the 113 landowners affected by preliminary works have currently submitted claims associated with reinstatement works they have carried out, or for the use and occupation of the formerly vested lands. It is therefore not possible at this time to predict how much compensation will be paid to landowners.

It is estimated the costs of reinstating the lands will be in the region of £1.5m. Some landowners have chosen to complete this work themselves, whilst others have opted to have the work carried out by the contractor.

The amount of compensation paid to landowners, as at 30 September 2013, amounted to £586,680.45.

Illegal Landfill Site at Mobouy Road

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department had vested, or plans to vest, any of the lands identified as comprising the illegal landfill site at Mobouy Road, Derry; and whether as a result, it has inherited, or has identified itself as being at risk of inheriting, any public liability for the decontamination of any of this land.

(AQW 26285/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I would refer the Member to my answer to his Assembly Question AQW 25176/11-15.

Bus Lanes in Belfast

Mr Hussey asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail how many bus lanes operate in Belfast, and the Greater Belfast area, from Monday to Friday, and of these, how many also operate on a Saturday.

(AQW 26292/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Bus lanes within the Greater Belfast area, which operate on 14 corridors and in the city centre, measure approximately 51 km in length.

The following bus lanes generally operate from Monday to Friday at peak times only, morning and evening:

- Albertbridge Road;
- Andersonstown Road/Falls Road;
- Antrim Road;
- Castlereagh Road;
- Crumlin Road;
- Holywood Road;
- Lisburn Road;
- M1/Westlink - Roden Street;
- Saintfield Road/Ormeau Road;
- Shankill Road;
- Shore Road;
- Stranmillis Road;
- Upper Newtownards Road; and
- Woodstock Road.

Of the bus lanes listed, approximately 2.6km operate from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Monday to Saturdays within the city centre, which represents 5% of the total length of bus lanes in the greater Belfast area.

Housing Developments: Adopted Roads

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of housing developments in the (i) Omagh District Council; and (ii) Strabane District Council areas which require roads to be adopted by his Department.

(AQW 26299/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Within the Omagh District Council area, there are 52 unadopted private streets.

Within Strabane District Council area, there are 51 unadopted private streets.

Meeting with Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council

Lord Morrow asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 25313/11-15, for an update on the progress of the outcome of the meeting with Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.

(AQW 26310/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: As I advised the Member in my reply to his Assembly Question, AQW 25313/11-15, Roads Service has requested a meeting with the Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council's town centre manager and Coalisland area councillors to discuss parking issues in Coalisland. It is anticipated that a meeting will be held before the end of this month.

Cycling Strategies

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the strategies being pursued to increase the number of people using cycling as a means of transport.

(AQW 26330/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The Active Travel Strategy which I launched in January aims to put walking and cycling at the heart of our local transport arrangements, encouraging a healthier, less stressful and, increasingly, lower cost alternative to the car for many shorter daily journeys.

This was followed by my Department's publication of an Action Plan for Active Travel which covers the period up to 2015. The plan which is published, along with the Active Travel Strategy, on my Department's internet site sets out initiatives and strategies that will be taken forward by government departments, local authorities and voluntary bodies to encourage more cycling and walking and less dependency on private cars.

Also I am establishing a new cycling unit to ensure cycling issues and initiatives are progressed in a more coherent and coordinated manner across my Department, in partnership with local government, voluntary bodies, public transport operators and the health and education sectors.

Sale of the Port of Belfast

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the meetings or discussions that he or his senior officials have had regarding the sale of the Port of Belfast.

(AQW 26393/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am unaware of a proposal to sell Belfast Port and neither my senior officials nor I have had discussions regarding such a proposal. While I am willing to explore all options for the future that will improve the commercial operation of the port, maintain its competitiveness and enhance its contribution to the growth of the Northern Ireland economy, I envisage that the assets would remain in public ownership.

Sale of the Port of Belfast

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development whether H M Treasury have made any approaches in relation to the sale of the Port of Belfast.

(AQW 26394/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Her Majesty's Treasury has made no such approaches to me or to my Department. Furthermore, the Minister of Finance and Personnel has informed me that DFP officials have not, in this administration, had any approaches from HM Treasury in relation to the sale of the Port of Belfast.

Belfast Harbour Authorities

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the progress made on obtaining the £40m revenue from the Belfast Harbour Authorities, as set out in the Programme for Government 2011-15.

(AQW 26395/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I refer the Member to my previous answers on 14 February 2013 (AQW 19202/11-15) and 21 June 2013 (AQW 24050/11-15).

Works on Railway Lines at Night

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail his Department's policy on work being carried out on railway lines at night.

(AQW 26456/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: This is an operational matter for Translink. Most of Translink's maintenance and engineering work on railway lines and structures takes place at nights and week-ends. This helps ensure that Translink can keep the trains running with minimum disruption to passenger services. Furthermore Translink has to ensure that maintenance staff and contractors can work safely without the risk of moving trains; which also requires them to carry out most work at night.

Belfast to Bangor Railway Line

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development how many times work has been carried out on the Belfast to Bangor railway line at night, in each of the last three years.

(AQW 26457/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink has advised me that work was carried out, at night, on the Belfast to Bangor railway line 158 times in 2011, 153 times in 2012 and 108 times in 2013.

Works on Railway Lines at Night

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the consultation process that takes places prior to work being carried out on railway lines at night.

(AQW 26458/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: For significant engineering projects working for an extended duration in one location NI Railways aim to send letters to local people and advise local authorities.

