

# Written Answers to Questions

Official Report (Hansard)

**Friday 16 September 2011**

**Volume 66, No WA2**



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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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Sheehan, Pat (West Belfast)  
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 16 September 2011

## Written Answers to Questions

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

#### **Social Protection Fund**

**Mr Allister** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister (i) how much has been spent to date under the Social Protection Fund; and (ii) how much is estimated to be spent in the remainder of the current financial year.

**(AQW 1613/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness (The First Minister and deputy First Minister):** To date, no monies have been released from the fund. Our officials are working with other departments to assess funding options and potential initiatives.

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

**Mr Swann** asked the First Minister and deputy First Minister to detail the cost of security provision for the St Patrick's Barracks site in Ballymena, broken down for each year since its closure.

**(AQW 1616/11-15)**

**Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness:** The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister took responsibility for the St Patrick's barracks site, Ballymena on 15 April 2011. From then until 31 August 2011 security costs of £86,683 have been incurred. These costs are based on the existing contract for security which expires at the end of November 2011.

We do not hold information on costs incurred by the Ministry of Defence on the site prior to its handover.

### Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

#### **Countryside Management Scheme**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what percentage of Countryside Management scheme payments were paid by the end of (i) July 2011; and (ii) August 2011; and how this compares with her Department's targets for payment.

**(AQW 1592/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill (The Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development):** My Department has an overall target to pay 90 % of NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS) claims which present no technical queries by 30 June of the year following submission of the claim. For the 2010 scheme, 31.9% (292) claims were paid by the end of July 2011, and 46.9% (430) were paid by the end of August 2011. The target was not achieved for two main reasons. Firstly Countryside Management Inspectors were reassigned to Single Farm Payment inspections which delayed commencement of inspections of 2010 NICMS. Secondly whenever initial inspections were undertaken the results indicated a high level of non-compliance and over-declaration within a significant number of claims. In line with EU regulations,

my Department is now carrying out a number of additional inspections following which outstanding payments will be progressed.

### **Countryside Management Scheme**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development how many applicants to the Countryside Management Scheme, who completed field boundary restoration work, received payment for this work by 1 September 2011.

**(AQW 1593/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** By 1 September 2011 there were no NI Countryside Management Scheme (NICMS) applicants who claimed for field boundary restoration work under the scheme who had received payment. The Department has been unable to pay such claims because of a high level of non-compliance with scheme rules and over-declarations discovered during on farm inspections.

### **Ministerial Special Adviser**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, pursuant to AQW 1549/11-15, the answer to which failed to provide the information requested, to now provide details of (i) how many candidates were considered for the post of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which she selected her Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did she ensure that it was 'broadly based' as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.

**(AQW 1654/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I have nothing further to add to my response to AWQ 1549/11-15. I am aware of the process to appoint Special Advisers. I can assure the Member that the appointment was carried out in line with the procedures. The detailed process of the selection was not carried out by my officials but by my Party.

### **Strategy for the Equine Industry in Northern Ireland**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development what steps have been taken to implement the recommendations in the 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in Northern Ireland'; and to outline her Department's position and plans on recognising the horse as an agricultural animal.

**(AQW 1706/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** The 'Strategy for the Equine Industry in Northern Ireland' was developed by and for the equine industry and it identified the requirement for a single body to take forward the Strategy's recommendations. The Equine Council (ECNI) is the body tasked with taking forward the industry's Strategy. The Department fully supports the ECNI and recently made funds available for start-up costs, including the appointment of a Development Officer.

The issue of recognising the horse as an agricultural animal is a key consideration within the Strategy and will be one of the priority actions to be taken forward by the ECNI's newly appointed Development Officer. The ECNI will make its case to DARD on this issue in due course.

### **Badger Culling**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to outline her Department's current position on badger culling.

**(AQW 1707/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** There has been considerable progress made in reducing TB incidence in cattle in the north of Ireland. The herd incidence has almost halved from nearly 10% in 2002 to 5.03% at 31 July 2011. The number of TB reactor cattle in 2010 at 6,400 was 22% lower than in 2009 and the lowest since

1998. Also, the number of herd breakdowns in 2010 at 1,150 was the lowest since 1996 when TB levels were on a rising trend.

While these figures are encouraging, there is clearly more work to be done. TB is a very complex and challenging disease that is difficult to eradicate and it has an adverse impact on those farm businesses affected. There is no simple solution or 'quick-fix' to TB eradication. My aim is to reduce and ultimately eradicate TB in cattle here and we have a rigorous EU Commission approved TB eradication programme in place that includes a strand to address the wildlife factor.

There are no plans for any cull of badgers here. As the badger is a protected species, any direct interventions in the badger population would be subject to the agreement of the Environment Minister, the issue of appropriate licences, and the availability of the substantial additional funding that would be needed. My officials are monitoring closely the progress in England and Wales on their proposals for badger control in areas with high and persistent levels of bovine TB.

Additional funding has been allocated in the DARD budget to commission TB and wildlife research and studies to address critical knowledge gaps and provide a robust science-led evidence base to further guide the TB eradication strategy.

The issue of badgers and bovine TB is very complex, emotive and contentious. While science has established that there is a link between TB in badgers and TB in cattle, it has not yet established, with certainty, how the disease is spread between them and what can be done to prevent its spread.

Interventions to address the wildlife factor may include improving biosecurity, as well as more direct intervention such as the vaccination of badgers, which may be the most feasible solution in the long-term. My officials are monitoring closely the studies being conducted in the south of Ireland and in England to develop a viable oral badger vaccine and cost-effective means of vaccine deployment. They will similarly keep a close interest in developments to produce a viable cattle vaccine.

Direct interventions in wildlife will incur substantial cost and must be fully justified in cost-benefit terms. We need to be certain that the benefit would justify the considerable costs.

Action to deal with cattle to cattle transmission of TB will continue to be an important element of the TB strategy as we move forward.

### **New Season Comber Potatoes/Comber Earlies**

**Mr Hamilton** asked the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development when she anticipates that New Season Comber Potatoes/Comber Earlies will be granted European Union Protected Geographical Indication status.

**(AQW 2021/11-15)**

**Mrs O'Neill:** I am pleased to be able to confirm that the application for Protected Geographical Indication (PGI) status for New Season Comber Potatoes/Comber Earlies, is in the final stage of the process, having been published on the European Commission's Official Journal.

This is to provide other Member States and Third Countries the opportunity to comment on the application. If no comments or objections are received I would anticipate that the Commission should be in a position to grant PGI status by the end of this year. However you will appreciate that the timescale for the process of granting EU Protected Food Names is entirely a matter for the Commission.

## Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

### Illegal Fishing and Poaching

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many prosecutions her Department has pursued for (i) illegal fishing; and (ii) poaching in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 1586/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín (The Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure):** The table below indicates the number of prosecutions taken by the Department in the last five years relating to all types of illegal fishing.

Year	Number of Cases Processed
2006	56
2007	78
2008	108
2009	180
2010	126

The Department defines poaching as one type of illegal fishing activity and such cases are included in the above table.

### Policing of Fishing in Lakes and Waterways

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure how many staff in her Department and its arm's-length bodies are employed in the policing of fishing in lakes and waterways.

**(AQW 1588/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The Department is responsible for the enforcement of fisheries protection legislation in its jurisdiction and currently employs 10 Fishery Protection Officers to carry this function, a further post is vacant. The Department also works closely with Private Water Bailiffs from angling clubs and with the PSNI on a wide range of enforcement issues. The Department does not sponsor any arms-length bodies involved in Fisheries issues.

### Líofa 2015

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to detail (i) the cost to date of Líofa 2015; (ii) the financial allocations and obligations that have been identified and assigned to this project in any forthcoming budget, broken down by (a) year; and (b) budget heading; and (iii) the business plan for Líofa 2015.

**(AQW 1595/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The breakdown of cost for the Líofa 2015 initiative launch:-

	Cost
Interpreters	£ 245.00
Website	£1217.16
Banners	£ 213.60
Hospitality	£ 694.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2370.56</b>

No obligations have been identified and assigned to this project in any forthcoming budget.



**Business case attached as per your request.**

**Annex A**

**PRO-FORMA BUSINESS CASE (INCLUDING ECONOMIC APPRAISAL) FOR EXPENDITURE APPROVALS LESS THAN £10,000**

This pro forma is only for use with proposals involving public expenditures less than £10k in total including, for example, mainstream public expenditure (DEL), EU and other funding, over the whole life of the project.

<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Líofa Project</b>
Branch/ALB	Languages Branch
Completed By	Ann Perry
Authorised By; Grade	Kevin Hamill - DP
Date Appraisal Approved	
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>£2675.76</b>

**The Requirement**

Accountability and good practice require the use of appraisal at all levels of decision-making. Used properly, it leads to better choices by policy makers and managers. It encourages groups to both question and justify what they do by providing a framework regarding the use of limited resources that should lead to decisions based on value for money.

Appraisal is not optional. The principles of appraisal should be applied, with proportionate effort, to all proposals for spending or saving public money, or otherwise changing the ways in which public resources are employed. These principles apply equally to policies, programmes and projects, to the public expenditure and resources of NDPBs and Agencies, and not just to Departments.

**Use of this Pro Forma**

The document is only for use with proposals involving public expenditures of less than £10k in total including, for example, mainstream public expenditure (DEL), EU and other funding, over the whole life of the project. It is designed bearing in mind that effort to be applied should be proportionate to the scale of the expenditure. By addressing the points below, the general principles of appraisal are applied, and a suitable analysis is made to help decision-making and to help develop a value for money solution.

**Economics Services Unit**

**1. Why is the service or item required (i.e. need) and what are the associated objectives?**

Ministerial Direction – Minister Ní Chuilín has stated that one of her main priorities in office is the promotion of Gaeilc culture to as wide an audience as possible.

The Líofa Project will contribute to the achievement of this goal. IT Assist will design a web page on the Departmental Website which the public can sign up to to take up the Líofa challenge and to access a list of Irish Language classes in their area.

The main objective of the project is to encourage 1000 people from all walks of life across the north to sign up to becoming fluent in the Irish language by 2015.

## 2. Why does the project require government assistance and what are the costs?

At present, there is no comprehensive list setting out where Irish Language classes are available for members of the public who wish to learn Irish. DCAL intends to provide this service and help facilitate people who wish to become fluent in the Irish language.

### Initial Costs

<b>Launch at Long Gallery in Stormont</b>	approximately £1000
<b>Interpreters/Sign Language</b>	approximately £245
<b>Annual Survey of participants by Statistics Branch</b>	Minimal
<b>Web Site Construction</b>	£1217.16 (Notional)
<b>Launch Banners</b>	£213.60

### Programmer Analyst

Work Oversight 1 day

### Programmer

Livelihood	Development 2 days
Testing	1/2 day
Deployment	minimal
Map Investigation & Development	2 days
Testing	1/2 day
Deployment	minimal

### Cost

PA	1 days £196.76
Programmer	5 days £1020.40

**Website total £1217.16**

### Future Costs

Future costs are not quantifiable at this stage. This will be dependant on how the Líofo 2015 develops.

### Total Costs

£2675.76

## 3. What would be the effect of not providing the service or item?

Project has been identified as a flagship project for the Department by the Minister. The Department promotes the use of Irish. The absence of a comprehensive list about where Irish Language classes are available impedes access to those who wish to learn the language and fails to comply with departmental obligations under the European Charter for Minority Languages and the St. Andrews Agreement.

4. **What are the alternatives to providing the chosen item or service level?**

**Option 1**

Foras na Gaeilge/Community Group could take the project forward

**Option 2**

Ask an external IT company to design and maintain the website

**Option 3**

Do nothing

5. **Why were the alternative options rejected?**

None of these options are viable for the following reasons:

**Option 1**

Foras/Community groups do not currently have the available resources to take the project forward. Additionally, within the given timescales it was decided that the Initiative could be taken forward most effectively by using Departmental resources.

**Option 2**

The cost of using an external IT company would be prohibitive. In addition, this would create an ongoing cost for the Department in terms of monitoring and updating the website.

**Option 3**

The Project has been identified as a flagship project for the Department by the Minister. The 'do nothing' approach is therefore not an option.

6. **What is the rationale for selecting the chosen option and how has value for money been achieved?**

Minister identified that she would like the Department to promote the Gaelic culture by encouraging people to become fluent in Irish in 2015.

It was decided that the best way to achieve this was by placing a web page on the Departmental Website which could be used to list all Irish language classes etc presently being run in Northern Ireland and to allow those willing to take up the Líofo 2015 challenge to sign-up online.

Value for money was achieved by using existing NICS internal resources and seeking quotes in line with procurement guidance.

## Líofo 2015

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether an equality impact assessment has been carried out on the Líofo 2015 initiative; and to outline the results.

**(AQW 1612/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The launch of the Líofo 2015 initiative was subject to an equality screening, I can confirm that this exercise has taken place. The initiative will be open to all sections of the community, including all s75 groups.

## Líofo 2015

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for a breakdown of the projected cost of the Líofo 2015 initiative.

**(AQW 1614/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The breakdown of cost for the Líofo 2015 initiative launch:

	<b>Cost</b>
Interpreters	£ 245.00
Website	£1217.16
Banners	£ 213.60
Hospitality	£ 694.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2370.56</b>

It is anticipated that further expenditure may be required during the 4 year life of the Líofo 2015 initiative.

## **Líofo 2015**

**Miss M McIlveen** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what consultation her Department carried out on the Líofo 2015 initiative prior to its launch.

**(AQW 1615/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Departmental officials and the Minister met with key stakeholders prior to the launch to seek their endorsement and take on board their views.

No formal consultation was carried out.

## **Appointment of Special Advisers**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1420/11-15, why she claimed in a BBC Spotlight programme that “the party appointed myself and Mary McArdle to these positions” when the DFP Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers places the onus for the selection of a Special Adviser on the Minister and states that Ministers should make the selection on justifiable grounds, that Ministers have a personal responsibility and that Ministers should ensure that they consider a number of candidates.

**(AQW 1643/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I appointed Mary McArdle as my Special Adviser.

## **Ministerial Special Adviser**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, pursuant to AQW 1476/11-15, the answer to which failed to provide the information requested, to now provide details of (i) how many candidates were considered for the post of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which she selected her Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did she ensure that it was ‘broadly based’ as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.

**(AQW 1652/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I refer the member to my answer to AQW 1476/11 -15.

## **Fish Poaching in Inland Waterways**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what steps her Department is taking, or intends to take, to combat fish poaching in inland waterways.

**(AQW 1673/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Poaching is an illegal fishing activity and DCAL is concerned with any illegal fishing activity taking place throughout its operational area.

DCAL Fisheries Protection Officers, under the management of Senior Fisheries Officers undertake regular patrols on land and water, on rivers, lakes and coastal areas throughout the DCAL operational area. They also carry out intelligence led operations to detect, disrupt and deter those involved in illegal fishing activities.

In addition Fisheries Protection Officers undertake inspections of fish dealers' premises and businesses selling fish such as hotels, restaurants and commercial outlets to ensure that those engaged comply fully with the 1966 Fisheries Act and Fisheries Byelaws.

DCAL Fisheries Protection staff also work closely with local angling clubs, many of which have Private Water Bailiffs who play an important role in supporting the Department in combating illegal fishing activities.

## **Ulster Scots Heritage**

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what plans her Department has to promote the Ulster Scots heritage.

**(AQW 1752/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** The two main organisations funded by my Department that are involved in the promotion of Ulster-Scots heritage are the Ulster-Scots Agency and the Ministerial Advisory Group which is currently developing the Ulster-Scots Academy approach.

The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) jointly funds with the Department of Arts Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the North South Language Body which comprises the Ulster-Scots Agency and Foras na Gaeilge, the Irish Language Agency.

The Ulster-Scots Agency's statutory remit is specified in the legislation (The North/South Co-operation (Implementation Bodies) (NI) Order 1999) and has responsibility for the promotion of Ulster-Scots language and culture. Using its approved budget of £3.3m the Agency funds projects and programmes which promote Ulster-Scots culture and heritage activities.

The work of the Ministerial Advisory Group which is currently developing the Ulster- Scots Academy approach includes three work strands- one of which is Heritage and Culture.