For routine maintenance and emergency repairs which are more transient in nature it would not be usual to contact local residents.

Railway lines are operational almost every day of the year and accordingly most maintenance work to ensure the network remains safe takes place at night.

The noise generated by engineering projects will be considered at the planning stage and efforts made to reduce it however the maintenance or replacement of railway infrastructure often requires some heavy engineering processes to be undertaken.

Dial a Lift Service

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the promotion of the services provided by Dial a Lift; and whether he plans to take steps to ensure that older people living in rural areas are made aware of the service.

(AQW 26488/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The main aim of my Department's 'Dial a Lift' scheme, supported by the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) is to provide a transport option for rural individual members to access local services. Transport is provided by Rural Community Transport Partnerships and each Partnership provides services based on a specific geographical area in line with the aims of the RTF to facilitate transport in rural areas. The support available from my departmental budget to support these services is approximately £3m per year.

Promotion of the Dial-a-Lift scheme is undertaken at a local level by the Rural Community Transport Partnerships, taking account of the resources available to them. The Partnerships' promotional activity would include a mix of local road-shows, linking into other local events, presentations to groups, leaflet / flyer distribution and local press articles.

The Partnerships also link into the MARA Project (Maximising Access in Rural Areas) a DARD initiative designed to tackle rural poverty and social isolation. The project operates on the basis that those most vulnerable in rural areas, in the majority of cases elderly people, are identified for a MARA visit by a trained enabler. A holistic assessment is carried out of the person's needs including transport, this information is then referred to the Partnerships who contact the person and discuss transport options, including Dial-A-Lift for them. This approach is focused on identified needs.

Dial a Lift Service

Mr Storey asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will extend the Dial a Lift service in rural areas to people who are required to attend an inpatient appointment at hospital.

(AQW 26489/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: The main aim of my Department's 'Dial a Lift' scheme, supported by the Rural Transport Fund (RTF) is to provide a transport option for rural individual members to access local services. Transport is provided by Rural Community Transport Partnerships and each Partnership provides services based on a specific geographical area in line with the aims of the RTF to facilitate transport in rural areas. The support available from my departmental budget to support these services is approximately £3m per year.

Under the 'Dial a Lift' scheme the Partnerships have always been able to provide transport to local GP surgeries, dentists and local clinics. My Department agreed with the Partnerships in 2010 that they may provide transport to local hospitals for members who do not qualify for Department of Health Social Services & Public Safety (DHSSPS) assistance with travel. This position remains unchanged.

The Dial a Lift scheme should not be seen as a substitute for health funded transport, which is the statutory responsibility of the DHSSPS under the auspices of the Patient Care Service. The Patient Care Service (a tier of the NI Ambulance Service) provides non-emergency patient transport services across Northern Ireland.

I recognise the need for my Department to interact with DHSSPS on these important issues. A process has started and my Department is currently leading on a pilot project in the Dungannon area to consider the opportunities for a more joined up approach to the delivery of publicly funded transport services

Procurement of Buses

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he will include specifications for bicycle storage when procuring for buses.

(AQW 26510/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink is aware of the need to provide space for bicycles on its vehicles. I have asked it to explore these options going forward taking account of value for money, safety and impact on its overall passenger base. Translink plans will be subject to economic appraisal and this is one of a number of factors which will be considered.

Cycling Storage Facilities on Buses

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development what correspondence there has been between Translink and bus providers regarding cycling storage facilities on buses.

(AQW 26511/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink have not had any direct contact with manufacturers regarding cycle racks since the trial mentioned in AQWs 26029/11-15 and 26367/11-15. However, it maintains a watching brief on all such developments within the industry. If a device/methodology emerges which appears to be suitable for operation in the NI environment, Translink have been asked to give it due consideration.

The Department sets broad targets for Translink in terms of bus fleet age and accessibility and must assess Translink proposals in terms of value for money. Cycling storage facilities on buses can be considered as one of a range of issues going forward.

Mixed Bicycle and Rail Transport Use

Mr Lyttle asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the planned investment for encouraging mixed bicycle and rail transport use.

(AQW 26521/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have recently announced the creation of a unit which will be tasked with developing cycling and walking initiatives and making a case for investment. In terms of making use of public transport Translink have confirmed that currently there are 208 bicycle storage spaces across the rail network. NI Railways continue to regularly monitor levels of use of these facilities and will develop a programme for installation of additional spaces where further demand is projected.

The class 3000 trains which entered service in 2004-05 have capacity to accommodate up to 4 bicycles. The class 4000 trains which entered into service in 2011-12 have capacity to accommodate 8 bicycles in a 3 car train. In addition folding bicycles can be accommodated provided they are completely folded.

In relation to buses, making provision for those combining bike and bus travel will be considered by the new unit referred to above.

Dee Street/Mersey Street Junction, Comber

Mr Douglas asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans his Department has to upgrade the road surface at the Dee Street/Mersey Street junction, particularly for cyclists travelling over the Dee Street bridge, in order to link with the Comber Greenway.

(AQW 26527/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department undertakes an annual programme of reconstruction and resurfacing works through which schemes are implemented on a prioritised basis. Dee Street is included in the current three year structural maintenance programme and resurfacing work should proceed within this period, subject to the availability of the necessary funding.

Western Arc: Connecting Europe Facility List

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development whether he would make a joint application with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to have the Western Arc, a proposed rail connection

between Belfast, Derry, Galway and Cork, included as a Pre-Identified Project on the Connecting Europe Facility list.

(AQW 26544/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I am always prepared to cooperate with the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport on issues and projects of mutual interest.

Despite intensive lobbying by my Department, the European Commission has ruled that Londonderry does not meet the criteria required for inclusion as a Core Node. As a result, Londonderry and its connection to Belfast are not included on the TEN-T Core Network.

The list of pre-identified projects in the Connecting Europe Facility has been restricted to the Core Network. Given that, and taking into account the Commission's ruling, a proposed rail connection project between Belfast, Londonderry, Galway and Cork could not be included on the list. However, in the disbursement of the Connecting Europe Facility funds, 5% of the total budget is due to be reserved for the Comprehensive Network. Consequently, other projects related to Londonderry's transport links may still be eligible to bid for EU funding in the future.

Coleraine to Londonderry Railway Line

Mr G Robinson asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timeframe to complete the delayed signalling upgrade on the Coleraine to Londonderry railway line.

(AQW 26546/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: You will be aware of my disappointment that Phase 2 of the Coleraine to Londonderry has been delayed. This resulted from difficulties that arose during the procurement process.

Translink has commenced a new procurement strategy and currently estimates that Phase 2 will be completed by the end of 2016. However, my officials will work closely with Translink in order to identify any and all opportunities to bring this date forward.

Reservoirs Located on Church Road, Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the plans for the reservoirs located on Church Road, Holywood.

(AQW 26575/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that the reservoirs at Church Road, Holywood are no longer in service and will be declared surplus to requirements. In disposing of surplus assets, NIW must ensure that it obtains the best price, achieves value for money and maintains high standards of propriety. NIW has not yet identified a timeframe for offering them to the market.

Rail Infrastructure Projects in the West and North West of Ireland

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail (i) whether he is aware of the West On Track submission to the EU Petitions Committee, which raised concerns over the Irish Government's commitment to rail infrastructure projects in the West and North West of Ireland; and (ii) the actions he can take to influence greater distribution of the European Regional Development Fund on public transport by the Irish Government in the North West.

(AQW 26589/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I can advise that I am aware of the recent submission made by the group West on Track. The exploration and securing of European funding opportunities remain an ongoing priority for my Department and we remain committed to working with government partners in the Republic of Ireland in our efforts to seek and secure further funding for cross border projects in the next programme period.

Belfast Rapid Transit Project

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline the timeframe for the commencement of work for the Belfast Rapid Transit project.

(AQW 26617/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: My Department is currently developing the detailed designs for the new Belfast Rapid Transit system. As the detailed designs for individual sections of the routes are completed it is our intention to undertake local information events at a number of locations along the routes. This will provide an opportunity for local residents and traders to view the proposals and speak to officials.

Work is due to commence on the routes and the provision of Park & Ride facilities in 2014.

The specification of the Belfast Rapid Transit vehicles and the design of the Belfast Rapid Transit halts are due to be completed in 2014.

Between 2015 and 2017 we will complete the infrastructure works, procure the vehicles, finalise the operations plan and formally award the operating contract.

Belfast Rapid Transit is scheduled to become operational in 2017, subject to the completion of the required statutory processes and the availability of finance.

Number of Cyclists Using Buses

Mr McKay asked the Minister for Regional Development, pursuant to AQW 26028/11-15, how he plans to ensure that the number of cyclists using buses and related demand levels are measured.

(AQW 26641/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: Translink does not issue tickets for bicycles carried on buses and thus there is no mechanism for counting the number carried. Translink has no plans to change its ticketing technology to take account of bicycles carried. However, Translink conductors and ticket collectors monitor the number of cyclists who have tried to use buses or trains with bicycles. In the future the Cycling Unit may be in a position to survey this issue.

Installation of Water Meters

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Regional Development of the water meters installed in South Antrim, how many carried a charge for installation, in each of the last five years.

(AQW 26667/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that customers are not charged for water meter installations and consequently there have been no customers charged for meter installation in South Antrim during any of the past 5 years. Water meter installation charges are not applied because the meters are owned by and remain the responsibility of NIW.

Sale of the Portavoe Reservoir

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the revenue his Department expects to generate from the sale of the Portavoe Reservoir

(AQW 26680/11-15)

Mr Kennedy: I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water (NIW) that when disposing of surplus assets, it must ensure that it obtains the best price, achieves value for money and maintains high standards of propriety. Any sale is dependent on a number of factors, not least the market conditions at the time of the sale and the level of expressions of interest.

All of NIW's assets have an estimated value known as the Net Book Value (NBV) which is used for accounting purposes. The NBV must be equalled or exceeded in order for the disposal of an asset to proceed. Since the final accepted sale price for Portavoe Reservoir will be entirely dependent on the

level of interest shown if and when the reservoir is offered to the market, NIW cannot at this stage speculate on the level of revenue likely to accrue.

Department for Social Development

Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development how, and when, the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive was involved in the decision that the four planned maintenance contractors, identified in the alleged overpayment of £18m, would not receive any new contracts until matters relating to planned maintenance have been resolved; and what is the timescale for such resolution.
(AQW 26087/11-15)

Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development): The Housing Executive has advised that the issues around the award of the new planned maintenance framework were discussed by the Board of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at its meetings on 29 May, 26 June, 31 July, 28 August and 25 September 2013.

In terms of the planned maintenance framework, it is anticipated that the Housing Executive Board will consider this matter at their October meeting. In relation to the double glazing framework, the injunction that had prevented the appointment of contractors has been lifted and appointments to the framework should be completed by the end of October.