Under this strand there are a number of projects currently under way and further projects are being identified which will contribute to the promotion of Ulster- Scots heritage. Examples of these projects include the development of an Ulster- Scots tourism app and refurbishment of the ancestral home of the seventh president of the USA, Andrew Jackson, in Carrickfergus.

Funding is also available from departmental mainstream programmes for projects which may have an Ulster-Scots language, heritage or culture dimension, which cannot be separated from the primary funding objectives.

I have stated my intention to bring forward a strategy for Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture.

## **Parking for Disabled People at Public Angling Estate Waters**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the review of parking for disabled people at public angling estate waters; and how it will affect Portavoe Reservoir in Donaghadee.

**(AQW 1765/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** My Department is carrying out a review of parking facilities for disabled anglers at Public Angling Estate waters. This review will be undertaken utilising existing resources and some preparatory work has been completed. The matter will be progressed in line with other Departmental priorities.

NI Water own, Portavoe Reservoir. Technically any person entering the property other than anglers with the specified documentation are trespassing. However, enforcement of this situation is a matter for NI Water as owner of the facility.

NI Water has recently advised my Department of its intention to undertake urgent remedial and maintenance work at a number of reservoirs including Portavoe. This will result in the temporary closure of Portavoe as a fishery in 2012 while the work is carried out.

### **Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland Contract**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure for an update on the tendering process for the next Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland contract.

**(AQW 1793/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Work is underway by Libraries NI to replace the 'Electronic Libraries for Northern Ireland' (ELFNI) Contract.

Libraries NI have developed an Outline Business Case for a replacement system and inform me that the tender process is expected to commence this autumn.

### **Library Opening Hours**

**Mr D Bradley** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to outline the criteria and formula used to determine the proposed reduction in library opening hours.

**(AQW 1823/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** I recognise that both the Department and its sponsored bodies have already had to take very difficult decisions in planning to live within reduced budget allocations over the next four years.

In managing these new pressures, the Department will work closely with its sponsored bodies to minimise impacts on front line services and protect priority areas.

In order to deliver some of these savings Libraries NI have commenced a review of Library opening hours. I would emphasise that nothing has been finalised by the Libraries NI Board at this stage. I understand that a consultation has commenced and that will include a conversation with each community about when they would like to see their library opened. I would encourage people to take part in the consultation.

Decisions will not be made until all the information from the consultation has been collated and presented to the Board of Libraries NI. The Board of Libraries NI contains councillors from the DUP, the SDLP, my own party and the UUP.

In developing proposals for revised opening hours the following principles were applied by Libraries NI:

- the proposals must deliver the required level of savings i.e. a reduction overall of approximately 20% (or 1,200 staff hours per week) equating to between £750k - £800k per annum;
- the available hours should be used in the way that best meets customer need;
- opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library; and
- the opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closure due to staffing shortages should be avoided other than in the most exceptional circumstances.

It is proposed that there should be 4 Bands of libraries for the purpose of opening hours:

- Band 1 - Libraries open 57 hours per week
- Band 2 - Libraries open 40 hours per week
- Band 3 - Libraries open 30 hours per week
- Band 4 - Libraries open 18 hours per week

Libraries were allocated to a Band based on historic levels of use. Levels of use (or activity figures) for each library were determined by adding together:

- annual visits figure for 2010/11;

- annual issues (i.e. loans) figure for 2010/11;
- annual Public Access Computer sessions for 2010/11; and
- active members figure for 2010/11.

Where the total activity figure was:

- Greater than 280,000, the library was allocated to Band 1;
- Between 100,000 and 279,999, the library was allocated to Band 2;
- Between 80,000 and 99,999, the library was allocated to Band 3; and
- Less than 80,000, the library was allocated to Band 4.

There are a small number of exceptions to these categories. These relate mainly to libraries that have recently undergone, or will undergo, significant changes that mean that historic levels of use are not a reliable indicator, including:

- Where libraries were closed for part of the year because of major refurbishment;
- A number of libraries which were identified in the Stage 1 review of library provision in Greater Belfast as providing mitigation for closure of other libraries in their vicinity;
- Two libraries in Greater Belfast which had their hours reduced as a result of the Stage 1 review and are subject to planned review with regard to their use; and
- The Centre for Migration Studies and the Irish and Local Studies Library in Armagh which are not primarily lending libraries.

A copy of the spreadsheet with the activity levels of each library and the current and proposed hours has been published on the Libraries NI website.

### **Licensed Fishing Engines, Salmon Nets or Netting Operations**

**Mr Swann** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure whether her Department is aware of any licensed fishing engines, salmon nets or netting operations which are active (i) around the coast of Northern Ireland; (ii) around the coast of the island of Ireland; and (iii) around the north coast of counties Antrim and Londonderry.

**(AQW 1837/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** DCAL is empowered to licence salmon fishing engines in coastal waters within its jurisdiction by the Fisheries Act (NI) 1966.

- (i) In 2011 the Department has issued 6 licences for salmon fishing engines in the DCAL jurisdiction of the coastal waters of the North. Catch records over the last 5 years indicate that 4 of these licences are actively fished. The Lough's Agency is responsible for the licensing of salmon fishing engines in the Foyle and Carlingford coastal waters.
- (ii) The Lough's Agency and Inland Fisheries Ireland are responsible for the licensing of salmon fishing engines in their respective jurisdictions.
- (iii) In 2011 the Department has issued 4 licences for salmon fishing engines in the DCAL jurisdiction of the coastal waters of counties Antrim and Derry. Catch records over the last 5 years indicate that 3 of these licences are actively fished. The Lough's Agency is responsible for the licensing of salmon fishing engines in the Foyle coastal waters of County Derry.

### **Funding for Painting of Murals in West Belfast**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what funding her Department has provided for the painting of murals in West Belfast in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 1840/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Funding for murals, which comes from a variety of sources, is provided under the Re-imaging Communities Programme. The programme is delivered by the Arts Council NI and is overseen by the Shared Communities Consortium. Details of the total provided for murals in West Belfast in the last three years are as follows

2008-2009	£30,000
2009-2010	£26,650
2010-2011	£14,700

### **Fish Poaching in the Rivers and Waterways of North Antrim**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure what measures are in place to eradicate fish poaching in the rivers and waterways of North Antrim.

**(AQW 1847/11-15)**

**Ms Ní Chuilín:** Poaching is an illegal fishing activity and DCAL is concerned with any illegal fishing activity taking place throughout its operational area, which includes North Antrim.

#### **North Antrim is part of the DCAL Fisheries Protection Northern Area.**

The area enforcement team of three Fisheries Protection Officers, under the management of a Senior Fisheries Officer, undertake regular patrols on the land, rivers, lakes and coastal waters of the area. They also carry out intelligence led operations to detect, disrupt and deter those involved in illegal fishing activities.

In addition Fisheries Protection Officers undertake inspections of fish dealers' premises and businesses selling fish such as hotels, restaurants and commercial outlets to ensure that those engaged comply fully with the 1966 Fisheries Act and Fisheries Byelaws.

Northern Area Fisheries Protection staff also work closely with local angling clubs, many of which have Private Water Bailiffs, who play an important role in supporting the Department in combating illegal fishing activities.

## Department of Education

### **St Mary's College**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Education why extra places for teacher training were given to St Mary's College during 2009/10.

**(AQW 1573/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd (The Minister of Education):** In determining the allocation of initial teacher education (ITE) places each year, my Department considers a number of factors, including: the needs of our school system, both in the short and longer term; the demographic position in relation to individual phases of education; and the needs of specific sectors.

Enrolments in Irish-medium schools and units across the period 2004/05 to 2009/10 showed a continuing upward trend in overall enrolments (an increase of almost 25% from 3,272 in 2004/05 to 4,075 in 2009/10), whereas overall pupil numbers had decreased by 4% from 343,295 in 2004/05 to 329,457 in 2009/10. In recognition of the upward trend in the Irish-medium sector, an additional 10 earmarked places for the BEd Irish-medium primary programme were approved in the 2009/10 academic year for St Mary's University College, as the provider of the BEd Irish-medium route.

I will, as part of the annual ITE intake approval process, be carefully considering the number of teachers needed in future years, and will continue to take account of any particular sectoral or curricular needs.



## **Joint Efficiency Review Stage Two Report (PEDU)**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education for an update on his Department's and the Department of Finance and Personnel's Joint Efficiency Review Stage Two Report (PEDU).

**(AQW 1575/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As part of Stage Two of the Joint Efficiency Review, the Performance and Delivery Unit (PEDU) has been reviewing the scope for improved efficiency in Home to School Transport and School Catering Service.

Work in both areas is nearing completion and I expect that reports will shortly be presented to me and to the Minister for Finance and Personnel for consideration.

I have already signalled my intention to make public the final reports following completion of the exercise and to ensure that action is taken in response to the recommendations they contain.

## **Education and Library Boards**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what action the Education and Library Boards are taking to make savings and protect frontline services.

**(AQW 1576/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The action required by Education and Library Boards is to make savings in line with the Savings Delivery Plan that has been agreed for my Department as part of Budget 2010.

The Savings Delivery Plan focuses savings in areas that protect frontline services as far as possible within an extremely constrained financial budget.

I have recently approved Resource Allocation Plans for all 5 Education and Library Boards. These detail challenging savings requirements totalling some £25.8m. It is important that these savings are progressed to help reduce administrative costs and protect frontline services.

## **Unnecessary Duplication and Waste in the Education System**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what action he intends to take to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste in the education system.

**(AQW 1577/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** A Savings Delivery Plan has been developed to realise resource savings over the four year Budget period of £101m / £187m / £229m / £306m. The savings measures seek to protect spend on Departmental priorities and bear down on unnecessary duplication and administration.

I have recently approved Resource Allocation Plans for all 5 ELBs. These include challenging savings targets totalling some £25.8m. It is important that these savings are progressed to help reduce administrative costs and protect frontline services.

At the Committee for Education on 8 June, I indicated my intention to look at years 2, 3 and 4 of the budget period. Officials have now embarked on a full and robust review of all current areas of funding in order to assess if the budget can be re-profiled.

Agreement on the establishment of ESA will ensure greater consistency and efficiency in service delivery. Without it, scarce resources will continue to be spent on unnecessary bureaucracy and spread too thinly over existing institutions.

## **Nursery School Places in East Antrim**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Education how many children were unable to obtain a place at a nursery school in the East Antrim area in each of the last five years.

**(AQW 1579/11-15)**

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

The aim of the Programme is to provide a funded pre-school place for every child, in their final pre-school year, whose parent wishes to avail of it.

It is not possible to determine the number of children who did not get a place in a nursery school as, in applying for a funded place, parents are invited to list a number of preferences across the range of statutory and voluntary/private providers. When a setting is unable to accommodate a child the application is passed on to the next provider on the parent's list of preferences. A child is not considered to be unplaced until all parental preferences on an application form have been exhausted.

The table below, therefore, shows the number of children, in their final pre-school year, who did not get a pre-school place in any DE funded setting in the East Antrim\* area in the last five years:

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
No of Unplaced Children	50	64	60	79	24

\* The North Eastern Education and Library Board define the East Antrim area as being Newtownabbey, Larne and Carrickfergus Council areas.

### Schools Closed Due to a Lack of Student Numbers

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Education how many (i) primary schools; and (ii) post-primary schools have closed in the last three years due to a lack of student numbers; and of those, how many were from the (a) Catholic maintained sector; and (b) controlled sector.

**(AQW 1581/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** It is the relevant School Managing Authority in conjunction with the Board of Governors of individual schools that bring forward Development Proposals to the Department of Education for school closures.

A school's future viability is considered on its own merits against the six criteria listed in the Sustainable Schools Policy and therefore any decision is not based solely on the enrolment number. This means that it is not possible to attribute closures purely to low enrolments. However, details have been provided below of the total number of school closures during the last three years by school type and sector.

There have been 25 school closures in the last three school years. This total is broken down as follows:

- 11 Controlled primary schools
- 8 Maintained primary schools
- 2 Preparatory departments
- 3 Controlled post-primary schools
- 1 Grant-maintained integrated post-primary school

Additionally, 7 schools have closed due to amalgamations in the last 3 years to form 3 new schools. This total is broken down as follows:

- 4 Maintained primary schools formed 2 new primary schools.
- 2 Maintained post-primary schools and 1 voluntary grammar formed 1 new post-primary school.

## Intake of Pupils from a Minority Community

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education (i) how many of the integrated primary and secondary schools met the Department's criteria of a 30% intake of pupils from a minority community; and (ii) to detail the percentage of pupils from a minority community attending each integrated school.

**(AQW 1619/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:**

- (i) The latest information available relates to the 2010/2011 school year. There are currently 42 integrated primary schools, and 20 post primary schools. Of these, 19 primary schools and 8 post primary schools do not have an intake of 30% or more from a minority community.
- (ii) The tables below provide the religious breakdown of integrated schools, including the percentage of pupils from a minority community, attending each integrated school.

### RELIGIOUS BREAKDOWN OF INTEGRATED PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010/11

School name	Protestant %	Catholic %	Other %
Cliftonville Integrated Primary School	36.6	35.29	28.34
Forge Integrated Primary School	29.84	25	45.16
Hazelwood Primary School	27.57	50.55	21.88
Cranmore Integrated Primary School	37.7	38.8	23.5
Groarty Primary School	#	70.73	*
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	36.33	47.35	16.33
Omagh Integrated Primary School	32.94	52.82	14.24
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	25.55	49.78	24.67
Roe Valley Integrated Primary School	26.58	58.86	14.56
Carnlough Controlled Integrated Primary School	44.68	36.17	19.15
Glengormley Integrated Primary School	22.77	43.07	34.16
Crumlin Primary School	63.74	11.7	24.56
Ballymoney Controlled Integrated Primary School	74.53	4.87	20.6
Carhill Integrated Primary School	46.15	26.92	26.92
Ballycastle Integrated Primary School	37.01	40.26	22.73
Rathenraw Integrated Primary School	36.36	36.36	27.27
Round Tower Integrated Primary School	35.82	27.24	36.94
Millstrant Integrated Primary School	41.97	37.82	20.21
Braidside Integrated Primary School	38.27	39.11	22.63
Corran Integrated Primary School	34.45	42.11	23.44
Acorn Integrated Primary School	50.88	36.84	12.28
Spires Integrated Primary School	35.32	34.33	30.35
Maine Integrated Primary School	32.11	37.61	30.28
Kircubbin Primary School	47.41	31.9	20.69

Portaferry Integrated Primary School	22.81	54.39	22.81
Bangor Central Primary School	57.34	14.16	28.5
Annsborough Primary School	#	47.37	*
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	59.73	18.14	22.12
Fort Hill Integrated Primary School	72.41	5.6	21.98
All Childrens Integrated Primary School	26.64	58.88	14.49
Loughview Integrated Primary School	40.75	33.02	26.23
Cedar Integrated Primary School	32.72	43.32	23.96
Oakwood Integrated Primary School	37.75	38.73	23.53
Millennium Integrated Primary School	32.59	45.09	22.32
Drumlins Integrated Primary School	39.66	35.34	25
Rowandale Integrated Primary School	18.63	43.14	38.24
Kilbroney Integrated Primary School	21.98	58.24	19.78
Bridge Integrated Primary School	37.84	47.17	14.99
Portadown Integrated Primary School	24.14	32.33	43.53
Windmill Integrated Primary School	31.44	44.98	23.58
Saints & Scholars Int Primary School	27.43	39.66	32.91
Phoenix Integrated Primary School	33.56	52.35	14.09
<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>37.24</b>	<b>24.18</b>

**Note:**

- 1 Primary includes nursery, reception and year 1 - 7 classes.
  - 2 Integrated schools includes 'Controlled integrated' and 'Grant maintained integrated'
- \* relates to fewer than 5 pupils.
- # means a figure relating to 5 or more pupils has been treated to prevent disclosure.