Derelict Houses in Ballysally

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development when the first batch of derelict houses in Ballysally, which are about to be renovated, will be available for occupation.
(AQW 26110/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Plans are to start work on the refurbishment of the first ten houses in December. It is expected that work will be complete by March 2014, after which all can be occupied.

Job Seekers Allowance Claimants

Mr Clarke asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the penalties for people who were in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance, accepted a permanent job and subsequently resigned from their permanent job with the intention of re-claiming Job Seekers Allowance.
(AQW 26202/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department currently has an effective regime which enables it to apply the appropriate sanctions to those jobseekers who contribute to their own unemployment.

When a person claims Jobseeker's Allowance, they must be available for and actively seek work. Where a person accepts a job and subsequently chooses to leave that job and reclaims Jobseeker's Allowance, they will be asked for the reason why they left. Their employer may be asked to comment on any statement they make. A person needs to show that they had "just cause" for leaving their job.

After considering the available evidence, if a decision maker decides that the person left their job without just cause then a sanction will apply for a period between 1 and 26 weeks.

The purpose of the sanction is to protect social security funding from claims arising from circumstances that a person has brought upon themselves.

Hardship payments may be considered in certain circumstances.

Audit Office Report: Fraudulent Occupation

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, following the publication of the Audit Office Report which concluded that some 2,400 properties in the social housing sector could be occupied fraudulently, how he plans to tackle this issue.

(AQW 26207/11-15)

Mr McCausland: In order to address this situation as noted in the NIAO report, the Housing Executive recently developed a Tenancy Misuse/Fraud Strategy (TFS) which sets out measures to allow staff to effectively prevent, detect and tackle tenancy misuse and fraud. The TFS is being rolled out and is expected to be fully in place by the end of the financial year. The Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations is also in the process of developing a model Tenancy Fraud Strategy for Housing Associations to adopt and use as appropriate.

Recommendation 2 of the Audit Office Report specifically details the need for a dedicated Tenancy Fraud Strategy within the Housing Executive, which draws upon best practice examples. The Housing Executive's Tenancy Fraud Strategy (TFS) provides a framework for the Housing Executive to identify and address social housing tenancy misuse and/or fraud within its stock and the strategy will be further developed to take account of relevant recommendations published in the recent NIAO report. A working group incorporating the Department, NIHE and Housing Associations is being set up to examine what actions can be taken to more effectively address the issues identified.

Housing Executive:Tenancy Fraud Strategy

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development, following the recent Audit Office Report on Tenancy Fraud, to outline the initial results following the investigations of the Tenancy Fraud Strategy of the Housing Executive.

(AQW 26208/11-15)

Mr McCausland: As noted in the NIAO Report, the Housing Executive has recently developed a Tenancy Fraud Strategy and is rolling this out during 2013/14. Records for the year to date show that that Abandonment and Non Occupation Notices have been served on 161 Housing Executive properties with 59 properties recovered to date.

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Evictions Due to Mortgage Arrears

Mr D McIlveen asked the Minister for Social Development how his Department plans to accommodate people who have been evicted from their homes because of mortgage arrears.

(AQW 26238/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I am aware that a large number of people here are experiencing difficulty meeting mortgage payments which can lead to the distressing prospect of court action and possible repossession and I empathise with those finding themselves in this situation.

Repossession should always be the last resort and I would urge anyone experiencing mortgage difficulties to access the services available through the Mortgage Debt Advice Service who can provide advice and assistance on housing options to help prevent eviction. This free advice service, operated by Housing Rights, has received funding from my Department until March 2015.

I recognise that this is a serious social and economic issue that requires further consideration. With that in mind, I have already asked my officials to establish a new Repossessions Taskforce that will examine ways in which to relieve the position here. Officials are currently preparing draft terms of reference for the Taskforce and I will make an announcement on the matter in the coming weeks.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive can also provide advice and assistance, and have legal duties to those who find themselves homeless. The legislative criteria with regard to homelessness are the

same for all applicants, including those who have lost their homes due to mortgage arrears. If the applicant has priority need and is unintentionally homeless then secure accommodation will be made available and if the applicant is intentionally homeless accommodation will be made available for a limited period to give the applicant a reasonable opportunity to source alternative accommodation for their occupation.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive: Convictions

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development what penalties can be imposed on a person facing a first conviction of an offence associated with fraudulently claiming to occupy a property owned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or a Housing Association.

(AQW 26250/11-15)

Mr McCausland: At present there is no criminal offence in Northern Ireland relating to a tenant claiming to occupy a property but not in fact doing so. The Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 has been enacted in England and Wales to deal with tenancy fraud in the social rented sector, but such legislation is not in place in Northern Ireland. The current sanction in Northern Ireland would be loss of the tenancy through repossession proceedings.

A working group incorporating the Department, NIHE and Housing Associations is being set up to examine what can be done to more effectively address tenancy fraud. This will include the need for new legislation.

Board of the Housing Executive: Maintenance Contractors

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 24783/11-15, how, and when, the Board of the Housing Executive was involved in the decision that the four named planned maintenance contractors would not receive any new contracts until matters relating to planned maintenance have been resolved.

(AQW 26277/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I would refer the Member to my answer in AQW 26087/11-15.

Housing Executive: Rent Arrears

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the total rent arrears owed to the Housing Executive in each of the last five years, broken down by constituency; and what action has been taken to recuperate these arrears.