**RELIGIOUS BREAKDOWN OF INTEGRATED POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS 2010/11**

School name	Protestant %	Catholic %	Other%
Hazelwood College	48.38	31.9	19.72
Malone Integrated College	41.33	45.73	12.93
Oakgrove Integrated College	30.8	67.33	1.87
Erne Integrated College	37.38	49.05	13.57
Drumragh College	28.4	58.8	12.81
Crumlin Integrated College	36.36	37.23	26.41
Parkhall Integrated College	81.38	2.64	15.98
Slemish College	43.69	33.47	22.84
North Coast Integrated College	57.69	21.66	20.65

School name	Protestant %	Catholic %	Other%
Ulidia Integrated College	54.48	33.96	11.57
Sperrin Integrated College	43.24	44.49	12.27
Priory College	73.6	12.27	14.14
Fort Hill College	73.33	8.59	18.08
Lagan College	42.5	36.61	20.89
Shimna Integrated College	31.43	49.14	19.43
Strangford Integrated College	52.04	25.44	22.52
Blackwater Integrated College	59.28	29.94	10.78
Brownlow Int College	33.41	51.09	15.5
New-Bridge Integrated College	43.88	46.52	9.6
Integrated College Dungannon	29.16	58.93	11.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.53</b>	<b>36.79</b>	<b>15.69</b>

### Pupil Capacity for Integrated Schools

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education (i) what is the current overall pupil capacity for integrated schools; and (ii) how many of these places are (a) filled; and (b) unfilled, broken down by each school. **(AQW 1620/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The current overall pupil capacity (ie approved enrolment) for integrated schools in the 2010/11 school year is 21,995. The number of these places that were (a) filled and (b) unfilled, broken down by each school is as detailed in the table below.

School name	(a) Places Filled	(b) Places Unfilled
Cliftonville Integrated Primary School	159	179
Forge Integrated Primary School	240	10
Hazelwood Primary School	389	17
Cranmore Integrated Primary School	176	27
Groarty Primary School	40	23
Enniskillen Integrated Primary School	210	34
Omagh Integrated Primary School	300	19
Oakgrove Integrated Primary School	385	15
Roe Valley Integrated Primary School	146	0
Carnlough Controlled Integrated Primary School	46	16
Glengormley Integrated Primary School	197	249
Crumlin Primary School	170	204
Ballymoney Controlled Integrated Primary School	245	169
Carhill Integrated Primary School	24	70

<b>School name</b>	<b>(a) Places Filled</b>	<b>(b) Places Unfilled</b>
Ballycastle Integrated Primary School	122	36
Rathenraw Integrated Primary School	49	174
Round Tower Integrated Primary School	264	12
Millstrand Integrated Primary School	155	77
Braidside Integrated Primary School	327	21
Corran Integrated Primary School	178	25
Acorn Integrated Primary School	201	2
Spires Integrated Primary School	197	9
Maine Integrated Primary School	106	14
Kircubbin Primary School	112	40
Portaferry Integrated Primary School	52	49
Bangor Central Primary School	556	0
Annsborough Primary School	57	28
Glencraig Integrated Primary School	220	32
Fort Hill Integrated Primary School	199	41
All Childrens Integrated Primary School	203	0
Loughview Integrated Primary School	395	11
Cedar Integrated Primary School	183	13
Oakwood Integrated Primary School	191	12
Millennium Integrated Primary School	186	17
Drumlins Integrated Primary School	100	16
Rowandale Integrated Primary School	80	0
Kilbroney Integrated Primary School	90	50
Bridge Integrated Primary School	389	17
Portadown Integrated Primary School	201	2
Windmill Integrated Primary School	195	15
Saints & Scholars Integrated Primary School	206	64
Phoenix Integrated Primary School	145	10
Hazelwood College	813	12
Malone Integrated College	704	96
Oakgrove Integrated College	790	10
Erne Integrated College	392	8
Drumragh College	580	0
Crumlin Integrated College	213	187

School name	(a) Places Filled	(b) Places Unfilled
Parkhall Integrated College	664	71
Slemish College	718	2
North Coast Integrated College	475	25
Ulidia Integrated College	489	11
Sperrin Integrated College	455	45
Priory College	450	0
Fort Hill College	846	4
Lagan College	1197	3
Shimna Integrated College	480	0
Strangford Integrated College	475	25
Blackwater Integrated College	260	140
Brownlow Integrated College	379	71
New-Bridge Integrated College	488	12
Integrated College Dungannon	447	53

**Source:** 2010 School Census / School Access Team

Figures exclude pupils in receipt of a statement of special educational needs and pupils admitted to Year 1 (primary) / Year 8 (post-primary) on appeal and pupils in their first year at a post-primary school following their admission by the direction of the Exceptional Circumstances Body as they are admitted over and above a school's approved enrolment number. Figures also exclude pupils admitted to a school by a temporary variation to a school's approved enrolment number.

### Shared Sixth Form for Ballymoney

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the proposals for the provision of a shared sixth form for Ballymoney.

**(AQW 1621/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Department of Education (DE) officials and representatives from the Ballymoney Learning Community met on June 9, 2011 and 4 August 2011 to discuss proposals for a shared sixth form for Ballymoney including the suggestion of a shared sixth form created by extra capacity at Dalriada School in the 2011/12 school year. The Department's response was to encourage a fuller and longer-term proposal on the basis that established procedures already exist for all schools to create extra capacity temporarily in order to meet demand for sixth form places.

DE supports the concept of a shared sixth-form in Ballymoney that will stop Ballymoney's young people having to seek post-16 provision elsewhere out of necessity rather than choice. DE also supports the positive integrative element of the proposal which seeks to bring together young people from maintained, controlled and grammar schools. In taking this forward detailed consideration needs to be given to a range of interests since the Ballymoney schools currently cater for young people from a wide catchment area beyond the immediate environs of Ballymoney.

### Global Positioning System

**Mr McDevitt** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of children who (i) now have to pay for a school bus pass which they had previously been awarded free of charge, broken down by

Education and Library Board; and (ii) have moved school as a result of the introduction of the use of the Global Positioning System, broken down by each Education and Library Board and each school year.  
**(AQW 1649/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Education and Library Boards do not use the Global Positioning System (GPS) when assessing suitable routes to school for pupils. Rather, they use the Geographical Information System (GIS) which uses digitised Ordnance Survey maps to check the distance between a pupil's home and their school.

The Southern Education and Library Board has indicated that 14 pupils at first considered eligible for assistance with school transport, later had that assistance removed as the result of a reconsideration of the length of their route to school using GIS. The remaining Boards do not keep records of this information. The Boards also do not keep information in relation to concessionary seats granted to pupils, who subsequently have to give them up for the use of eligible pupils and who then may have to pay for a bus pass.

Information concerning the number of pupils who have moved school as a result of an application of GIS is not kept by the Boards.

### **Ministerial Special Adviser**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 1548/11-15, the answer to which failed to provide the information requested, to now provide details of (i) how many candidates were considered for the post of Ministerial Special Adviser; (ii) what account was taken of any potential imbalance in religious background or gender in the pool from which he selected his Special Adviser; (iii) how wide was the trawl for candidates and how did he ensure that it was 'broadly based' as required by the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers; and (iv) to publish the job description and person specification drawn up before the Special Adviser was appointed.

**(AQW 1651/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I refer the member to the answer to AQW 1548/11-15 which was published in the Official Report on 29 July 2011.

### **Entrance Exams for Post-Primary Schools**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Education for his assessment of whether children sitting several entrance exams for post-primary schools, including exams for the Catholic maintained and controlled sector (i) is in the best interests of the children; and (ii) is sustainable in the long-term.

**(AQW 1669/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I do not believe that it is in the best educational interests of children to be sitting any entrance test that is referenced to a school's admissions processes. Children should be able to access a first-rate education without the trauma and stress associated with sitting up to five test papers.

Our pupils should be academically challenged throughout their school career, but academic selection has been used to prevent young people from accessing schools. Instead I want to nurture the talents of all our young people and to ensure all schools provide a high standard of educational experience and build on pupils' individual abilities.

I want to see, and I am working towards, an equal system across the board where we have area planning to cater for the educational needs of all pupils, where we can look at our schools in a sustainable way, and where we have a fair and level playing field for all our schools in terms of admissions processes.

### **Education and Library Boards Employees**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Education (i) whether the Education and Library Boards are to pay employees, whose contracts include conditions of employment determined by the National Joint Council



for Local Government Services, an additional £250 during the 2011/12 financial year; and (ii) to detail the cost of these payments (a) in total; and (b) by each Education and Library Board area.

**(AQW 1680/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I can confirm that the Education and Library Boards will pay employees, whose contracts include conditions of employment determined by the National Joint Council for Local Government Services, an additional £250 during the 2011/12 financial year subject to the approval process being completed by the Department of Finance and Personnel. This is a provision that has been made for low earners and will apply to those earning less than £21,000 full-time equivalent.

Table below details the cost of these payments:

	<b>Accrual at 2010/11</b>
BELB	£846,000
WELB	£757,242
NEELB	£815,000
SEELB	£742,545
SELB	£945,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,105,787</b>

### Non-Teaching Posts

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Education to provide an estimate of (i) the number of non-teaching posts that may be lost during (a) this financial year; (b) the 2012/13 financial year; and (c) the 2013/14 financial year; and (ii) the savings that might result from reductions in non-teaching posts (a) in total; and (b) in each Education and Library Board area.

**(AQW 1681/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The numbers of posts that may be lost during this year and future years is not yet known as Education & Library Boards' are currently working with my Department to assess the position and work through the statutory process for staff redundancies.

I can confirm, however, that the focus of my Savings Delivery Plan is on protecting frontline services as far as possible within an extremely constrained budget.

### Bi-Lingual Education

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) the provision for bi-lingual education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; and (ii) if his Department has any plans to improve services within schools for these children.

**(AQW 1683/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I have been advised by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) that a comprehensive range of communication options are available for children who are deaf or hard of hearing and that educational audiology services recognise the right of parents to choose the communication approach they consider most appropriate for their child. ELBs provide bi-lingual education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing when this is the informed choice of the parents. A total communication approach is adopted for these children which focuses on:

- using the child's residual hearing to the full through prescribed hearing aids/cochlear implants/ other equipment;
- use of sign language to support the spoken word;
- the natural use of speech and language with the aim to develop the child's speech and language; and

- the use of all visual stimuli.

In certain instances ELBs may also provide a communication support worker or peripatetic teacher.

I have also been assured by the Boards that they constantly review all special educational needs services and improve these services where possible. ELBs are confident that the needs of any deaf or hard of hearing child, including those who require bi-lingual education, can be addressed.

## **Líofa 2015**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education to detail the funding allocated by his Department to the Líofa 2015 Project.

**(AQW 1686/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am fully supportive of the Culture Minister's project to promote the Irish language and to encourage 1000 people to become fluent Irish speakers by 2015. My Department is already making an important contribution to this initiative through its ongoing support for the Irish-medium school sector and for related educational projects such as the Primary Languages Programme which give pupils in Foundation/Key Stage 1 the opportunity learn an additional language at school; and the An Gaelaras Leargas pilot programme which provides Key Stage 2 pupils in the Derry area with an opportunity to develop their knowledge of Irish language and culture.

I shall be pleased to continue to support Liofe 2015 in whatever ways might be possible through the education system.

## **Common Funding Formula**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education why changes have been made to the common funding formula that now makes schools liable for the total cost of employing a prematurely retired teacher.

**(AQW 1693/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Changes have not been made to the Common Funding Formula arrangements for schools but rather schools were consulted earlier this year on proposals for changes to the centre substitution arrangements as detailed in the Common Funding Scheme, which took effect from 1 September 2011.

These changes sought to reflect recommendations made by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in their follow-up report on The Management of Substitution Cover for Teachers. In addressing the recommendations, the Department proposed a number of changes including making schools responsible for the total costs of re-employing prematurely retired teachers. This seeks to act as an incentive to schools to give preference to newly or recently qualified teachers in their substitution arrangements.

## **Newly Qualified Teachers**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what measures are being taken to maximise the employment opportunities for newly qualified teachers.

**(AQW 1697/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I am keen to ensure that newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are afforded every opportunity to not only gain permanent employment but also to gain further vital experience by providing substitute cover and by filling temporary vacancies.

To this end, my Department has introduced a range of measures to maximise the employment opportunities for NQTs, namely:

- Schools are repeatedly urged by the Department to give preference to newly qualified or experienced non-retired teachers seeking to return to employment when filling vacancies, including those of a temporary nature. Schools have also been advised that they should recruit to vacancies on a permanent rather than a temporary basis unless the vacancy is clearly of a temporary nature.

- From September 2010, the Department has monitored the re-employment of prematurely retired teachers on a monthly basis. Schools and employing authorities are routinely challenged when such employment occurs, and an explanation sought as to why such teachers are being re-employed in preference to NQTs.
- The Department has issued guidance to all employing authorities and schools advising that the Substitute Teachers' Register (NISTR) must be used when booking all substitute teachers. NISTR allows schools to identify younger teachers seeking employment as substitutes, and employing authorities to mount a more robust challenge where schools employ prematurely retired teachers.
- Employing authorities are now required to bear the costs of granting premature retirement to teachers. Over time, this will have the effect of reducing the stock of prematurely retired teachers available for work, meaning schools will need to look more frequently to newly qualified and other non-retired teachers for substitute cover and to fill temporary vacancies.

With effect from 1 September 2011, my Department has:

- introduced a flat rate of pay, based on salary levels applicable to NQTs, for substitution cover provided by prematurely retired teachers who have received discretionary compensation; and
- made amendments to the Common Funding Scheme which will further discourage the employment of prematurely retired teachers. These include charging the school's delegated budget for full cost of employing a prematurely retired teacher; and reducing the ceiling for centre reimbursement of teacher substitution costs from point 4 on the teachers' 6-point main pay scale to a maximum of point 3.

These changes should provide an enhanced incentive to schools to employ newly or recently qualified teachers as substitutes.

It is also important to ensure that the numbers joining approved initial teacher education (ITE) courses reflect the needs of our school system, both in the short and longer term, and thus represent value for money. In light of falling rolls, my Department has reduced the overall intakes to Initial Teacher Education courses from 880 in 2004/05 to 663 in 2011/12 – a reduction of nearly 25%. I will be giving careful consideration to the employment position of NQTs when setting the 2012-13 ITE intake numbers.

The Department will continue to monitor the impact of these arrangements to determine their effectiveness in achieving the anticipated outcome and will consider future adjustments to policy if necessary.

## Homophobic Bullying in Schools

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education what action his Department is taking to address homophobic bullying in schools.

**(AQW 1698/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Bullying, in whatever form and for whatever reason, has no place in schools. The Department is committed to tackling this issue and is pro-active in examining ways to prevent it.

My Department's publication 'Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour' offers detailed guidance, practical initiatives and case studies to support schools to tackle all forms of bullying.

All schools must to have a policy on how they will address Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in the curriculum, linking with their pastoral care policy and setting out the aims of the teaching programme, such as developing positive relationships, diversity and respect for others.

My Department continues to participate in the local Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) and the British and Irish Anti-Bullying Forum. The local Forum establishes working groups to deal with specific issues as need arises. In 2009, a homophobic bullying working group ensured that the Forum's website ([www.niabf.org.uk](http://www.niabf.org.uk)) offered advice and guidance on this issue and produced a teacher fact sheet, which was distributed to all schools.

The Department also funds the regional coordinator post attached to the NIABF who is involved in delivering the 3-year Anti-Bullying Strategy. This year, Anti-Bullying Week will be from 14-18 November and the theme is cyber bullying. Activities include the dissemination of anti-bullying resource packs for schools, a competition for pupils to produce a poster or short movie around the theme and a Parents' Day to highlight the important role parents can play in tackling this issue.

The Inter-Board Group continues its work to develop a common approach to tackle all forms of bullying in schools. Last October, the group launched "Let's Stop Bullying", an inter-active CD-ROM developed for all primary and special schools, funded by the Department and made available through the C2K system.

The Department is now in receipt of the draft report on research on the nature and extent of bullying in schools here. This recent study repeats the approach used in 2002 and 2007 and the final report will enable trends over time to be established. The final report will be published by the end of the month.

### **Young People Who are Lesbian, Gay or Bi-sexual**

**Mr McKay** asked the Minister of Education how he intends to ensure that the education system is welcoming to young people who are lesbian, gay or bi-sexual.

**(AQW 1700/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I expect our schools to be welcoming to all young people irrespective of their sexual orientation. All young people have the right to learn in a safe environment and to be treated with respect and dignity.

School Boards of Governors as well as principals and teachers have responsibilities to promote equality, good relations and diversity in schools and the wider community. These responsibilities are driven by the Department's education policies, education and employment legislation and anti-discrimination, human rights and equality legislation.