(AQW 26306/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The information is not available in the format requested as the Housing Executive does not routinely collate data by Parliamentary Constituency. However, the tables attached detail the rent arrears as follows: -

- Table 1 - provides figures by Housing Executive District Office area at March 2009, March 2010, March 2011 and March 2013.
- Table 2 - provides figures for March 2012 - these are only available by Housing Executive Area Accounts Unit due to the implementation of a new computer system at that time.

In relation to actions taken to recover arrears, the Housing Executive has seven dedicated Accounts Units who apply their policies and procedures across Northern Ireland. These included early intervention, promoting specialist money advice providers and working with tenants to agree a suitable repayment agreement. In situations where arrears continue to increase, it can be necessary to take court action to obtain a decree for repossession of the property. However, repossession is only as a last resort.

TABLE 1 – RENT ARREARS BY HOUSING EXECUTIVE DISTRICT OFFICE AREA

| District Office | March 2009 | March 2010 | March 2011 | March 2013 |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) |
| West Belfast | 758 | 702 | 682 | 869 |
| East Belfast | 802 | 768 | 768 | 808 |
| Belfast North | 1503 | 1380 | 1182 | 1352 |
| Shankill | 711 | 698 | 661 | 956 |
| South Belfast | 824 | 784 | 777 | 933 |
| Belfast Area | 4598 | 4332 | 4070 | 4918 |
| Bangor | 545 | 574 | 554 | 614 |
| Newtownards | 602 | 596 | 561 | 710 |
| Castlereagh | 820 | 801 | 735 | 833 |
| Lisburn Antrim St | 636 | 594 | 579 | 666 |
| Lisburn Dairy Farm | 439 | 406 | 340 | 346 |
| Downpatrick | 396 | 352 | 310 | 335 |
| South East Area | 3438 | 3323 | 3079 | 3504 |
| Banbridge | 178 | 172 | 143 | 124 |
| Newry | 322 | 243 | 232 | 241 |
| Armagh | 168 | 157 | 135 | 125 |
| Lurgan/Brownlow | 250 | 236 | 220 | 268 |
| Portadown | 228 | 187 | 163 | 182 |
| Dungannon | 201 | 174 | 158 | 172 |
| Fermanagh | 174 | 173 | 167 | 184 |
| South Area | 1521 | 1342 | 1218 | 1296 |
| Ballymena | 245 | 287 | 280 | 376 |
| Antrim | 249 | 267 | 314 | 451 |
| Newtownabbey 1 | 307 | 318 | 320 | 333 |
| Newtownabbey 2 | 280 | 335 | 345 | 410 |
| Carrickfergus | 257 | 311 | 304 | 377 |
| Larne | 198 | 203 | 190 | 220 |
| Ballycastle | 66 | 75 | 76 | 126 |
| Ballymoney | 102 | 119 | 118 | 144 |
| Coleraine | 393 | 384 | 405 | 477 |
| North East Area | 2097 | 2299 | 2352 | 2914 |
| Waterloo Place | 196 | 169 | 178 | 215 |

| District Office | March 2009 | March 2010 | March 2011 | March 2013 |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) | Total (£000K) |
| Waterside | 614 | 555 | 521 | 499 |
| Collon Terrace | 385 | 362 | 371 | 380 |
| Limavady | 256 | 238 | 220 | 226 |
| Magherafelt | 192 | 166 | 160 | 187 |
| Strabane | 317 | 272 | 283 | 281 |
| Omagh | 176 | 140 | 111 | 110 |
| Cookstown | 132 | 112 | 92 | 91 |
| West Area | 2268 | 2014 | 1936 | 1989 |
| Annual Total | 13922 | 13310 | 12655 | 14621 |

TABLE 2 – RENT ARREARS BY HOUSING EXECUTIVE AREA ACCOUNTS UNIT

| Accounts Office | March 2012 |
|-----------------|--------------|
| | Total (£000) |
| Belfast Area | 4588 |
| South East Area | 3343 |
| South Area | 974 |
| North East Area | 2646 |
| West Area | 2437 |

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Housing Executive: Rent Arrears

Mr Buchanan asked the Minister for Social Development how many elected members of the Housing Council are in rent arrears to the Housing Executive.

(AQW 26307/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive advise that no elected members of the Housing Council are in rent arrears to the Housing Executive.

Private Landlords: Upgrading Heating Systems

Mr Weir asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the (i) funding schemes; (ii) programmes; and (iii) grants are available to private landlords to upgrade heating systems.

(AQW 26333/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department does not have a specific funding scheme, programme or grant for private landlords to upgrade heating systems in their properties. However, the Department does have schemes which assist low income households, including privately rented, to upgrade their heating systems.

The Warm Homes Scheme upgrades heating systems in privately owned and privately rented homes where the existing heating system is coal fire, Economy 7 or bottled gas. The tenant must receive a qualifying benefit.

In exceptional circumstances work to heating systems may be included as part of a Discretionary Renovation Grant, which can be paid, by the Housing Executive, to a private landlord. Exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist where there is an imminent and significant risk to the occupier. The amount of grant paid depends on the approved cost of the work and their financial circumstances. If they are on a low income they may get grant aid up to a maximum of £25,000. The NIHE will calculate if they have to make a contribution. A landlord's grant is determined on a percentage basis depending on the area in which the property is located.

Coleraine Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development when he will be in receipt of the Draft Annual Report for 2012/13 of the Coleraine Neighbourhood Renewal Areas that relate to health, skills and training development.

(AQW 26347/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My officials are currently in the process of analysing the 2012/13 annual reports for all 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. They will all be presented to me within the next two weeks, following this they will be published on my Department's website.