The teaching of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) is an important element within the Personal Development and Mutual Understanding (in primary schools) and the Learning for Life and Work (in post-primary) areas of learning in the revised curriculum. Through RSE, the curriculum contains sufficient scope to deal with sexual orientation. The curriculum also includes citizenship education, which lets pupils explore issues around diversity, inclusion and equality. Teachers have been trained in all requirements of the curriculum and guidance from the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment makes schools aware of the wide range of RSE resources available. RSE is also inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

The Department's Circular 2001/15 advises schools that they should have a policy setting out how they will address RSE within each pupil's curriculum. The policy should be the subject of consultation with parents, and should be endorsed by the school's Board of Governors. In developing or reviewing their RSE policies, schools have been advised by DE Circular 2010/01 to take account of guidance produced by the Equality Commission on Eliminating Sexual Orientation Discrimination.

The Department, and other Public Authorities involved with the education sector, are holding (or have held) consultations on their revised Equality Schemes and Audits of Inequalities/Action Plans. As the responses to these consultations will inform future policy development by, and between, organisations, I will ensure that I am satisfied that they take account of the concerns of all groups that represent Section 75 categories.

I take my responsibilities with regard to equality very seriously and I will ensure that policy makers within the Department take account of the latest Equality Commission guidance on Section 75 responsibilities and have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations.

## Primary Teachers

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education why primary teachers who qualify from St Mary's University College, Belfast are permitted to teach in any denomination of primary school while primary teachers qualifying from Stranmillis University College, Belfast cannot teach at Roman Catholic controlled primary schools; and what is the difference in the qualifications offered by these two colleges.

**(AQW 1701/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** It is a requirement of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools that all those appointed to a permanent teaching position in a Catholic Maintained nursery or primary school should hold a recognised Certificate of Religious Education. All student teachers have the opportunity to access the Certificate of Religious Education course. Students at St Mary's University College may opt to take the Certificate during their initial teacher training at the College whilst students at Stranmillis University College may opt to acquire the Certificate by Distance Learning through a part-time course of study offered by the University of Glasgow. Alternatively, they can avail of the opportunity to acquire the Certificate from the Iona Retreat Centre in Derry or through a Life-light Home Study Course.

Both University Colleges offer similar routes into primary teaching through their generic Bachelor of Education and Post Graduate Certificate in Education programmes. Whilst there is no difference in the "qualified to teach" status of the teacher training qualifications offered by either College, the onus is on students to acquire the Certificate of Religious Education if they wish to seek employment in a Catholic maintained nursery or primary school.

## Proposed Capital Projects

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, pursuant to AQW 467/11-15, whether the work to consider how the available capital funds should be deployed will include criteria against which proposed capital projects will be assessed.

**(AQW 1704/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** I intend to make a statement to the Assembly in the near future on the challenges facing us in ensuring that we have a high quality education system. This will include consideration of how we can make the best use of the limited resources available in the best interest of children and young people through strategic planning and investment.

This work is ongoing.

## Loreto School in Omagh

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education what is the current position in relation to the court case taken by Loreto School in Omagh.

**(AQW 1715/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** On 21 April 2011 the Department lodged an appeal against the decision of Mr Justice McCloskey of 25 March 2011 in respect of Loreto Grammar School, Omagh. The Appeal is listed for hearing at the Court of Appeal on the 26 and 30 September 2011. It is unknown when a ruling will be delivered thereafter.

## Northern Irish History

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister of Education to outline the provision in the post-primary curriculum for the teaching of Northern Irish history.

**(AQW 1727/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** History is a statutory requirement at Key Stage 3 and a qualification choice at Key Stage 4.

Under the statutory minimum content for history all post-primary schools are required to provide pupils at Key Stage 3 with the opportunities to investigate Irish and British historical periods including the

long and short term causes and consequences of the partition of Ireland and how it has influenced this State today, including key events and turning points.

At Key Stage 4 there is a significantly less curricular prescription in order to provide greater choice and flexibility for pupils. At Key Stage 4 and in sixth form it is for pupils to choose to study history.

### **Curricular Co-operation Between Schools**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education to detail (i) how many examples of curricular co-operation between schools have been notified to his Department in the last three years; (ii) of these, how many involve co-operation between Catholic maintained schools and other sectors; (iii) in how many cases has the range of subjects been enhanced or extended due to the co-operation; (iv) what plans he has to extend good practice in co-operation to areas which are currently not subject to curricular co-operation; and (v) in which geographical areas curricular co-operation between schools does not exist.

**(AQW 1731/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department does not hold the information requested. Post primary schools do collaborate with each other, including those from the maintained and controlled sector, within area leaning communities to ensure that young people can have access to a much broader, better balanced and more economically relevant range of courses. I am fully committed to encouraging schools from all sectors to continue to work with each other and to plan a coherent curricular provision on an area basis. In a difficult resource context through working in partnership schools can pool resources, share their expertise and avoid duplication.

### **Teachers Due to Retire**

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister of Education how many teachers, currently in a teaching post, are due to retire in each of the next five years.

**(AQW 1734/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** Under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2011, the Default Retirement Age of 65 has been removed. For those teachers who joined the Northern Ireland Teacher' Pension Scheme prior to 2007, the Normal Pension Age (NPA) remains at 60.

The table below details the number of teachers who will reach NPA in each of the next five years. It may reasonably be assumed that the majority of these teachers will retire when they become eligible to receive pension benefits.

#### **FIGURES PROVIDED ARE IN FINANCIAL YEARS AND DO NOT INCLUDE VOLUNTARY GRAMMAR SCHOOLS.**

	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>2014/2015</b>	<b>2015/2016</b>	<b>2016/2017</b>
Teachers due to reach age 60	572	632	676	671	596

### **Websites Offering Sex Education Advice**

**Ms Lo** asked the Minister of Education what provisions are in place to ensure that all secondary school aged pupils have access to websites offering sex education advice which reflects the realities and practicalities of teenage sexuality; and (ii) what measures are in place to ensure that websites offering support to young people who are lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender are not blocked by C2K filtering systems.

**(AQW 1737/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** As with all aspects of the revised curriculum, delivery of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) is a matter for individual schools, taking account of the maturity and level of

understanding of their pupils. It is for schools to decide on the materials, including online resources, and programmes they wish to use to support the delivery of RSE, in accordance with their RSE policies.

Access to internet based resources within schools is provided through the C2k network. This access is fully monitored and websites are categorised in accordance with C2k's filtering policy which defines three types of access - Green, Amber and Red. Websites relating to content such as sex education, abortion, pro-life, gay, lesbian, bisexual are categorised as 'Sex Education' and as such fall into the 'Amber' group within the filtering policy. Post-primary schools which wish to use sites in the Amber group to support the delivery of their RSE programmes can request access to them from C2k.

## Pupil Enrolment

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last three years, including this school year, to detail the number of pupils enrolled in the (i) maintained; (ii) controlled; (iii) Irish-medium; (iv) voluntary grammar; and (v) integrated sectors, broken down by (a) primary school and post-primary school; and (b) Education and Library Board.

**(AQW 1744/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The information requested has been placed in the Assembly library. Information for the 2011/12 school year has not yet been collected by the Department and will be available in December. Information has therefore been provided for the years 2009/10 and 2010/11.

## Number of Teachers and Classroom Assistants

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Education, for each of the last three years, to detail the number of teachers and classroom assistants employed in the (i) maintained; (ii) controlled; (iii) Irish-medium; (iv) voluntary grammar; and (v) integrated sectors, broken down by (a) primary school and post-primary school; and (b) Education and Library Board.

**(AQW 1745/11-15)**

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

## Teacher Qualifications

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education to outline the difference in the training received and the qualifications gained by students at St Mary's University College and Stranmillis University College who wish to teach in a primary school.

**(AQW 1757/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** It is a requirement of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools that all those appointed to a permanent teaching position in a Catholic Maintained nursery or primary school should hold a recognised Certificate of Religious Education. All student teachers have the opportunity to access the Certificate of Religious Education course. Students at St Mary's University College may opt to take the Certificate during their initial teacher training at the College whilst students at Stranmillis University College may opt to acquire the Certificate by Distance Learning through a part-time course of study offered by the University of Glasgow. Alternatively, they can avail of the opportunity to acquire the Certificate from the Iona Retreat Centre in Derry or through a Life-light Home Study Course.

Both University Colleges offer similar routes into primary teaching through their generic Bachelor of Education and Post Graduate Certificate in Education programmes. Whilst there is no difference in the "qualified to teach" status of the teacher training qualifications offered by either College, the onus is on students to acquire the Certificate of Religious Education if they wish to seek employment in a Catholic maintained nursery or primary school.

## Orange Order Website

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister of Education what steps his Department is taking to enable schools to access the Orange Order website.

**(AQW 1762/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** C2k is a directorate of the Western Education and Library Board which provides all grant-aided schools with a managed ICT service, including access to the internet, through contracts with private sector providers. The service operates an internet filtering policy to keep pupils safe when on-line, and the Websense software used has default settings which automatically sift websites into a number of categories. On the basis of these categories, C2k filtering policy permits or denies access. The filtering software initially put the Orange Order's website into a category to which access was refused, but some seven years ago C2k found that the site had been blocked and, after discussions with the Order, they asked the provider of this aspect of the service to allow access.

However, C2k were alerted on 8 September 2011 that only post-primary schools were able to access the site. They have now taken the necessary steps with the provider of this aspect of the service to rectify the situation with regard to primary schools.

It is common for websites which schools wish to use to be located in categories which are blocked. Equally, schools often come across sites which they think should be blocked. C2k have arrangements in place for schools to request blocking or unblocking, on an individual or collective basis, through the C2k Helpdesk.

## Irish Language Medium Schools

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Education to detail the number of (i) applications; and (ii) approvals for Irish Language Medium Schools in the Mid Ulster area; and to provide details of the successful applications.

**(AQW 1776/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** In the last thirteen years in the Mid Ulster area:

- (i) There have been 9 applications in total from 6 schools.
- (ii) These resulted in 6 approvals as set out in the table below:

School	Decision
Gaelscoil Uí Neill	Second application approved
Gaelscoil na Speiríní	First application approved but school failed to achieve minimum intake
Gaelscoil na Speiríní	Second application approved
Bunscoil Uí Chléirigh *	First application approved
Gaelscoil an tSeanchaí	Second application approved
Gaelscoil Aodhua Rua	First application approved

\* did not open

## Pre-School Spaces

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister of Education for an update on the removal of the priority pre-school spaces given to children with July/August birthdays for the 2012-13 academic year.

**(AQW 1779/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** In a debate in the Assembly on 7 June 2011 I committed to a review of the procedures for admission to pre-school places. This review is considering a range of issues, including the priority given



to children with July and August birthdays in the allocation of funded pre-school places. That review is currently underway and once finalised I will consider how the recommendations might be taken forward taking into account the resource implications of any changes and the need for legislative amendment.

### Teachers: Sick Leave

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Education how many teachers were on sick leave for a period of over three months during the 2010/11 school term but reported back to work in June 2011.

**(AQW 1857/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** There were 113 teachers on sick leave for a period of over three months during the 2010/2011 school term who reported back to work in June 2011.

This figure does not include teachers in Voluntary Grammar Schools.

### Pupils Suspended and Expelled

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of Education how many pupils have been (i) suspended; and (ii) expelled from post-primary schools in each of the last three years, broken down by education sector.

**(AQW 1880/11-15)**

**Mr O'Dowd:** The Department collects statistics on suspensions and expulsions from each of the Education and Library Boards annually. The statistics for the last school year, 2010/11, have been collected and are currently being analysed by the Department. The data will be published on the Department's website ([www.deni.gov.uk](http://www.deni.gov.uk)) in due course.

The information requested for the previous three school years is provided in the tables below:

#### (I) PUPILS SUSPENDED FROM POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Controlled	1,935	1,806	1,787
Catholic Maintained	1,739	1,627	1,567
Other	1,299	1,113	1,171
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,973</b>	<b>4,546</b>	<b>4,525</b>

#### (II) PUPILS EXPELLED FROM POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Controlled	*	10	*
Catholic Maintained	15	16	12
Other	#	9	#
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>22</b>

#### Notes:

- For the purpose of statistical collection, school management types are amalgamated into three groups: 'Controlled', 'Catholic Maintained' or 'Other'. The 'Other' classification includes grant maintained and controlled integrated schools, voluntary grammar schools and other maintained schools. Data for independent schools is not available.
- Figures include pupils undertaking Key Stages 3 & 4 in post-primary schools only. For special schools pupils, curriculum year is used as a proxy for Key Stage.

3. \* denotes figures less than 5. Small numbers are suppressed to prevent identification of an individual in line with the confidentiality principle of the Statistics Authority's Code of Practice on Official Statistics.
4. # denotes a figure which has been treated to prevent disclosure of small numbers elsewhere.
5. Figures relate to the number of pupils suspended. The number of actual suspensions will be larger as pupils can be suspended more than once.

## Department for Employment and Learning

### Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education requested to become tenants at the Stranmillis College site.

**(AQW 1572/11-15)**

**Dr Farry (The Minister for Employment and Learning):** This is information that my Department does not hold and I have asked Stranmillis University College to provide the answer.

The College has informed me that it was approached by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education about the possibility of renting some accommodation at Stranmillis. There were some initial examinations of possible options by the College but it did not prove possible to reach agreement on a viable option given the Council's needs.

As a result, no formal proposal was ever brought forward to the Governing Body and I understand the Council obtained accommodation elsewhere.

### Maximum Student Number (MaSN) Cap for Queen's University, Belfast

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he plans an increase in the Maximum Student Number (MaSN) cap for Queen's University, Belfast.

**(AQW 1663/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Following the recent Executive agreement on tuition fees in Northern Ireland, I only have limited funds available to increase student numbers across all the Higher Education providers.

I will be discussing how best to implement any increase with the providers in the near future.

### Evening Classes

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning whether he will reinstate concessionary fees for elderly people who wish to attend evening classes.

**(AQW 1664/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** European Directive 2000/78/EC precludes Further Education Colleges from offering universal age-based fee concessions.

All six Colleges are continuing to provide concessionary fees to individuals, including older people, on a means tested basis, which reflects learners' ability to pay.

### International Students

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning (i) how many of the students enrolled in higher education in Northern Ireland are international students; and (ii) how many of them receive financial assistance.

**(AQW 1666/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:**

- (i) In 2009/10, there were 1,605 international students enrolled at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions.
- (ii) International students studying in Northern Ireland do not receive financial assistance or support from the Department for Employment and Learning.

**Regional Colleges**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to detail the number of applications to each Regional College, including Belfast Metropolitan College; and the number of admissions in each for this academic year.

**(AQW 1773/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Department does not hold the information requested by the member; applications and admissions are a matter for each individual Further Education (FE) college.

I have passed your query to the six College Directors who have agreed to respond to you directly.

**16-25 Year Olds Not in Employment, Education or Training**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what percentage of people aged 16-25 years old are not in employment, education, or training.

**(AQW 1783/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** Estimates of the number of people in Northern Ireland not in education, employment, or training are derived from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The latest figures for Quarter 2 2011 estimate that there were 19.1% (48,000) of all those aged 16-25 in Northern Ireland who were not in employment, participating in government training schemes or in full-time education. It is not possible to identify separately those in part-time education or non-government sponsored training.

**Success Through Skills**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning for an update on the development of the Success through Skills - Transforming Futures implementation plan.

**(AQO 271/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland 'Success through Skills – Transforming Futures' was launched on the 25 May at my Department's annual skills conference.

Since then, I have been working to ensure that the implementation of the Strategy builds on my Department's existing work in this area and helps to bring about the step change required if we are to have a skilled workforce which will meet the future needs of local employers.

I intend to make a statement to the Assembly in the near future outlining how my Department is implementing 'Transforming Futures'.

However, a number of projects which aim to encourage more employers to buy in to the skills agenda and up-skill their workforce are already being taken forward, after successful pilot phases. These include the Skills Solutions service and Assured Skills.

**DEL: Capital Projects**

**Ms P Bradley** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning what capital projects his Department has planned for North Belfast in each of the next four years.