Ballymena Town Centre Masterplan

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the current status of the Ballymena Town Centre Masterplan.

(AQW 26384/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Ballymena Town Centre masterplan was published in April 2009 and includes 46 actions to be delivered over a 15 to 20 year timescale. The masterplan proposals are being delivered through public private partnerships established by the Council, such as Ballymena Town Centre Development Ltd and Ballymena Voluntary Strategic Investment Board.

Work is currently ongoing on a major £4 million public realm scheme for the town centre, a £150,000 revitalisation was completed earlier this year and my Department is working with a range of stakeholders in relation to the potential development of the OFMDFM owned St Patrick's Barracks site and the development of a site in Bridge Street.

Ballymena Town Centre Masterplan

Mr Swann asked the Minister for Social Development which elements of the Ballymena Town Centre Masterplan are currently being implemented; and to detail the investment being provided by his Department.

(AQW 26385/11-15)

Mr McCausland: A number of the actions identified in the Ballymena Town Centre masterplan have already been completed by my Department or by Ballymena Borough Council. Work is currently ongoing on a major public realm scheme for the town centre, a revitalisation scheme was completed earlier this year and my Department is working with a range of stakeholders in relation to the potential development of the OFMDFM owned St Patrick's Barracks site and the development of a site in Bridge Street. The investment by my Department to date in the regeneration of Ballymena Town Centre, including funding currently approved for the public realm scheme is £3.06million.

Housing Executive Schemes

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development what Housing Executive schemes are planned for the (i) Cookstown; and (ii) Magherafelt District Areas, in this financial year, broken down by housing estate.

(AQW 26404/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The tables below give details of the Housing Executive's planned schemes for the Cookstown and Magherafelt District areas in this financial year. It should be noted that many of these schemes include single dwellings (or very small numbers of dwellings) in rural areas across the council areas. Therefore, the main locations for each scheme are included rather than every location being listed.

TABLE 1 – COOKSTOWN DISTRICT AREA

| Scheme | Dwgs | Date * | Estates |
|---|------|--------------|--|
| Riverside Drive/Windsor Crescent, Cookstown Heating | 49 | DOP 22/04/13 | As per scheme name |
| Moneymore/ Stewartstown Heating | 22 | DOP 22/04/13 | As per scheme name |
| Cookstown Smoke Alarm Replacement | 70 | DOP 02/06/13 | Various addresses in Cookstown North & South; Moneymore; Stewartstown |
| Cookstown 15 Year Boiler Replacement | 52 | DOP 16/09/13 | Cookstown North & South; Moneymore; Sandholes; Stewartstown; Coagh/Lisnahall |
| Killymoon Crescent, Cookstown Roofs | 12 | ESD 26/10/13 | As per scheme name |
| Princess Avenue/ Windsor Crescent Kitchens | 68 | ESD 22/01/14 | As per scheme name, plus addresses in Lissan Road and Cooke Crescent |

TABLE 2 – MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT AREA

| Scheme | Dwgs | Date * | Estates |
|---|------|--------------|--|
| Glenburn/Sandy Grove Heating | 49 | DOP 03/06/13 | As per scheme name in Magherafelt, plus addresses in Bellaghy and Glenelly Heights, Draperstown |
| Magherafelt Smoke Alarm Replacement | 41 | DOP 13/05/13 | Various addresses in Ballymaguigan, Maghera, Magherafelt, Moneyneena and Tobermore |
| Magherafelt Low Rise Fire Doors | 38 | ESD 10/03/14 | Hall Crescent & Meeting House Avenue in Maghera, Glenburn Park in Magherafelt |
| Leckagh Drive/ Walk, Magherafelt: External Cyclical Maintenance | 127 | ESD 10/03/14 | As per scheme name |
| Maghera/Bellaghy Kitchens | 71 | ESD 24/03/14 | Springfield Park & William Court in Bellaghy; Glenelly Villas in Draperstown; Crawfordsburn, Mullagh Park and Tamney Crescent in Maghera |

| Scheme | Dwgs | Date * | Estates |
|---|-------------|---------------|---|
| Magherafelt Heating | 100 | ESD 31/03/14 | Various addresses in Bellaghy, Castledawson, Maghera & Magherafelt |
| Riverside, Castledawson/ Killowen Drive External Cyclical Maintenance | 206 | ESD 31/03/14 | As per scheme name |
| Magherafelt Double Glazing | 77 | ESD 31/03/14 | Various addresses in Curran, Fallahogey, Gulladuff, Moneyneena, plus Alexander Park in Upperlands |

DOP = scheme has started

ESD = current programmed start date (these are indicative dates and are subject to the scheme design/approval and contractors being in place.)

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Closure of Visitor Attractions, Leisure Facilities, Community or Amenity Facilities

Mr McNarry asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has any evidence of a growing trend in councils of closing visitor attractions, leisure facilities, community or amenity facilities that were initially jointly funded by Government and/or European funding provided on a three year sustainability basis; and if any funded activities are under pressure from closure or additional funding requirements.
(AQW 26448/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I have no evidence of any trend across councils to close visitor attractions, leisure facilities, community or amenity facilities that were initially jointly funded by Government and/or European funding provided on a three year sustainability basis. Nor do I have evidence that any related funded activities are under pressure from closure or are requiring additional funding.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have been placed in the work-related activity group since the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 26478/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Between October 2008 when Employment and Support Allowance was introduced, and August 2013, there were 23,094 people placed in the work related activity group.

The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have been placed in the Support Group category since the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance, broken down by constituency.

(AQW 26479/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Between October 2008 when Employment and Support Allowance was introduced, and August 2013, there were 30,287 people placed in the Support Group category.

The information requested is not available by parliamentary constituency.

Redeveloped Area of the Village, South Belfast

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development what assurances he can give that the agreed allocation process for homes in the redeveloped area of the Village, South Belfast, will strictly adhere to (i) (Category 1) Allocations will first go to those residents still living in the redevelopment area; (ii) (Category 2) Former residents who facilitated redevelopment by moving out of their homes, and have letters from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive guaranteeing them the right to return to the area; and (iii) (Category 3) The general housing list; those in this category would be allocated after those in categories 1 and 2 have been offered first.

(AQW 26542/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I can confirm that properties are being allocated in the priority as stated, with the proviso that some discretion has to be brought into play in terms of matching the phased handovers coming on stream, in terms of size and suitability, against the requirements of the next priority applicant. For example, in the case of a three bedroom property becoming available, where there are no persons in the first two categories requiring a three bedroom property, then offers would be made to the general waiting list in the usual way. Also, some applicants in the first two categories have deferred their priority status and indicated a preference to wait until forthcoming phased handovers become available in order to avail of a preferred location.

The broad thrust is to give priority to people from the first two categories and only move to applicants from the general waiting list where houses have either been refused or deferred for whatever reason by applicants in the first two categories or where houses do not match requirements. All those with a guarantee letter are guaranteed a return to a new build property in the Village.

Private Landlords: Unsuitable Tenants

Mrs D Kelly asked the Minister for Social Development whether there is any process in place whereby private landlords are held accountable when they rent property to unsuitable tenants; and if not, whether he plans to legislate to make irresponsible private landlords answerable when their tenants cause disruption to others by anti-social behaviour or criminal activity.

(AQW 26543/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Articles 26 & 27 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 set out the steps a landlord can take to deal with anti-social behaviour by, or affecting, their tenants.

It is not normally possible to make one person responsible for the actions of another and I have no plans to bring forward legislation which would hold a landlord responsible for the actions of their tenants.

Residents of the Strand Area of Holywood

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what his Department can do to help the residents of the Strand area of Holywood in acquiring a community house.

(AQW 26574/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Housing Executive has advised that demand for accommodation in the Holywood area is high. Housing stress has increased steadily from 140 in March 2010 to 196 in March 2013. It would therefore be extremely difficult for the Housing Executive to justify the allocation of one of their dwellings to a community group.

Social and Affordable Housing

Mr Agnew asked the Minister for Social Development what progress has been made on the introduction of a developer contribution to social and affordable housing; and whether there is a timeline for its implementation.

(AQW 26583/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I remain supportive of introducing a system of developer contributions for affordable housing; indeed, it is a key action in my Housing Strategy for Northern Ireland: Facing the Future.

I have been critically evaluating this issue over the past months and two key factors will impact on the timing of the introduction – appropriate processes need to be in place to manage any regime efficiently and the timing is crucial in light of the challenges facing the construction sector currently. In the present market conditions it is likely to prove extremely difficult to realise contributions.

My officials, in conjunction with the Department of the Environment, will reassess this matter shortly to examine whether the housing construction market has had an opportunity to improve sufficiently to allow developer contributions to be introduced.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Budget

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development how he intends to ensure that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive spends its budget in full in this financial year.

(AQO 4677/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Last year the Housing Executive declared easements of £31 million through in year monitoring rounds and Urgent Procedure in March. The easement related mainly to efficiency savings as a result of very keen tender prices for new contracts in the area of response maintenance.

This year, the Housing Executive had identified easements of £10m in June monitoring as planned maintenance procurement has not been completed and contracts have not been let.

It is most disappointing for me to be reporting again that the Housing Executive has identified further easements totalling £35m. The majority of this easement, £24.5m relates to Housing Executive Maintenance Budgets and in particular, delays in issuing new contracts for Planned Maintenance and Double Glazing. The Housing Executive still intends to spend over £100m in property maintenance work with £65m + in planned schemes, and a further £35m + in response maintenance and there will be a full service for tenants to repair heating systems, fix boilers, deal with burst pipes, and other necessary repairs.

The issue of contract management is long standing and is a priority for me and the Chairman of the Housing Executive. My officials are working closely with the Housing Executive to maximise spend on the budget in the current financial year.

The Housing Executive has identified former NIHE properties which were sold to tenants under the ‘Right to Buy Scheme’ and which are now being offered for sale on the open market. A reclassification of revenue funding to capital, to cover the costs of the scheme is proposed and a bid for £10m capital has been made at the October Monitoring Round.

Soft Service Functions: Outsourcing

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development whether a decision has been taken to outsource soft service functions from his Department; and if so, were discussions held with the Department of Finance and Personnel to ascertain if other Departments were outsourcing these functions.

(AQW 26607/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development (DSD) has taken the decision to outsource its Soft Services. This decision was an operational one driven by a need to support business improvement and achieve efficiencies.

The decision by DSD to outsource its Soft Services forms part of a wider NICS-wide procurement exercise being taken forward by DFP for the provision of Security and Ancillary Services within which Departments specify their individual requirements.

First Time House Buyers

Mr I McCrea asked the Minister for Social Development to detail what assistance is available for first time house buyers.