**(AQO 272/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The University of Ulster has planned a redevelopment of its North Belfast campus. Construction work is expected to commence at the York Street site in 2013, with a completion date

of 2018. The Department has already contributed £16m over the last 2 years towards the estimated £250m cost of the project.

In addition, the Belfast Metropolitan College is in the process of delivering a Workforce and Economic Development Centre on the Springfield Rd which will benefit the whole community of North Belfast. This £16m facility will be operational from January 2012.

The Northern Regional College has also recently completed a £10m investment at its Newtownabbey campus and this was fully funded by the Department.

### **DEL: Employment Service**

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline any pressures being faced by the Employment Service.

**(AQO 274/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The Employment Service is facing considerable pressures. The Service is staffed to deal with an unemployment register of 35,000 people. The August Labour Market Report published by the Department of Finance and Personnel indicates a current claimant count of 60,400, an increase of almost 73%.

In addition, there has been a substantial increase in demand for Steps to Work – the Department's main adult back to work programme. In 2009/10, 18,000 people started the programme. This rose to almost 27,000 in 2010/11: an increase of 49%. Also, people are staying on the programme longer: occupancy rates have risen by 76% in the last year.

The Department has a fixed budget for these services and programmes. The rise in demand means that the quality of services on offer is being gradually reduced as the Department reduces provision to live within budget.

Northern Ireland's needs are greater than the rest of the UK: the NI claimant count rate is current 6.8% compared to a UK rate of 4.9%. The economic inactivity rate here is 26.6% compared to a UK average of 23.2%. These figures argue for more investment in back to work support locally compared to Great Britain.

### **University of Ulster: Magee Campus**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how many applications from students in Northern Ireland were received by the University of Ulster in 2011 for courses at the Magee Campus; and how many of these applications were successful.

**(AQO 275/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** The University of Ulster has informed my Department that there were 5,786 applications through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), from 4,072 Northern Ireland domiciled applicants, for entry to full time undergraduate courses at Magee in academic year 2011/12. Students can include up to five choices on their application form and there is no preference order.

A total of 1,111 applicants received and firmly accepted a conditional offer and, up to 5 September 2011, 727 Northern Ireland domiciled students have been offered and have accepted places at Magee.

### **Regional Colleges: Foundation Degrees**

**Mr Brady** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the number and type of Foundation Degree courses which are available in Regional Colleges.

**(AQO 276/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** At present a total of 75 Foundation Degree courses are delivered across the six Further Education Regional Colleges. Thirty one of these are full-time courses and the remaining 44 are delivered through part-time provision.

My Department has focussed resources on the development of Foundation Degrees in a number of priority skills areas, namely, Leadership and Management, Financial Services, Information Communication Technology, Construction & the Built Environment and Engineering.

Other vocational areas where Foundation Degrees are currently available are Hospitality & Tourism and Applied & Medical Science, Sports & Fitness, Early Years Care, and Counselling.

A Higher Education Strategy for Northern Ireland is being developed and I intend to publish it this Autumn. It will propose an increase in the number of students studying Foundation Degrees, particularly those studying part-time.

### **Broadband: Rural Areas**

**Mr Lynch** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning to outline the work undertaken by his Department to address barriers to employment as a consequence of poor broadband provision in some rural areas.

**(AQO 277/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** While access to broadband is the responsibility of the Department for Enterprise Trade and Investment, I do not believe that its availability or the lack of it, in rural areas constitutes a barrier to employment. Evidence, however, shows that the most effective means of engaging the unemployed with work is through regular, face to face contact with a skilled personal adviser service. It is for this reason that the Employment Service operates a system of fortnightly job search reviews and regular work-focused interviews for those claiming benefits.

Comprehensive service provision across Northern Ireland is provided through a network of 35 Jobs & Benefits Offices and Jobcentres. As well as a face to face service, this network also offers opportunities for people to look for jobs via jobcentre online which can be accessed through kiosks located in each office.

All six of our Further Education Colleges have 1 Gigabit (1,000 Megabits) internet circuits, and only 30 of the 600 colleges across the UK have such a high level of capacity. Our universities have similar capacity. Students are able to take advantage of this technology.

### **Higher Education: Rural Areas**

**Mr McLaughlin** asked the Minister for Employment and Learning how his Department plans to help people living in rural areas to overcome barriers to participation in higher education.

**(AQO 278/11-15)**

**Dr Farry:** My Department has no evidence to suggest that participation in higher education is any lower among people from a rural background; indeed the available statistics suggest a slightly higher participation rate for people living in rural areas over those from urban areas.

That said, my Department's aim is to ensure that higher education and the opportunities that it brings should be available to all those who have the ability to benefit from it regardless of their background or location.

My Department supports the delivery of higher education in Northern Ireland's six Further Education Regional Colleges as it provides "close-to-home" study through part-time, distance or web-based learning, allowing flexible higher education for learners from communities who might otherwise face significant barriers to participating in higher education.

My Department is currently developing a strategy for widening participation in higher education following a recent public consultation on the issue. My officials will take account of the issues raised through the consultation responses, including those responses which suggested that, in future, there should be more emphasis on community based initiatives to widen participation and, in particular, that there is a need for more outreach by the higher education sector including targeted engagement with groups and communities in low participation areas.

The widening participation strategy will be published later this year as part of an overarching Higher Education strategy for Northern Ireland.

## Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

### Crescent Capital II

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she is aware of the carrying value of investments in the Crescent Capital II fund that would enable her to project if InvestNI might be expected to receive repayment to its subordinated investment in Crescent Capital II; and for a breakdown of the value of these funds and other liquid capital in Crescent Capital II's most recent accounts.

**(AQW 1591/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster (The Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment):** The UK government has recognised that, with the possible exception of London and SE England, there is market failure in seed and early stage funding throughout the UK. A range of initiatives has been developed to address this failure within NI, which is estimated to extend to deals of up to £2m in any 12 month period.

Invest NI's approach to venture capital is to intervene where there is a recognised market failure, by providing funding when required in order to attract private investment to SMEs. Companies suitable for VC investment in NI must have high growth potential and be able to identify future options for an exit, possibly a trade sale, IPO etc. They must be substantially based in NI and must contribute to the NI economy.

Crescent Capital II Fund was established in March 2004. It is a £22.5m fund, of which 90% has been drawn down, and Invest NI is a 33% investor alongside a number of private investors.

At this point in the Fund life, it is not possible to accurately project if Invest NI will receive repayment of its subordinated investment in Crescent Capital II, however the Fund had made four successful exits as at 31 March 2011, the total sales proceeds of which were £8,468k. The Fund will continue to manage out its existing investments until April 2014.

The net asset value of Crescent Capital II LP as at 31 March 2011 was £8,016,900, of which total investments were valued at £7,537,403. It should be noted that Crescent Capital follows British Venture Capital Association guidelines when valuing its investments and future realisation proceeds may not reflect the carrying value of investments.

### Utility Companies

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what procedures her Department has in place to ensure that utility companies laying pipes or cables in the ground comply with current legislation to ensure the safety of the general public and persons excavating below ground.

**(AQW 1598/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** DETI, through the Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland, has in place a range of procedures arising from regulations covering gas pipeline safety and the safety of the electricity supply. These procedures include the assessment of safety cases, inspection of laying activities and the investigation of incidents.

### Utility Companies

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment how many prosecutions have been pursued against utility companies or their contractors in each of the last five years for non-compliance with health and safety regulations when replacing, maintaining or laying underground services.

**(AQW 1599/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In the past five years there have been no prosecutions of utility companies or their contractors, for breaches of health and safety regulations, in regard to the installation or repair of underground services.

### **Electricity Providers**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions her Department has had with electricity providers in relation to pricing.

**(AQW 1679/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Power NI's electricity tariffs are subject to formal regulation by the Utility Regulator, and, while my Department does not have a formal role in the tariff review process, as part of the Utility Regulator's scrutiny of the Power NI tariff proposals, my officials have attended meetings over the summer period involving Power NI, the Utility Regulator, and the Consumer Council.

Airtricity, which is the other major electricity supplier operating in the domestic supply market in Northern Ireland, has also announced that its prices are to increase, and my officials have had discussions with the company in relation to their recent announcement.

Both the Power NI and Airtricity price increases are disappointing and challenging for both business and domestic consumers, especially in the current difficult economic climate. However rises in the wholesale cost of generation fuels, resulting in increased power generation costs, are primarily responsible for the increase in retail electricity tariffs.

### **Gas Pipeline**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans are in place to extend the gas pipeline beyond the ten original towns that were connected to the supply-line and to the smaller towns and villages of North Antrim.

**(AQW 1741/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In late June 2011, my Department issued a consultation inviting views from the energy industry and the wider community on the potential for extending the natural gas network in Northern Ireland to areas which are currently without gas. Details on the consultation, which closes on 30 September 2011, can be found on the Department's website at [www.detini.gov.uk](http://www.detini.gov.uk).

### **Impact on Electricity Consumers**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact on electricity consumers resulting from the local market being dominated by state owned businesses in the Republic of Ireland.

**(AQW 1753/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The electricity supply market in Northern Ireland has been fully opened for business customers since 2005, allowing them to buy their electricity supply from a number of supply companies, offering choice and the ability to negotiate preferential contracts. The wholesale electricity market has been operating since establishment of the Single Electricity Market in November 2007, when the domestic electricity supply market in Northern Ireland was also opened. Both these markets operate on the basis of competitive pricing, which takes no account of the ownership of companies.

Companies participating in the Northern Ireland electricity market which are not in competition, are subject to regulation by the Utility Regulator in line with its statutory functions.

### **Electricity Prices**

**Mr Elliott** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of what the next pressure point will be that could lead to a further rise in electricity prices.

**(AQO 284/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Electricity price movements from one tariff period to the next are mainly driven by the cost of generation fuels. Increases in power generation costs have resulted in higher retail electricity tariffs.

The recent volatility and increase in wholesale fuel prices has been driven by worldwide events such as the tsunami and earthquake in Japan affecting the availability of nuclear power and hence the demand for oil and gas. There is also the ongoing instability in the Middle East and North Africa. Any further increase in the cost of international wholesale fuel costs would therefore put additional pressure on retail electricity prices.

The Utility Regulator will continue to work with Power NI to monitor any fluctuations in wholesale energy prices and will, if appropriate, review the tariffs in-year.

## **Trade: Exports**

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what plans her Department has to develop export relationships and consult with emerging economies such as China, India and Israel in order to help Northern Ireland's economic revival.

**(AQO 285/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI's well-established overseas market visit programme encourages and supports Northern Ireland companies to increase their sales in existing overseas markets or to enter new markets. In this year's comprehensive programme there are over 60 international trade events to over 30 countries worldwide, with a focus on China and India as well as emerging markets of Brazil and Kurdistan.

Northern Ireland companies wanting to learn of and access business opportunities in Israel can, with the support of Invest NI, do so by using the services of UK Trade and Investment.

Invest NI's Foreign Direct Investment efforts are continually reviewed in order to take advantage of emerging opportunities, particularly from the so-called group of emerging economies.

## **Broadband**

**Mr Murphy** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for an update on her Department's plans to secure 100% broadband coverage.

**(AQO 286/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Through investments made by my Department, it has been the case than since December 2005 every household and every business in Northern Ireland has had the opportunity to access a broadband service. For 99% of premises broadband access is available through fixed line technology, whilst for the remainder of premises access is provided via a mix of wireless technologies, including satellite.

## **City of Culture 2013**

**Mr P Ramsey** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment whether she has considered establishing a task force within her Department to assist businesses in taking full advantage of the UK City of Culture 2013.

**(AQO 287/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Londonderry's status as the first UK City of Culture in 2013 will present a range of opportunities to businesses in the city and the wider North West region. This requires a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach from my Department, through both Invest Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board. However, I do not consider that it is necessary to establish a task force.

Alongside the obvious possibilities for businesses operating in the tourism sector, there is also an opportunity to use Londonderry's tenure as UK City of Culture to present the city and wider region in the best possible light to potential inward investors. Invest Northern Ireland will be working with existing investors and local stakeholders to maximize this opportunity.



## Green New Deal

**Mr Lunn** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what discussions she has had with her Executive colleagues on developing a Green New Deal strategy.

**(AQO 288/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** My Executive colleague, Nelson McCausland, is in the lead on this matter and his department chairs the Inter-departmental Working Group established to take work on Green New Deal forward.

Energy efficiency and the creation of jobs are clearly very important for my department as well and I met with Minister McCausland in June to discuss current issues and progress on the development of the Green New Deal proposal and also other alternatives including the separate Green Deal which is being rolled out in Great Britain.

## Business: Research and Development

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what action her Department plans to take to increase the number of local businesses that will benefit from the EU 7th Framework Programme to develop research and development projects.

**(AQO 289/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** In partnership with key stakeholders, my Department is currently undertaking a review of the support mechanisms available to local organizations who wish to participate in the EU 7th Framework Programme.

That review, which will be completed in October is expected to recommend new measures that will among other things provide further support to local companies who want to apply for Framework funding. This will build on the ongoing support which Invest NI currently provides.

## Electricity Prices: Tyrone-Cavan Interconnector

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for her assessment of the impact on future electricity prices should the Tyrone/Cavan interconnector not proceed.

**(AQO 290/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The lack of a second electricity interconnector costs an estimated £18million to £25million per year, due to technical constraints in the transmission network. This restricts use of the most efficient gas power plants, increasing wholesale costs and ultimately retail prices in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The second line will improve system reliability and double transmission capacity and the flow of electricity from the most modern plants. This will promote competitiveness in the Single Electricity Market and help keep electricity prices as low as possible.

## Business: Training

**Mr Girvan** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline the uptake of, and support available for, staff training to help small and medium sized enterprises improve their competitiveness.

**(AQO 291/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** Invest NI offers a range of tailored support to assist businesses with staff training and improving their competitiveness.

In the last three years, Invest NI's Business Improvement Training Programme has offered over £27 million of support to Invest NI clients to undertake training focused on the development of the strategic direction of their business.

The Interim Management programme offers SMEs support to engage experienced managers to deliver specific business improvement projects. In the last three years, the 143 projects supported identified

significant benefits including £14.9 million in increased sales, a £3.2 million reduction in costs, £3 million in increased R&D expenditure and the creation of almost 70 new jobs.

Invest NI also provides both general and company specific training in 'lean principles' and, in the last two years, 180 companies have participated in the programme, 88% of whom were from SMEs. The identified value added benefits to date include £4.5 million of efficiency savings with the potential for a further £8 million to come from on-going projects

A range of other training is also available to SMEs including People Solutions workshops which are focused on improving productivity, product quality, customer satisfaction and business performance. In addition, the [nibusinessinfo.co.uk](http://nibusinessinfo.co.uk) website also offers a number of free online training modules covering all key aspects of owning and operating a business.

## **Manufacturing: South Tyrone**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment what assistance her Department is giving to the manufacturing industry in the South Tyrone area; and for her assessment of the future of the manufacturing industry in general.

**(AQO 292/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** I am pleased to say that there have been a number of recent successes in manufacturing companies in South Tyrone. In January this year, I officially opened a new retail pack facility at Linden Foods in Dungannon. This £8 million investment will create 85 new jobs and help the company grow its sales by an additional £30 million. Last week, I attended the launch of Westland Horticulture's innovative new peat free product range which is proposed to create up to 23 new jobs and increase the company's sales by £22 million.

It is particularly encouraging that exciting new export-focused companies continue to emerge from across the constituency such as Ballygawley based Irish Manufacturing Services which designs, develops and produces equipment for the mining and quarrying sectors, and Cookstown's CDE Global and its new spin-out company CDEnviro, which designs and supplies equipment for the sewage and waste water treatment industries.

The support these businesses have received from Invest NI emphasises that manufacturing remains a key sector for Northern Ireland. A wide range of support is available from Invest NI to enable them to grow their business, maximise efficiencies, undertake further product development and equip them with the skills and support to sell their products in export markets.

## **Tourism: Golf**

**Mrs Overend** asked the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment to outline her Department's targets in terms of additional visitors and increased visitor spend as a result of the recent success of local professional golfers.