(AQW 26632/11-15)

Mr McCausland: There are a number of mechanisms I have introduced to assist first-time buyers (and those returning to the housing market) that are, and will continue to, deliver access to affordable homes. With further funding I have been able to secure for housing in 2013/14, NI Co-Ownership will be able to support the purchase of 900 homes this year. In addition, I have secured additional funding for Co-Ownership housing up to 2014/15, which will deliver an extra 170 homes a year. The Affordable Home Loans fund, which aims to deliver over 600 homes, will allow the advancement of new, affordable housing pilot schemes in Northern Ireland.

My officials continue to consider alternative mechanisms to assist first-time buyers access the housing market. In the interim, HM Treasury will shortly announce the first wave of mortgages available under the Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee. Under this scheme, lenders across the UK will be able to use Government backed guarantees to offer £130 billion worth of mortgages with smaller deposits, as little as 5%, on new and existing properties.

Child Maintenance Service

Mr McGlone asked the Minister for Social Development what steps are being taken to rectify the technical problems currently affecting the Child Maintenance Service's computer systems; and what timescales are in place for their resolution.

(AQW 26665/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Child Maintenance Service currently manages 3 separate Child Maintenance Schemes that are each supported by their own IT.

A number of cases on the 1993 and 2003 Schemes and systems have been affected by technical issues which have required the cases to be managed clerically whilst the IT issues are further investigated. Unfortunately this is not an uncommon occurrence on these older systems and many have to be managed clerically for long periods of time.

That is why I was pleased to launch, using a pathfinder approach, a new Child Maintenance system (2012) last December as part of the wider reforms to the child maintenance system. This new scheme is supported by more modern IT and in time will gradually replace the older 1993 and 2003 Schemes and systems. To date, of 9,000 cases registered nationally on this new system, none have needed to be managed clerically and this augers well for when we move to introduce this Scheme for all new applications here, later this year.

Small Town Public Realm Project for Donaghadee

Mr Easton asked the Minister for Social Development what is the schedule for works to start on the small town public realm project for Donaghadee.

(AQW 26684/11-15)

Mr McCausland: My Department is working with Ards Borough Council on a major £2.5 million public realm scheme for Donaghadee. Council appointed an Integrated Consultancy Team to develop the concept design and complete an economic appraisal. The Economic Appraisal for the scheme was received by the Department on 4th October 2013 for consideration and subject to funding being available and all necessary approvals the scheme should commence in 2014. A more definite timeline for the schedule of works cannot be confirmed until all the necessary approvals are in place.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Tenants' Rents

Mr Spratt asked the Minister for Social Development whether Northern Ireland Housing Executive tenants' rents will increase to match those in Housing Associations, should their properties be moved into the ownership of Housing Associations as a result of changes within the Housing Executive.

(AQW 26699/11-15)

Mr McCausland: Annual rent increases have been a feature of social housing over many years and are necessary to enable providers such as the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and Housing

Associations to maintain standards. However, I am committed to ensuring rent levels remain affordable and sustainable; and to ensuring that tenants are protected from any excessive or unaffordable rent increases.

As agreed with Executive colleagues, the further exploration of my proposals for the reform of social housing is underway. No decisions have been made as to how rent will be calculated in the future. Rent levels will require detailed analysis of the various options before any decisions can be made. As you will appreciate this will be a critical component in the establishment of the new social housing model which in due course will be subject to the scrutiny and approval of the NI Executive.

Public Realm Schemes

Mr Campbell asked the Minister for Social Development whether his Department will be able to deliver the 10 Public Realm Schemes by 31 March 2014.

(AQW 26737/11-15)

Mr McCausland: I can confirm that this milestone for 2013/14 has been achieved and my Department is making good progress to achieve the full Programme for Government commitment to deliver at least 30 Public Realm Schemes by March 2015.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Mr Brady asked the Minister for Social Development how many people have (i) applied for; and (ii) received Discretionary Housing Payments in each of the last two years.

(AQW 26745/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The numbers of people who have (i) applied for and (ii) received Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) in each of the last two years are detailed in the table below.

| Period | Applications | Awards paid |
|---------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| 2011/12 | 10,726 | 10,299 |
| 2012/13 | 18,766 | 16,703 |

The Information provided in this response is governed by the Principles and Protocols of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. This is enforced by UK Statistics Authority.

Foyle and Lisnagelvin Jobs and Benefits Offices

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 26352/11-15, what action he has taken to reduce the number of calls not answered in the Foyle and Lisnagelvin Jobs and Benefits offices.

(AQW 26770/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Social Fund Crisis Loan Service is primarily a face to face service delivered at the front office and in addition, a limited telephone service is provided to support this service. The Agency recognises that the telephone service is limited and requires modernisation and, as part of Welfare Reform, a programme of investment is underway which is due for completion next year. This new service will be available to claimants from the Foyle and Lisnagelvin areas. Claimants who cannot currently access the Crisis Loan telephone should call into their local office.

Soft Services Function

Mr Eastwood asked the Minister for Social Development whether he has decided to outsource the Soft Services function from his Department.

(AQW 26787/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The Department for Social Development has taken the decision to outsource its Soft Services. This decision was an operational one driven by a need to achieve efficiencies.

AQW 1004/11-15

Mr Allister asked the Minister for Social Development, pursuant to AQW 1004/11-15, to provide an answer to the question as anticipated in Standing Order 19 (5) which states that a question must be answered as clearly and as fully as possible.

(AQW 26813/11-15)

Mr McCausland: The administrative procedures and processes of Private Office are confidential. The answer to AQW 1004/11-15 was provided on 14th June 2013.

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