**(AQO 293/11-15)**

**Mrs Foster:** The emerging Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland sets ambitious targets to double the current contribution tourism makes to the economy to £1 billion and to increase visitor numbers from 3.2million to 4.5million by 2020. These targets have become even more challenging given the downturn in global tourism over the last few years. The recent successes of our local professional golfers will act as an important lever to help us reach our goals. Both NITB and Tourism Ireland are focused on growing the number of golf tourists to Northern Ireland in 2011 and beyond.

## Department of the Environment

### George Best Belfast City Airport

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister of the Environment whether he or his officials met with personnel from the George Best Belfast City Airport during 2011 when a proposed indicative noise contour was discussed; and if so, on what dates did such meetings take place.

**(AQW 1631/11-15)**

**Mr Attwood (The Minister of the Environment):** My officials met with representatives of George Best Belfast City Airport on 3 February, 28 June, and on 4, 18 and 25 August 2011 to discuss planning issues at the airport including the establishment of an indicative noise control contour. I attended the meeting on 25 August 2011. I anticipate that I will be in a position to make an announcement in relation to this matter in the near future.

## Department of Finance and Personnel

### Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) for his assessment of whether the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers has been followed by all Ministers; and (ii) what steps his Department took to ensure that the Code was complied with during the recent appointments of Special Advisers.

**(AQW 1551/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson (The Minister of Finance and Personnel):** Whether the guidance contained in the Code of Practice on the Appointment of Special Advisers was followed is a matter for each individual Minister as the Appointing Authority. My Department therefore did not take steps to monitor the use of this guidance during the recent appointments of Special Advisers. However, DFP will have a monitoring role as proposed under the terms of the recent review into the appointment of Special Advisers.

### Government Departments: Staff

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail (i) the number of staff, by grade, who have left Government Departments, their agencies and arms-length bodies in each of the last three years; (ii) the total of the lump sums received by these staff; and (iii) all other additional payments or enhancements received.

**(AQW 1603/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The number of staff who have left Government Departments, their agencies and arms-length bodies in each of the last three years by grade is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

However the information requested, but not specified by grade, is contained in the annual Department of Finance and Personnel Superannuation and Other Allowances Resource Accounts which are laid in the Assembly and published on the Department of Finance and Personnel website: [www.dfpi.gov.uk](http://www.dfpi.gov.uk).

### Energy Efficiency Homes Scheme

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel (i) what savings have been made in the current financial year by ending the Energy Efficiency Homes Scheme; and (ii) when these savings will be allocated to the Green New Deal Project.

**(AQW 1623/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** It is too early to determine the final level of savings that will be made throughout the year.

Land and Property Services have advised me, however, that discharges to the rate account 2010/11 at 31 March were £93,525, by comparison discharges associated with cases processed in 2011/12, as at 4 September, were £53,475.

The savings will increase over the coming months, as cases that were in the system prior to the closure date are dealt with. Furthermore, I listened to the views of those affected by the decision and agreed a 3 month period of grace so that no one was disadvantaged, so the final closure was not long ago on the 30 June 2011.

Savings from the scheme, both in terms of revenue and the final position relating to administrative savings, will only be allocated to Green New Deal following a positive assessment of the business case by DSD and DFP. The wider business case is currently being prepared by the Green New Deal Group and will be submitted to DSD in due course.

## **Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Scheme**

**Mr Lyttle** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel for an update on the Dormant Bank and Building Society Accounts Scheme.

**(AQW 1650/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** The Reclaim Fund announced on 2nd August 2011 that the first tranche to be transferred to the Big Lottery Fund will be £30million of which Northern Ireland will receive a Barnett share.

It is expected that distributions from the Reclaim Fund in the first year will be between £60-100 million of which Northern Ireland will receive a Barnett share. I have no further information at this stage on the scale or timing of future transfers as future releases will depend on the rate of reclaim.

I am awaiting confirmation of the funding available for Northern Ireland from the first tranche.

## **Special Advisers**

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel, for each of the last three years, to detail the cost of the annual gross salary and related expenses for each departmental Special Adviser appointed by Ministers from (i) the Democratic Unionist Party; (ii) Sinn Fein; and (iii) the Alliance Party.

**(AQW 1653/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Information on the remuneration of Special Advisers is published annually in the Note on Staff Numbers and Related Costs in Departments' Annual Resource Accounts. Information on related expenses is not held for individual members of staff.

## **Small Business Rate Relief Scheme**

**Mr Givan** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel how many responses have been received to the consultation on the proposed extension of the Small Business Rate Relief Scheme; and to outline the steps for taking the proposal forward.

**(AQW 1748/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** I launched the consultation exercise, seeking views on changes to the rating of commercial properties, on 28 June 2011.

At the time of writing there have been six substantive responses, as well as several meetings between the business sector and my Department.

I want people to take their time in responding to the proposals, since I have been asking the business community to provide evidence as well as views on the various points raised by the consultation. This includes consideration of the proposals for a levy on the largest shops, which is needed to fund the enlargement of the small business rate relief scheme.

Consultation does not close until 18 October 2011, and I fully expect a marked increase in responses over the coming weeks, following the end of the summer period.

Following the close of consultation, and subject to its outcomes, it is my intention to implement the 'downturn' proposals set out in the consultation paper at the start of the next rating year on 1 April 2012. This would, however, be dependent upon Assembly and Executive approval. To meet this tight deadline I will be asking for accelerated passage for the legislation to implement the large shops levy.

## Census

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel when the information gathered in the recent Census will be announced.

**(AQW 1809/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** It is currently planned that the first results from the 2011 Census will be available in July 2012. These will provide a new estimate of the total number of people living in Northern Ireland, broken down by age and gender, along with estimates for local administrative areas.

## Special Advisers

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Finance and Personnel to detail the total gross salary, including expenses, for each departmental Special Adviser in each year since 8 May 2007 to date.

**(AQW 1846/11-15)**

**Mr Wilson:** Information on the remuneration of Special Advisers is published annually in the Note on Staff Numbers and Related Costs in Departments' Annual Resource Accounts. Information on related expenses is not held for individual members of staff.

# Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety

## Admissions to Hospitals

**Mr D McIlveen** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people aged 65 and over were admitted to hospital between 1994 and 1999 compared to the number admitted between 2000 and 2005.

**(AQW 1567/11-15)**

**Mr Poots (The Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety):** Information regarding the number of people aged 65 and over who were admitted to hospital is not available.

Information is however available on the number of inpatient and day case admissions to hospitals under the acute programme of care where the patient was aged 65 and over as shown in the table below;

Year	Admissions
1994 to 1999	622,007
2000 to 2005	866,118

**Source:** Hospital Inpatient System

It should be noted that any individual could have been admitted to hospital more than once during any given time period and would therefore be counted more than once in the above figures.

## Clinical Psychiatric Services for Children with Asperger's Syndrome

**Mr McCarthy** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the availability of Clinical Psychiatric services for children with Asperger's Syndrome in each Health and Social Care Trust.

**(AQW 1583/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** All Health and Social Care Trusts provide services to children with Asperger's Syndrome either through their Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Team or through Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). All Trusts have access to child psychiatry services either within their own Trust or through CAMHS in the Belfast Trust. Psychiatric services only become involved in cases where complex or co-morbid circumstances complicate either diagnosis or treatment.

### **Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the measures in place to assist the Antrim Area Hospital Accident and Emergency Unit until the new Unit opens in 2013. **(AQW 1605/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Pending the construction of the new A&E Department, which is scheduled for completion in 2013, the Northern Trust has put in place a range of measures to provide additional support for the management of people who access the A&E department in Antrim Area hospital.

These include changes to the physical layout of the A&E Department, recruitment of consultants to Acute Medicine and the provision of 14 additional inpatient beds which will be ready for use in December 2011. In addition an Elderly Care Assessment unit, Early Pregnancy Assessment unit and an Ambulatory Care Pathway are currently under development.

These and other measures form part of an overall plan progressed in collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure the provision of safe and sustainable services pending the construction of the new A&E Unit.

### **Allied Health Professional Courses**

**Mr McGlone** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what action is taken to recover fees paid to universities for students undertaking Allied Health professional courses when the student does not complete the course. **(AQW 1624/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** Students do not complete courses for a variety of reasons, including academic failure. When a student fails to complete, the costs of tuition fees are not recovered. The Department and the University of Ulster maintain a contract with costs based upon the lowest AHP fee costs in the UK and low attrition.

### **Budgetary Savings Process**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what indicators he intends to put in place to measure the impact on service delivery of any budgetary cuts made as part of the overall budgetary savings process. **(AQW 1626/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** We are in a very difficult financial context and all departments are faced with the challenge of providing services and making savings within the resources approved by the Executive and the Assembly. My primary focus is on improving the quality of health and social care services and outcomes for service users, whilst making sure that we live within our means, and are as efficient and effective as possible. We need to look critically at what we are doing currently and in some cases what we should be doing instead.

The targets and indicators of performance I set for the sector have a focus on achieving outcomes, and on levels of quality and access to the service, from the resources that have been allocated. I intend that the Health and Social Care Review which I have commissioned recently should provide the basis for setting longer term priorities and objectives, and changes in the delivery of services required to provide quality care over the coming years.

## **In-Year Health Service Financial Shortfall**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety for an update on the in-year health service financial shortfall for the Health Service.

**(AQW 1627/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My department faces a considerable financial challenge both in 2011/12 and in future years. As in any year, financial forecasts are subject to continuous review and a range of measures will be necessary to manage this pressure so as to live within the available resources. I remain exceptionally concerned about the ability to provide a sustained, high quality health and social care service within the DHSSPS Budget allocations. I have therefore initiated the Review of Health and Social Care to make recommendations on the future provision of services including our acute hospital configuration; the development of primary health care services and social care and the interfaces between the sectors.

## **Allocation of In-Year Monitoring Funds to Health Funds**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) whether he has had any discussions with the Minister of Finance and Personnel on additional funding for his Department; and (ii) whether he has agreed with his Executive colleagues a schedule for the allocation of in-year monitoring funds to health funds.

**(AQW 1628/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I have had a number of discussions with the First Minister regarding my Department's budget, some of which were attended by the Minister of Finance and Personnel. In addition, I met with the Minister of Finance and Personnel in July to discuss pressures on my Department's capital budget.

My Department is also working closely with the Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit within the Department of Finance and Personnel. PEDU is providing support to my Department in the delivery of high quality services whilst securing the budgetary savings needed up to 2014-15, with a focus on 2011/12.

Under the In Year Monitoring guidelines for 2011/12, my Department can only submit bids for additional funding in the event of major and unforeseeable circumstances. In this context, inputs to the forthcoming October Monitoring Round are currently being considered and work is underway in assessing my Department's proposed requirements and approach. Once this process has been completed, I will have further discussions with my Executive colleagues regarding my Department's funding position.

## **Back Office Functions**

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has had any discussions with his counterparts in other parts of the UK on how back office functions might be rationalised between them, effecting financial savings.

**(AQW 1629/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I have not been involved in any discussions with my UK counterparts on this subject. However, the Health & Social Care (HSC) Business Services Transformation Programme is well advanced and aims to modernise 'back office' functions and, in doing so, deliver significant financial savings. In taking this work forward, a number of possible approaches were studied. These included an examination of the potential for the HSC to receive shared services from an external organisation (such as an NHS shared business services organisation) or a Northern Ireland public sector shared service organisation.

On a related point, the Business Service Organisation, which has responsibility for providing many back office functions to the HSC, routinely works in partnership with GB counterparts on a range of issues including procurement.

## Prescription Charges

**Mr Gardiner** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety whether he has any plans to reintroduce prescription charges.

**(AQW 1630/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am currently considering a number of different options aimed at ensuring the efficient use of resources and looking at areas including the possible reintroduction of charges for prescriptions. However, I have not made any final decisions on this matter.

Any decision to reintroduce prescription charges will be subject to full public consultation.

## Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency Course Places

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the number of unfilled Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency course places at the (i) Antrim Area Hospital; and (ii) Causeway Hospital.

**(AQW 1645/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** At 22nd August 2011 there were 19 doctors in training vacancies at Antrim Area and Causeway Hospitals, as follows:-

Antrim - 10 vacancies	1 x Foundation year 2
	2 x Emergency Medicine
	1 x O&G
	1 x Paediatrics
	1 x Core Medical Training
	1 x Gastroenterology
	1 x Rheumatology
	2 x Core Surgical Training
Causeway - 9 vacancies	1 x Foundation year 2
	6 x Emergency medicine
	2 x Core Surgical Training

## Vacant Posts

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many vacant posts have been filled or covered by locum doctors in the last 12 months in the (a) Antrim Area Hospital; and (b) Causeway Hospital; and (ii) to detail the associated costs.

**(AQW 1646/11-15)**



**Mr Poots:** The Northern Trust has advised that:

(i)

**ANTRIM HOSPITAL – AUGUST 2010 – TO FEBRUARY 2011**

Specialty	Vacant Post	Grade	No of Locums in Post
Emergency Medicine	1	F2	1
	1	ST1/2	1
	1	ST1/2	1 w.e.f. Feb 11 – Aug 11
Paediatrics	-	-	-
ENT	1	CT1/2	1 w.e.f. Oct 10 – Feb 11
Surgery	1	CT1/2	1 w.e.f. Aug 10 – Feb 11
	1	Middle Grade	1

**ANTRIM HOSPITAL - FEBRUARY 11 – TO DATE**

Specialty	Vacant Post	Grade	No of Locums in Post
Emergency Medicine			
Paediatrics	1	Staff Grade	1 w.e.f. May 11 – Jun 11
ENT	-	-	-
Surgery	1	CT1/2	1 w.e.f. February 11
	1	F2	1 w.e.f. April 11
	1	CT1/2	1 w.e.f. August 11

**CAUSEWAY HOSPITAL: AUGUST 2010 – FEBRUARY 2011**

Specialty	Vacant Post	Grade	No of Locums in Post
Emergency Medicine	6	ST1/2	6
Paediatrics	2	ST1/2	2
Surgery	1	CT1/2	1 w.e.f. Aug 10 – Feb 11
	1	Middle Grade	1
Urology	2	Middle Grade	2

**CAUSEWAY HOSPITAL: FEBRUARY 2011 – TO DATE**

Specialty	Vacant Post	Grade	No of Locums in Post
Emergency Medicine	6	ST1/2	6
Paediatrics	2	ST1/2	2 w.e.f Feb 11 – Aug 11
Surgery	1	Middle Grade	1
	2	CT1/2	2 w.e.f. Aug 11
Urology	2	Middle Grade	2

(ii) Cost of locums for the 12 month period April 2010/March 2011 is as follows:

Causeway Hospital	£2,451,880
Antrim Hospital	£2,415,176
<b>Total cost</b>	<b>£4,867,176</b>

### Doctors in Training at the Causeway Hospital

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety why there has been a difference in the number of doctors in training at the Causeway Hospital compared to other hospitals. (AQW 1648/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** The difference in the number of doctors in training at any hospital in Northern Ireland, including Causeway, reflects the number of training posts available, which in turn is established through a designation of suitability for training and education purposes. The Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency, working with the Colleges of Medical Education, the General Medical Council and Trusts agree which posts are suitable for training. There will be variances in actual numbers of doctors in training posts each year because of an inability to fill some posts. At 22nd August 2011 there were 74 junior doctor vacancies in Northern Ireland, 9 of which were situated at the Causeway Hospital.

### Mental Capacity (Health Welfare and Finance) Act

**Mr B McCrea** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what transitional arrangements will be put in place for people in the criminal justice system, particularly those under the age of sixteen, when the proposed Mental Capacity (Health Welfare and Finance) Act is made and supersedes the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. (AQW 1655/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** In April 2011, the Executive agreed that my Department could proceed to draft the Mental Capacity (Health, Welfare and Finance) Bill which will apply to civil society. The application of the principles and approaches in this Bill to those subject to the criminal justice system is currently being considered by the Department of Justice and will be the subject of a separate Executive paper. My Department is working closely with the Department of Justice to develop the criminal justice proposals and the option remains open to merge the civil and criminal justice elements into one Bill at a later stage. This would be the preferred approach and would obviate the need for any transitional arrangements.

### Nursing Bank Staff at the Antrim Area Hospital

**Mr McCallister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (i) how many nursing bank staff at the Antrim Area Hospital are waiting to receive holiday pay owed to them from 2008; (ii) whether this non-payment constitutes a breach of their employment contracts; and (iii) when they can expect to receive payment. (AQW 1661/11-15)

**Mr Poots:** I am advised that all bank staff in the Northern Trust are currently receiving their holiday pay since April 2011. An exercise is under way to identify and pay relevant staff for the period April 2008 to March 2011. The Trust will ensure that all bank staff are paid in accordance with their entitlement under their contract of employment as soon as other payroll priorities permit.

## **Bowel Cancer Screening Programme**

**Mr Spratt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many people aged between 60 and 69 have taken part in the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme since its launch.  
**(AQW 1682/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** As of 8 September 2011, 37,203 people aged between 60 and 69 have taken part in the Bowel Cancer Screening Programme since its launch in April 2010.

## **At Risk Register**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety what procedures are followed by social workers when dealing with children placed on the At Risk Register.  
**(AQW 1705/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The procedures for safeguarding children who are at significant risk of harm because of abuse or neglect are set out in the Regional Child Protection Committee's Policy and Procedures Guidance. This guidance also sets out the arrangements for joint working and shared decision making by the professionals and agencies involved.

## **Land in the Ballymena Borough Council Area**

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail the land owned by his Department in the Ballymena Borough Council area, including (i) the address; (ii) the size in acres of each site; and (iii) for what each site is used.  
**(AQW 1740/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Department owns a 1.82 acre site at Dunclug, Cushendall Road, Ballymena. The site is leased to Triangle Housing Association Ltd who propose to build residential accommodation for persons with learning disabilities.

## **Domestic and Catering Services at Craigavon Area Hospital**

**Mr Irwin** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail any plans of the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to contract out domestic and catering services at Craigavon Area Hospital.  
**(AQW 1778/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Southern Health and Social Care Trust (The Trust) has no plans to contract out domestic and catering services. However, the Trust provides laundry services to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust under a contractual arrangement which will be subject to a competitive tender later this year.

## **Fire and Rescue Service: Scrap Cars for Training**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail (i) the total number of scrap cars the Fire and Rescue Service has used for training purposes in each of the last five years; (ii) where the Fire and Rescue Service procures these cars; and (iii) whether there has been any change in the procurement arrangement over the last five years.  
**(AQW 1785/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Table below shows the total number of scrap cars used by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) for training purposes in each of the last five years.

<b>Year</b>	<b>No of Scrap Cars Used for Training Purposes</b>
2006/07	220
2007/08	741
2008/09	820
2009/10	169
2010/11	703
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,653</b>

The NIFRS currently procures scrap cars for training purposes from 15 suppliers across Northern Ireland.

The number of suppliers increased from one during the period 2005 - 2007 to three during 2007 – 2009; and to 15 in 2010.

### **Fire and Rescue Service: Scrap Cars for Training**

**Mr Nesbitt** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to detail his Department's procurement strategy, with particular reference to obtaining cars for use by the Fire and Rescue Service for training purposes.

**(AQW 1786/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) is responsible for the procurement of cars for training purposes. NIFRS procurement is governed by its Procurement Strategy, which has been developed in accordance with the Executive's Public Procurement Policy. In relation to the procurement of scrap cars for training purposes, NIFRS is bound by contract thresholds contained in its procurement strategy and set out in the table below.

<b>Thresholds</b>	<b>Number of Quotations Required</b>
Up to £2,000	May be placed without seeking quotation as per NIFRS procurement policy
£2,000 - £30,000	Four formal written quotations
> £30,000 – EU Thresholds	Publicly advertised tender competition

### **MRI Scans**

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety how many MRI scans were carried out by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (i) 2008; (ii) 2009; and (iii) 2010.

**(AQW 1861/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** The number of MRI scans carried out by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust in (i) 2008; (ii) 2009; and (iii) 2010 is shown in the table below.

	<b>Year</b>		
	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>
No. MRI Scans carried out	4,678	5,278	5,819

**Source:** Northern HSC Trust

## Adoption Strategy

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety when their Department is planning to introduce an adoption strategy.

**(AQO 349/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** My Department issued a draft strategy, Adopting the Future, for consultation in 2006. In light of the time which has elapsed since the department consulted on a range of options for adoption reform in Northern Ireland, I have asked my officials to revisit the original proposals and the public response to those proposals to ensure that they remain valid and fit for purpose.

## Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, pursuant to AQW 1418/11-15, when the Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy will be published.

**(AQW 1943/11-15)**

**Mr Poots:** I am currently considering the Guidance on the Termination of Pregnancy and as yet, no date has been set for its publication. I hope to be in a position to advance this matter shortly.

## Department of Justice

### Royal Prerogative of Mercy

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many times the Royal Prerogative of Mercy or similar pardons have been granted to serving prisoners in each of the last ten years.

**(AQW 1558/11-15)**

**Mr Ford (The Minister of Justice ):** The Department of Justice has not granted the Royal Prerogative of Mercy since the devolution of policing and justice on 12 April 2010. Previously requests for the Royal Prerogative of Mercy were considered by the Secretary of State.

### Marion Price/McGlinchey

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice, pursuant to AQW 1509/11-15 (i) to date, what has been done to accommodate to hold Marion Price/McGlinchey as a separated prisoner; (ii) what additional equipment or fittings have been purchased and installed or adapted; (iii) how much this has cost; and (iv) how many prisoners benefit from the installations or adaptations.

**(AQW 1560/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:**

- (i) Glen House in Maghaberry Prison has been set aside as a dedicated facility for female prisoners and has been refurbished to provide Ms McGlinchey with a regime and environment which is, as far as possible, consistent with that available to female prisoners in Ash House, Hydebank Wood.
- (ii) The additional equipment or fittings which have been installed or adapted are set out in Table A, below.

#### TABLE A

##### Cell

- Flat Screen TV/DVD Combi\*
- Computer\*
- Curtains/Duvet Set\*
- Lamp/Mat/Cushions\*

**Recreation Room**

- Carpet
- Sofa
- Table/Chairs
- Flat ScreenTV/Unit/Digi Box/DVD Player
- Coffee Table
- Book Case
- Uplighter
- 3 x pictures
- 3 x pairs of Curtain
- Mat

**Interview Room**

- 1 x pair of curtains\*
- Carpet\*
- 2 x pictures\*

**Kitchen**

- Microwave

**Ablutions**

- Vanity Unit and Mirror
- Urinals removed and sealed off
- Bath sealed off using sheets of plywood

**Stairwell**

- 2 x pictures\*

**Exercise Yard**

- Picnic Bench
- Summer Seat
- 2 x Large Planters and flowers
- 2 x Small Planters and flowers
- 14 x Small Plastic Flower Pots and Flowers\* provided at no additional cost

(iii) The total cost is for the refurbishment of Glenn house was £2257.00

(iv) Ms McGlinchey is the sole occupant of Glen House and currently the only prisoner to benefit from the refurbishment. The facilities will benefit any other female separated prisoners committed to custody.

**Convicted Sex Offender Paul Hunter Redpath**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice (i) how convicted sex offender Paul Hunter Redpath was able to breach his registration requirements; (ii) what restrictions were put in place on his release from custody in January 2010; and (iii) why his absconding was only recently revealed to the public when the last sighting of him was in Scotland on 19 July 2011.

**(AQW 1635/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Jurisdiction for notification requirements in respect of this individual rests with the police and courts in Scotland, where he has been resident since his release from custody in 2010. I understand that he has been subject to a Sexual Offences Prevention Order since January 2010 with a condition not to leave the Grampian Police area. I also understand that decisions to make a public appeal are taken by the police in Scotland in conjunction with the Procurator Fiscal.

Grampian Police are liaising closely with the PSNI in their attempt to trace Paul Redpath.

### **Case Number 11/069592**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice for a breakdown of the full costs of case number 11/069592; and why the case was dismissed at Dungannon Magistrates' Court.

**(AQW 1637/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Some of the costs associated with case number 11/069592 are not yet known and not all agencies hold cost information at case level.

The table below therefore sets out the estimated costs associated with this case.

#### **ESTIMATED COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH CASE NUMBER 11/069592**

<b>Cost Type</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
PSNI Prosecution <sup>1</sup>	Not Known
PPS Prosecution <sup>2</sup>	£300
Defence (Legal Aid Costs) <sup>3</sup>	£1,140
Court (Judiciary and Staff Costs)	£233
Facilities (e.g. Courtroom Accommodation)	£85
<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,758</b>

1. As this case did not go to trial there were no court related costs for police. PSNI cannot disaggregate out the entire costs of the officers attending calls and the investigation of individual cases without incurring disproportionate cost.
2. PPS advise that it is not possible to produce precise costings for particular cases since the amount of time required to take individual decisions as to prosecution will vary depending on a range of factors including the complexity of the case and the extent of the case papers. Some costs are identifiable, for example, the fees paid to prosecuting counsel, however in relation to this case the PPS used its own in-house prosecutors so no costs of this type were incurred. Whilst it is not possible to give a precise overall figure of PPS costs from the outset to the conclusion of this particular case, it can be said that this figure ought not to exceed £300.00.
3. Legal aid in this case was provided for both solicitor and counsel. NILSC have not yet received any claims for this case and have therefore provided estimated costs (based on the Magistrates' Courts and County Court Appeals (Criminal Legal Aid) (Costs) Rules (Northern Ireland) 2009). These costs exclude VAT and any potential claim for travel and mileage.

The court made an order to Strike Out the case and noted 'No Jurisdiction'. The reasons underpinning this decision are entirely a matter for the District Judge (Magistrates' Court) who presided in this case.

### **Marek Barcin Case**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice what is the total legal aid cost to date of the Marek Barcin case.

**(AQW 1638/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** No bills have been submitted so far. The case involves an application for extradition which falls outside the normal standard fee regime and for this reason it is not possible to provide an estimate of the likely cost.

### **Woburn House, Millisle**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister of Justice whether there are any plans to house category C prisoners in Woburn House, Millisle.

**(AQW 1684/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The Northern Ireland Prison Service is exploring a number of options in relation to contingency accommodation as a direct result of the increasing prisoner population. There are no plans to house prisoners in Woburn House, Millisle.

### **Children Who Commit a Criminal Offence**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice what action can be taken against the parents or guardians of children who are ten years old or younger who commit a criminal offence which the parents or guardians are found to have actively encouraged; and to detail the number of (i) prosecutions; and (ii) convictions secured against parents or guardians in these circumstances in each of the last three years, broken down by court division.

**(AQW 1696/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** Children of 10 years of age are currently within the age of criminal responsibility and can be prosecuted in their own right. Children under the age of 10 are below the age of criminal responsibility and cannot be arrested or prosecuted. They can however commit offences which can be recorded by police. If a parent or guardian were found to have intentionally encouraged or assisted such an offence, or encouraged or assisted such an offence believing it would be committed, they could be prosecuted for encouraging or assisting crime. Data which would identify any such prosecutions are not available.

Provisions exist in law for Parental Compensation Orders whereby parents/guardians can be required to pay compensation to a person affected by the taking of property or its loss or damage caused by a child under 10 in the course of anti-social behaviour or committing an act which would have constituted an offence if the child had been 10 or over. For a range of reasons these powers have not been commenced for Northern Ireland and will need to be considered more widely in the context of the Youth Justice Review the report on which I will be publishing shortly.

### **Convictions for the Possession of Illegal Fireworks**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many people in each court division have been convicted for the possession of illegal fireworks in each of the last three years.

**(AQW 1789/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The table below gives the number convicted for the possession of prohibited fireworks by court division, under Regulations 4(2) & 13 Explosives (Fireworks) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2002.

Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included. The table covers the calendar years 2002 to 2006, the latest year for which figures are currently available. This was due to changes in how such data are collected but steps are now being taken as a matter of urgency to derive data for subsequent years. It is hoped information for the period 2007 to mid 2009 will be available in the near future; work on data for 2010 is also progressing in parallel.



**NUMBER CONVICTED FOR POSSESSION OF PROHIBITED FIREWORKS 2004-2006**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number convicted</b>
<b>2004</b>	
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1
Ards	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2005</b>	
Armagh	1
East Tyrone	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2006</b>	
Londonderry	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>

**Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences**

**Mr Storey** asked the Minister of Justice for an update on the proposed Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences operational group.

**(AQW 1796/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** A Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Operational Group has now been established and the inaugural meeting of the Group has been scheduled for 26 September 2011.

**Convictions for Selling Fireworks Without a Licence**

**Lord Morrow** asked the Minister of Justice how many people have been convicted for selling fireworks without a licence in each of the last three years, broken down by court division.

**(AQW 1826/11-15)**

**Mr Ford:** The table below gives the number convicted for selling fireworks without a license under Regulation 4(1) and 12 of the Explosives (Fireworks) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997 in each of the last available three years by court division.

Data are collated on the principal offence rule; only the most serious offence for which an offender is convicted is included. The table covers the calendar years 2004 to 2006, the latest year for which figures are currently available.

**NUMBER OF PEOPLE CONVICTED OF SELLING FIREWORKS WITHOUT A LICENSE BY COURT DIVISION – NUMBER CONVICTED, 2004-2006**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number convicted</b>
<b>2004</b>	
Belfast	4
Fermanagh & Tyrone	1
Ards	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2005</b>	
Belfast	2
Antrim	1
Fermanagh & Tyrone	2
Londonderry	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>2006</b>	
Belfast	3
Antrim	3
Craigavon	1
Fermanagh & Tyrone	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>

## Department for Regional Development

### Rail Link North of Ballymena to Londonderry

**Mr Frew** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the budget commitments required to develop the rail link north of Ballymena to Londonderry; and what assurance he can give that this work will begin in 2014.

**(AQW 1597/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy (The Minister for Regional Development):** The current estimated cost of the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay is £75m.

As part of the Budget 2010 process, it was decided by my predecessor to defer the start of the Coleraine to Londonderry track relay project until 2014 and funding of £20m was allocated to allow the project to proceed at that time. The rest of the funding will have to be found in the next budget allocations and I will be seeking support to ensure that the necessary funding is secured.

I would like to emphasise that I am committed to upgrading, not simply maintaining, the Londonderry line as quickly as possible. I will continue to review options and discussions will continue about what is technically and financially feasible.

## NI Railways: Rolling Stock

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much rolling stock NI Railways intends to purchase in the next two years; and to outline the timetable and routes on which this stock will become operational.

**(AQW 1601/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department is providing funding in total of £114m to enable Translink to purchase 20 Class 4000 trains.

The first 5 units have been delivered to Northern Ireland and are undergoing extensive commissioning and testing. Subject to the successful completion of this process Translink expect the first unit to enter passenger service during autumn 2011 with all units in passenger service by mid-2012.

When available, Translink plans to substitute the existing old trains (Class 450 units) in service on the Larne line with new Class 4000 units on a one for one basis until all services on the Larne line are operated with modern trains. In the short term the existing Larne line timetable will be retained.

The rest of the new trains will be deployed across the rest of the railways network to increase service levels and capacity.

A new revised timetable to be implemented across the network is still in draft and continues to be subject to test and validation followed by a period of consultation.

## Buses Privately Hired from Translink

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Regional Development to detail the number of buses privately hired from Translink for use on 12 July 2011 which were not fitted with seatbelts; and whether any of these buses were hired with subsidies.

**(AQW 1602/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** There were 333 buses privately hired from Translink for use on the 12 July 2011. Of these 105 did not have seatbelts fitted. Private hire charges made by Translink are expected to be on a commercial basis.

## Funding for Rail Infrastructure

**Mr Agnew** asked the Minister for Regional Development how much funding has been drawn down from (i) the European Cohesion Fund Ten-T programme for rail infrastructure; and (ii) the European Regional Development Fund, in each of the past five years.

**(AQW 1610/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:**

- (i) The table below details the receipts received from the European Cohesion Fund Ten-T programme for rail infrastructure in each of the past five years.

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Ten-T	£0	£0	£1,110,677.50	£677,897.50	£367,707.89

- (ii) The following table provides details on the draw downs received from the European Regional Development Fund for rail in each of the past five years:

	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme	£2,632,505.68	£837,315.23	£0	£0	£2,185,912.61

## Weed Spraying in North Down

**Mr Dunne** asked the Minister for Regional Development why the spraying to control weeds on footpaths and roadways in North Down has not yet taken place in this financial year, resulting in unsightly footpaths and increased risk to users; and to outline any plans to address this issue.

**(AQW 1658/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that the one year contract for grass cutting and weed control for the North Down area was not extended to the 2011 season on the basis that it was considered not to be providing adequate value for money.

Roads Service, taking into account the lead-in time for developing and awarding such contracts of between 8 - 12 months, found it necessary to revert this work back in-house, to be carried out by its internal contractor, Roads Service Direct.

Regrettably, due to the relatively short lead in times involved and the need to provide appropriate training to the workforce, weed spraying was not completed as planned in some areas, despite Roads Service's best efforts to keep ahead of demand. Roads Service has advised that staff training is now complete, new equipment is available and that every effort is being undertaken to ensure that outstanding work is completed as quickly as possible.

However, Roads Service acknowledges that it is late in the season for weed spraying and that some areas will require additional effort to remove large and unsightly weeds. This work is being prioritised and it is hoped that results of these efforts will be quickly evident.

## Delivery of Winter Services

**Mr Durkan** asked the Minister for Regional Development whether his Department has developed a contingency plan for the delivery of winter services.

**(AQW 1662/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Both my Department's Roads Service and NI Water have dedicated winter service response plans.

These are complemented by the Department's overarching Major Emergency Response Plan and Business Continuity Plan. This suite of plans enables the Department to respond to major emergency situations, or disruptions to normal services, both in relation to its functions and in the wider community.

The Department's Business Continuity Plan was reviewed and updated in March 2011. The Major Emergency Response Plan is in the final stages of a review to take account of issues raised in the Freeze / Thaw incident. It is planned to test the revised plan later this year.

## Belfast Rapid Transit System

**Mr McNarry** asked the Minister for Regional Development when commuters within the Strangford constituency who are travelling to Belfast can expect to use the Rapid Transit System.

**(AQO 253/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department is currently preparing an Outline Business Case for the Belfast Rapid Transit project which is due for completion in April 2012. This will identify the preferred options for a bus-based Belfast Rapid Transit in terms of the network routes, procurement strategy, commercial/business model and fare system. As part of this Outline Business Case process, a 12 week public consultation exercise will commence in October 2011. In the initial weeks of the consultation period public exhibitions will be held in East Belfast, West Belfast and the city centre. This will give everyone the opportunity to view the proposals, ask questions and make comments which will assist my Department in the planning of the system.

Following the completion of the Outline Business Case, DFP and Executive Committee approval to proceed will be sought. Funding for the planning and commencement of initial implementation measures for Belfast Rapid Transit is included in the 2011/12 – 2014/15 budget.

The proposals for Belfast Rapid Transit include the provision of Park and Ride sites at key locations in the East and West of the city. One of the proposed locations, in Dundonald, will complement the use of the rapid transit system by those commuting from the Strangford constituency.

The target date for the operation of the Belfast Rapid Transit system is 2017. This is of course dependant on the availability of funding in the next budgetary period. At the appropriate time my Department will bid for the resources required.

### **Roads: Holywood Arches**

**Mr Douglas** asked the Minister for Regional Development what plans he has to remove the road protection line at the junction of Holywood Road/Holywood Arches in Belfast to encourage private sector investment and wider regeneration.

**(AQO 256/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** During a recent meeting with local representatives to discuss the Connswater Greenway Project, I was made aware of concerns regarding the potential impact of the Holywood Arches Bypass and Connsbank Link protection lines on potential regeneration opportunities in the area.

The Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan (BMTP) identified the the Holywood Arches Bypass and Connsbank Link as works to be provided by private developers seeking improved linkages to Titanic Quarter. Protection lines were included in the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) and draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP).

It is now unlikely that the funding source originally envisaged for this scheme remains in place and in the current economic climate, the scheme is regarded as a low priority for my Department.

Roads Service is currently awaiting the outcome of the Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan (BMAP) Inquiry, which will review the need to retain protection lines for this future road scheme.

The Department of the Environment's Planning Service is leading on this issue and I am advised that the date of adoption of the Plan is dependent upon receipt of the Planning Appeals Commission Report and is unlikely to be before the end of 2012.

Whilst I fully appreciate the concerns that Mr. Douglas and the local community have in relation to the uncertainty over the road scheme, it would be inappropriate at this time to interfere with due process. Therefore, I will await the outcome of the Inquiry before considering the way forward.

### **Roads: Gritting**

**Mrs Cochrane** asked the Minister for Regional Development what measures are in place to ensure that all neighbourhoods have sufficient gritting facilities in place for the coming winter.

**(AQO 257/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** My Department's Roads Service has advised that prior to the start of each winter service season, it carries out a significant amount of pre-planning to ensure a state of readiness for the coming winter. As well as a number of routine pre-season checks, this planning includes ensuring that adequate staffing arrangements are in place, including training for new staff, where required. Roads Service also ensures that all its winter service equipment is in working order and there is an adequate supply of salt. It also has arrangements in place to supplement stocks of salt during the winter period, if necessary.

While Roads Service targets the limited resources available for this service on the busier main through routes, salt bins or grit piles may be provided for use by the public, on a self help basis, on other routes adopted or maintained by Roads Service, which do not qualify for inclusion onto the gritting schedule.

Roads Service currently provides over four thousand [approximately 4,200] salt bins and nearly forty thousand [39,500] grit piles on public roads.

Roads Service commits significant resources to its winter service programme and every night, from the end of October until the middle of next April, Roads Service will have over 300 people on standby ready to salt main roads, helping drivers across Northern Ireland to cope with the wintry conditions.

I have also asked Roads Service to work with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA), to develop a broad framework of principles which will set out the basis of partnering arrangements between Roads Service and Councils for the removal of snow and ice from busy town centre footways, during prolonged periods of wintry weather. When finalised, it is hoped that agreements based on the broad framework can be put in place, specifically tailored for each individual council. I would hope that such arrangements could be agreed before the winter season starts, however, each individual Council will have the final decision on whether or not it signs up to provide this service to the public.

### **Sewerage: Newcastle**

**Mr W Clarke** asked the Minister for Regional Development for an update on the sewerage infrastructure upgrade for Newcastle.

**(AQO 258/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I am aware of the expressions of concern from the Member and a number of Public Representatives about the condition of the existing sewerage infrastructure within Newcastle and am therefore pleased to reaffirm the commitment of Northern Ireland Water to addressing the situation.

I have been advised by Northern Ireland Water that to date the sewerage infrastructure serving Newcastle has undergone an extensive upgrade. The work has been undertaken to improve the system and to reduce the environmental impact caused by spills from a number of Combined Storm Overflows. It is envisaged that the work will be largely completed by the end of 2011. The current estimated cost of the work is in the region of five and a half million.

Northern Ireland Water has also identified the need for improvements at the existing wastewater treatment works in order to ensure that increasing environmental consent standards for discharges are met. This upgrading work will cost between £7 and £9 million. Northern Ireland Water is currently evaluating tenders for the work and it is expected that the contract will be awarded in November 2011. This should enable work to commence on site shortly afterwards with a completion date of July 2013.

### **A2 Road Scheme**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Regional Development if he would attend a full meeting of Carrickfergus Borough Council to discuss the A2 road upgrade.

**(AQO 259/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** The Member will be aware that the upgrade of the A2 in East Antrim was the subject of an Adjournment Debate held in the Assembly Chamber on 31 May 2011, when I made a statement outlining my Department's position on the scheme. A Hansard record of the Adjournment Debate is available to view on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

The Member will also be aware that I met a delegation from the Council, which included him, on 17 August 2011, to discuss this scheme.

As the position regarding the Scheme has not changed in the interim, I feel that a further meeting would not be beneficial at this stage, but I will keep the situation under review.

## Railways: Bangor

**Mr Cree** asked the Minister for Regional Development for his assessment of the customer satisfaction levels for the Bangor railway line.

**(AQO 260/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** Customer satisfaction for Northern Ireland Railways is measured through an independent survey that is conducted twice every year. The survey has been developed in conjunction with the Consumer Council, Translink and my own Department.

The latest published results for Autumn 2010 show that customer satisfaction on the Bangor railway line was 81%. This is equivalent to the overall customer satisfaction score for Northern Ireland Railways.

Results for Spring 2011 for the passenger's charter survey are due to be published shortly. Early indications suggest that overall customer satisfaction has improved and that customers on the Bangor line are the most satisfied customers. These provisional results combined with the record numbers of passenger journeys on Northern Ireland Railways in 2010/11 lead me to conclude that this is a very commendable performance by Northern Ireland Railways.

## Railways: Belfast to Londonderry

**Mr Dallat** asked the Minister for Regional Development to outline his plans for ensuring that the operation and development of the Belfast to Londonderry rail line, particularly north of Coleraine, proceeds as planned.

**(AQO 262/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I am committed to upgrading, not simply maintaining, the Londonderry line as quickly as possible within available resources.

Prior to the budget Translink had planned to start this major £75 million project in 2012. However, as a result of the budget and to avoid disruption to Londonderry's UK City of Culture Year in 2013, it is currently intended that the start will be deferred until 2014. There has been funding of £20 million allocated to the 2014/15 budget to allow the project to start at that time.

The Member may be aware of an answer provided to Mr George Robinson MLA in February this year, by my predecessor, (AQW 4595/11) which made it clear that the track relay project was planned to start in 2014. This was raised as part of the consultation on the budget but the position remained unchanged at the end of that process.

My Department is providing £7 million in funding so that Translink can plan and implement a programme of engineering work to maintain safety on the line and keep the line operational. Translink hope to introduce a fully enhanced service when the full re-lay is completed. A key factor in all this is to safeguard passenger and staff safety.

In light of the concerns raised with me about current plans I initiated discussion with key stakeholders in the North West region. Specifically, I have recently met with Derry City Council and other public representatives and bodies. I have also raised these matters with my Executive colleagues and separately with the DFP Minister. I will continue to review options and discussions will continue about what is financially and technically feasible.

I am looking forward to debating this matter further in the Private Members' Motion later this afternoon.

## DRD: Terrorist Commemorations

**Mr Allister** asked the Minister for Regional Development what steps he has taken, and intends to take, to ensure the removal of terrorist commemorations from his Department's property and that of its arm's-length bodies.

**(AQO 263/11-15)**

**Mr Kennedy:** I would, from the outset, state that I share the views of the Member in that I find these memorials to terrorists offensive. I can also assure Members that my Department does not approve of, or support the unauthorised use of Departmental property for illegally erected roadside memorials.

Memorials erected without lawful authority have much in common with other unauthorised activities, such as, kerb and lamppost painting, and have the potential to create tension within local communities as well as posing a risk to those tasked with their removal. Roads Service will take action where there are road safety implications and continue to work with other agencies and local representatives to remove the offending material, where there is widespread local support.

Unauthorised memorials on the property of the Department's arms-length bodies are matters for the Boards of those organisations, bearing in mind their responsibilities for safety and statutory obligations to promote good relations between people of different religious beliefs or political persuasions.

## Department for Social Development

### Housing Executive Properties in East Antrim

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Social Development how many houses owned by the Housing Executive in the East Antrim area are currently unoccupied.

**(AQW 1580/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland (The Minister for Social Development):** The Housing Executive has advised that there are currently 201 unoccupied dwellings in the East Antrim area, which covers their Carrickfergus and Larne District Offices.

### Rural Housing Enabler Service

**Mr Campbell** asked the Minister for Social Development whether funding is being sought to provide a rural housing enabler service.

**(AQW 1584/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Housing Executive has advised that it has no immediate plans to seek funding for a rural housing enabler service but this will be kept under review. The Housing Executive has had discussions with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and a number of District Council Clusters (Local Action Groups) to see if there was a possibility of joint working on this initiative through the Rural Development Programme, but in the current financial climate was unable to identify any funding sources.

### 3G Football Pitch for the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on plans for a 3G football pitch for the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor.

**(AQW 1585/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The proposed 3G football pitch for the Kilcooley Estate is being advanced by the Kilcooley Sports Forum. An assessment of the proposal completed in September 2010 recommended a project with an estimated cost of £1.4 million. The Sports Forum will now consult with local residents to ascertain their views on the project and, subject to the outcome of this, will seek sources of funding for it.

### Neighbourhood Renewal in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development what Neighbourhood Renewal actions have yet to be implemented in the Kilcooley Estate, Bangor.

**(AQW 1587/11-15)**



**Mr McCausland:** Neighbourhood Renewal actions are implemented on the basis of the Kilcooley Neighbourhood Partnership's Action Plan which sets out its priorities for the next 4 years. The projects identified for funding, or part funding, through the Neighbourhood Renewal Investment Fund over the period are as follows:

<b>Approved Projects</b>				
	<b>Estimated Expenditure 2011/12</b>	<b>Estimated Expenditure 2012/13</b>	<b>Estimated Expenditure 2013/14</b>	<b>Estimated Expenditure 2014/15</b>
Kilcooley Community Forum Running Costs	£48,786.11	£50,030.95	£0.00	£0.00
Kilcooley P.S. Nurturing Project	£70,000.00	£70,000.00	£70,000.00	£70,000.00
Kilcooley Women's Centre STEP Project	£44,289.32	£45,100.32	£45,939.66	£46,808.24
Neighbourhood Partnership - Technical Assistance	£19,580.70	£19,130.70	£19,130.70	£19,130.70
Bangor Alternatives	£37,077.76	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
<b>Proposed Future Projects</b>				
Kilcooley Allotments		£50,000.00		
Young Men's Education		£30,000.00	£30,000.00	£30,000.00
Early Years Project	£20,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00	£60,000.00
Bangor Alternatives		£38,000	£38,000	£38,000
Kilcooley Community Forum Running Costs		£0.00	£50,000	£50,000
Multi-Functional Centre - Appraisal	£10,000.00			
Multi-Functional Centre - Construction	Costs to be determined			
3G Sports Facility	Costs to be determined			

## **Benefit Fraud**

**Mr Weir** asked the Minister for Social Development to outline the proposed timetable for the initiative to tackle benefit fraud.

**(AQW 1590/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Social Security Agency has a robust strategy in place to detect and investigate fraud, with losses through fraud down from over £60m in 2001/02 to £20.5m in 2010. I am keen to build on the success to date and explore fully any new opportunities for further reducing the levels of fraud within the welfare system.

A joint Department of Work and Pensions and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs strategy, setting out a range of new initiatives to tackle fraud and error, was published on 18th October 2010. Many of the new initiatives proposed in the joint strategy would be helpful and relevant in tackling fraud and error in the Northern Ireland social security system, with replication also necessary in some instances to maintain operational capability.

The Agency has therefore set up a Project Team to bring forward proposals for implementation, where appropriate, of similar measures in Northern Ireland. Subject to the timescales necessary for legislation, procurement and structural change, it is anticipated that implementation of any agreed new initiatives could take place by 2012/13.

### **Pensioners' Bungalows in Bloomfield Estate, Bangor**

**Mr Easton** asked the Minister for Social Development for an update on the pensioners' bungalows in Bloomfield Estate, Bangor.

**(AQW 1689/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The Economic Appraisal for Bloomfield Bungalows is to be presented to the Housing Executive Board on 28 September. It will then be sent to the Department for consideration.

I will be happy to meet with the member and discuss the options presented at that time.

### **Children in the East Antrim Area Living Below the Poverty Line**

**Mr Dickson** asked the Minister for Social Development how many children in the East Antrim area are living below the poverty line.

**(AQW 1728/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** During the period 2005/09, 5,600 children in East Antrim Westminster Parliamentary Constituency were living below the relative poverty line. This equates to 29% of children in East Antrim Westminster Parliamentary Constituency. The results are produced using the Family Resources Survey datasets for Northern Ireland, and the Households Below Average Income datasets for Northern Ireland.

### **Boiler Replacement Scheme**

**Mr Hilditch** asked the Minister for Social Development to detail the reasoning behind the criteria for qualification for the Boiler Replacement Scheme.

**(AQW 1811/11-15)**

**Mr McCausland:** The rationale for the pilot Boiler Replacement Scheme was to offer assistance to older householders on low income who missed out on other energy efficiency improvement Government schemes such as the Warm Homes Scheme. All potential Boiler Replacement Scheme beneficiaries have been identified and have been contacted by leaflet. A budget of £2 million has been set aside to fund 1,330 boiler replacement installations.

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